

Islam as an Ideology

MOHAMMAD NATSIR

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Translator's Introduction

Megan Brankley Abbas

Mohammad Natsir (1908-93) was one of the most prominent Islamic politicians in 20th century Indonesia. He was also an important public intellectual whose decades' worth of writings left a profound impact on Islamic thought in the country. Born in West Sumatra, Natsir attended a series of Dutch-medium schools as a boy. He excelled in his studies and eventually graduated at the top of his Padang class in 1927. His academic success won him a government scholarship to the prestigious Algemeen Middelbare School (AMS) in Bandung, West Java. Studying in Bandung enabled Natsir to perfect his Dutch and learn English as well as some Greek and Latin, but it was also during those same years that Natsir began to deepen his commitment to Islam. He forged a close relationship with *Persatuan Islam* (PERSIS) founder Ahmad Hassan, receiving private instruction from the Islamic reformer and contributing to his magazine, *Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defender). He studied directly under Islamic nationalist pioneer Haji Agus Salim as well. With Hassan and Salim as his mentors, Natsir began to challenge the secularist underpinnings of the Sukarno-led nationalist movement and articulate an alternative Islamic nationalism for Indonesia. After graduating from AMS in 1930, Natsir remained in Bandung to continue his Islamic activism. He helped establish a network of modernized Islamic schools that taught both Dutch-style and Islamic subjects. He also continued to write about history and politics for leading Islamic magazines.

Soon after Indonesia declared its independence on August 17, 1945, Natsir began to rise through the ranks of the new revolutionary leadership. He served as the fledgling republic's communications minister for more than three years and was eventually detained by the Dutch during the Second Police Action in late 1948. Once the military phase of the

Indonesian Revolution ended, Natsir became the national chairman of Masyumi, the country's largest Islamic political party. He also served briefly as Prime Minister in 1950-51. However, as the 1950s wore on, Natsir's relationship with President Sukarno deteriorated. Masyumi refused to support Sukarno's authoritarian-style shift to "Guided Democracy," and Sukarno, in turn, accused Masyumi leaders of conspiring against him and the on-going revolution. Amidst these rising tensions, Natsir made the momentous decision in 1958 to join an anti-Sukarno regional rebellion based in Sumatra. He moved his family back to West Sumatra to support the secessionist Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI). However, the Indonesian Army moved quickly to quash the rebellion, forcing Natsir to abandon his home and go on the run. He managed to survive for many months in Sumatra's mountains and forests, but the Indonesian Army captured him in September 1961. Natsir was then imprisoned as a traitor to the nation.

Yet, Natsir's career as a Muslim intellectual and activist did not end there. In 1965, General Suharto seized power from Sukarno during a period of mass political violence and proclaimed the birth of the New Order regime. New Order officials released Natsir from prison, re-igniting hope for the future of Indonesian Islamic politics. Natsir petitioned for permission to reconstitute Masyumi, but Suharto refused the request. As a result, former Masyumi leaders were forced to abandon their official political aspirations and entered into the Islamic grassroots opposition instead. In 1967, Natsir founded the *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (Indonesian Islamic Preaching Council / DDII); he also continued to write and mentor young Muslim activists. The DDII soon became one of the most influential and conservative Islamic organizations in late 20th century Indonesia. Natsir died in 1993 at the age of 84. Despite his controversial political and religious past, he is now revered as a *Pahlawan Nasional* (National

Hero) of Indonesia.¹

Natsir wrote “Islam as an Ideology” during his political heyday in the 1950s.² Throughout the decade, debates raged over the proper foundations for the new Indonesian state. Secular-leaning nationalists like Sukarno endorsed the five-pronged Pancasila as the ideal national ideology.³ The first pillar, “Belief in One God,” guaranteed the primacy of monotheism in a multi-religious Indonesia but stopped short of recognizing Islam as the national religion. In contrast, Islamic nationalists argued that Islam should have a larger and more explicit role in the emergent Indonesian state. In “Islam as an Ideology,” Natsir insisted that Islam constituted its own worldview that encompassed social, economic, and political ethics. Citing the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad’s example, he articulated a robust vision for a modern Islamic Indonesia and refuted the arguments of Egyptian and Turkish secularists popular among Indonesians at the time. The essay struck a chord with Islamic nationalists and soon became the unofficial platform for the Masyumi Party. This simmering ideological contest boiled over during the Constitutional Assembly debates of 1956-59. As a leader of Masyumi, Natsir built on his ideas in “Islam as an Ideology” and delivered several impassioned addresses about creating an Islamic state in Indonesia. However, he was unable to persuade enough

¹ For an authoritative biography of Mohammad Natsir, see: Audrey R. Kahin, *Islam, Nationalism, and Democracy: A Political Biography of Mohammad Natsir* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012).

² The original date of publication for “Islam as an Ideology” is unclear to historians because the two earliest remaining print editions are both undated. However, I believe that Natsir wrote the essay in 1950 based on his note, in the fourth paragraph, that it was “five years since revolution erupted” in Indonesia.

³ Pancasila’s five pillars are belief in one God, a just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy through mutual consultation, and social justice for all Indonesians.

Pancasila nationalists to join the cause. The Constitutional Assembly became mired in ideological stalemate until Sukarno unilaterally dissolved it in 1959.

Although seventy years have passed since Natsir wrote "Islam as an Ideology," the essay remains as relevant as ever. Contemporary Indonesians continue to wrestle with the proper role of Islam in national politics. For example, in late 2016, hundreds of thousands of Muslims mobilized in the streets of Jakarta to protest against the Chinese-Christian governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, popularly known as Ahok. The protestors accused Ahok of insulting the Qur'an and applied sufficient pressure to result in his arrest and eventual imprisonment for blasphemy. President Joko Widodo has responded to this rising tide of Islamist activism with his own efforts to protect the national ideology of Pancasila. In 2017, he banned the Indonesian branch of the transnational Hizbut Tahrir, and in late 2020, he banned a second Islamist organization, the *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defenders' Front / FPI). In addition to playing leading roles in the anti-Ahok protests, both groups call not only for a more Islamic state in Indonesia but also for the re-establishment of a global caliphate. Natsir devoted decades to wrestling with these very issues - a fact that ensures his legacy lives on in 21st century Indonesia.

Notes on the Translation

Although written primarily in Bahasa Indonesia, Natsir's original text features many Arabic and Dutch phrases as well. For the sake of clarity and accessibility, I translated nearly all of these foreign language phrases into English and incorporated them un-italicized into the translated text. I applied this same method to any Arabic excerpts from the Qur'an or hadith collections. I did, however, add references for specific Qur'anic verses and hadith collections even when Natsir

did not provide this information in his original text. The only exceptions to this foreign language rule are specific Islamic terms that often appear in academic scholarship on Islam. I have italicized these terms on first use, left them in their Arabic original, and provided brief definitions in the text or footnotes in case readers are unfamiliar with their meaning.

Like most Indonesian writers, Natsir had a strong preference for communicating in the passive voice. I rendered most of his sentences active in order to make them more accessible for English-speaking readers, but I decided to retain the passive construction in some instances where shifting the voice would greatly affect the meaning or tone of the original sentence.

I also want to acknowledge that I remain uncertain about the exact copyright status of "Islam as an Ideology." It is unclear whether the essay is under copyright at all. After all, Natsir held public office in the early 1950s, and he likely wrote the text or even delivered it as a speech (it certainly reads like a speech!) in such a public capacity. If that is the case, it has always been in the public domain. More tangibly, I based my translation on a second edition print from Pustaka Aida that includes no copyright information nor date of publication. I know that a second Jakarta-based publisher, Penjiaran Islam, also printed the essay – also undated – during the same general time. To the best of my knowledge, neither of these publishing houses still exists. I also tried to reach out to Natsir's *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* for more information but either did not hear back from correspondents or was simply told that the copyright status was unknown. If any readers have information on the copyright status of this work, I invite them to get in touch with me.

Finally, I want to thank Dewi Kurniati Setiorini for all of her help with this translation. She encouraged me to take on this daunting project and spent hours discussing the meaning of

some of Natsir's more convoluted sentences and references.
I thank her for her patience, support, and good humor!

Islam as an Ideology⁴

Mohammad Natsir

People often ask, "Why must religion concern itself with politics?" Another frequent question that emerges is whether we should have a political party based on religion, like our Islamic party Masyumi, for example.

These questions emerge because people usually conceptualize the term "religion" as referring only to a system of worship between God and His creation. Perhaps this definition is appropriate for many religions. However, Islam is obviously more than just that. Islam involves regulations for how humans should behave towards other humans as fellow creatures of God. If we borrow the words of the Western Orientalist H.A.R. Gibb, then we can conclude in one sentence, "Islam is much more than a religious system; it is a complete civilization."⁵ Islam is a life philosophy or an ideology. It is a behavioral system in addition to an ideology and an "ism." This ideology serves as a compass for us Muslims and, as a result, we cannot separate it from politics. Moreover, we cannot separate our political selves from our ideology, i.e. the ideology of Islam. We cannot separate establishing Islam from establishing a society, a state, or freedom.

Islam and colonialism represent a paradox, an irresolvable contradiction. A Muslim, as an ideological person, is automatically unable to accept any form of colonization whatso-

⁴ This was originally published as "Islam Sebagai Ideologie" in Jakarta in 1950.

⁵ The original quotation actually reads, "Islam is indeed much more than a system of theology; it is a complete civilization." H.A.R. Gibb, *Whither Islam? A Survey of Modern Movements in the Moslem World* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1932), 12. – trans.

ever. We do not fight for independence merely for the sake of nationalism. Rather, fighting is – in reality – an unavoidable obligation for every responsible Muslim. Consequently, in the history of our country and of Indonesian opposition to colonialism, our Muslim community has stepped forward with a spirit of tremendous sacrifice across the centuries. The uprisings of Imam Bonjol, Diponegoro, and other Indonesian Muslim warriors have become a well of inspiration for our nation and our future descendants. We do not seek to take pride in the service of those who preceded us. They have already passed, and they have already reaped the fruits of their actions and struggles. We highlight them as a reminder that wherever the weak must be defended and wherever the oppressed must be freed from compulsion and fear, the Muslim community has the obligation to step forward to defend their rights and the truth itself. Our religion - our ideology - prohibits Muslims from only sitting on their hands.

We do not wish to boast about the actions of our ancestors. Our contemporary Muslim community has already proven, in the five years since revolution erupted in our homeland, that the spirit of Islam is not dead. Rather, it is a well that never dries up. It provides a tremendous boost in our struggle against colonialism. History has witnessed how the Indonesian Muslim community does not trail behind our comrades from any other ideological groups. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them, sacrifice with them, and wage jihad in various fields based on one agreement: “Free our country from both physical and mental colonialism, and establish sovereignty across this entire archipelago nation!”

Amidst this intersection of diverse ideologies, we are ready to locate common ground on those matters that we can pursue together based on the principle, “Come to common terms as between us and you.” (Qur’an 3:64) We see no use in wasting time with anger when we encounter misunderstandings or different ideologies. Rather, a Muslim must – with a cool

head and a big heart – stand firmly for certain principles and adopt the attitude: “Say to those who disbelieve, ‘Persist in your ways; we will certainly persist in ours.’” (Qur’an 11:121) Therefore, we can calmly and yet firmly outline a correct path for society in a manner positively aligned with how the Prophet Muhammad carried out his duty. “Say, ‘This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight, I and those who follow me. And exalted is Allah, and I am not of those who associate others with Him.’” (Qur’an 12:108)

The Meaning of Religion in an Islamic State

People often say, “Religion must be sidelined in the [nationalist] struggle. The state is the state, and religion is religion.” First, we must specify what we mean when we use the terms “religion” and “the state” in what follows.

Muslims possess their own philosophy of life and ideology just like Christians, fascists, or communists have their respective philosophies of life and ideologies. What is a Muslim’s ideology? The explanation could be quite broad and expansive if we seek a long response. However, it can be summarized with one sentence from the Qur’an: “And, We did not create human beings and jinn for any reason other than to worship Us.” (Qur’an 51:56) In other words, Muslims aspire to live their worldly lives as servants of God so that they achieve both worldly success and heavenly rewards.

Muslims cannot possibly draw an absolute distinction between this world and the afterlife. This we already appreciate. In order to achieve an exalted status, God provides us with various guidelines concerning how we must behave and relate to God as our Creator and how we must behave and relate to our fellow human beings. For interactions with fellow creatures, God provides broad outlines in the form of foundational principles about individual rights and obligations towards society as well as societal rights and obligations

towards the individual. These two forms of divine guidance comprise the religion of Islam, whose foundational principles are gathered in the Qur'an.

Collectively, we have long known this. However, when people speak about the religion-state issue, they often forget that the term "religion" - in this understanding of Islam - is not merely worshipping God through prayer or fasting, for example. It also encompasses all of the foundational principles and laws in society. Islam has established these all as part of the aspirations and ideology of the Muslim community.

The Qur'an already contains the broad outlines of this guidance. However, the Qur'an does not have its own hands and feet to ensure that humanity enacts its commands. It is absolutely necessary for the state, the society, and the individual to ensure that these rules and measures continue and are implemented as they should be. As the Prophet warned the Muslim community, "Indeed, God holds [preserves] through the power of the Sultan [the power of the State] what cannot be held [preserved] through the Qur'an alone."⁶ (Ibn Kathir) Just like other constitutions, the Qur'an cannot do anything on its own. Its regulations will not go into effect if it merely sits on the top shelf of a bookcase, let alone if it is simply held up as sacred.

When speaking about the religion-state issue, people often say, "Look at that country. There, they separate Islam from the state. For example, there used to be a unification of religion and state in Turkey. Indeed, the head of the state was even the Caliph or the Commander of the Faithful. However, during that time, Turkey was not a progressive or modern country; it was backwards, 'sick,' and even 'degenerate.'

⁶ The parenthetical glosses appear in Natsir's original discussion of this hadith. - trans.

What about progress? What about modernity and all of that?"

Furthermore, when we suggest unifying religion and the state, the same people immediately imagine a bloody fool sitting on his throne surrounded by his "harem" and watching his court ladies dancing all about. They also imagine some old farts wearing big turbans, clutching rosaries, and drinking herbal tea running the ministries of the state. After all, that is the depiction of "Islamic governance" in contemporary European books. Europeans – with very few exceptions – simply equate the caliphate with a "harem" and Islam with polygamy. This stereotype is the result of modern *taqlid*, which we must eliminate first if we truly hope to discuss such an issue.⁷ Additionally, we request that all free thinkers cleanse themselves of such prejudices.

Don't blame Islam if a state does not care about the needs of the people, if it leaves its people uneducated and ignorant, and if it does not provide all the necessary tools for progress. Such a state is no different from any other whose leader suppresses the rights of the people. Likewise, don't blame "worship" if a state does not possess any power and if it allows the lazy masses to manipulate it. This is especially true when the leaders of such governments are themselves immoral and permit superstition and magic to run rampant. These words describe the condition of Turkish governance during the Ottoman sultanate; it was not an Islamic state.

Islam neither commands nor even allows a person to delegate an issue to a non-expert. Rather, Islam threatens imminent destruction and disaster if any matter is so entrusted to non-experts. "When any matter is given to a non-expert,

⁷ Taqlid is an Islamic legal concept that refers to adhering to interpretative precedent within one's own legal school. Here, Natsir seems to use the term in a more colloquial sense to connote "blind imitation of the past." – trans.

then simply wait for its collapse.” (Sahih al-Bukhari) Islam neither commands nor allows delegating state governance to immoral and superstitious people. Islam enjoins care in choosing leaders. “Indeed, no one has the right to become your leader other than God, His Messenger, and those who have faith, meaning those who establish prayer, give zakat, and submit to the orders and laws of God.” (Qur’an 5:55) Islam neither commands nor even allows the continuing legitimization of such a government. The Islamic definition of “democracy” provides the people with the right to eliminate oppression with force and violence if necessary. Two hadith convey this message:

Once a man asked the Prophet Muhammad, “What is equally as good as jihad?” The Prophet answered, “Speaking the truth to an oppressive ruler.”

The Prophet warned: “When a Muslim witnesses someone commit an injustice and, rather than correcting it, simply permits it to continue, then God will direct His punishment to both the oppressor and the one who allowed that oppression to continue.”

Therefore, when we insist on unifying religion and the state, we do not seek to return to a degenerate and oppressive government like the one rooted in Turkey during the Ottoman period. Furthermore, the separation of religion and politics cannot improve such a government because it has already long separated itself from true religion. How can a society that is already bereft of religion further separate itself from religion? What must be separated from such a society is the wickedness, immorality, tyranny, idolatry, and greed that has already destroyed the strength of the Muslim community, that has already deteriorated all morals and character, and that has already shut the door to worldly success and heavenly rewards.

If we, however, seek to improve such a state, then it is necessary to introduce fundamental rights and obligations between those who govern and those who are governed. We must introduce principles and laws for human-to-human interaction. We must introduce a spiritual connection between humanity and God in the form of pure worship, which is the only perfect tool for avoiding all lustful and evil behaviors. We must instill noble character through laws in order to attain salvation and genuine progress. We must implant a noble and holy philosophy of life into the hearts of our nation's population – an ideology that will revive the spirit of activism and the struggle to achieve worldly success and heavenly rewards.

All of this is encompassed in the one system, one culture, one morality, and one ideology known as Islam. This means that we should delegate to those who are worthy and deserving so that they can receive that sacred trust. We should not delegate it to any bloody fool, let alone to a drunkard or anyone of that sort.

People say, "There is no consensus among the *'ulama* (religious scholars) that religion and the state must be unified." Fine! But, where is the consensus among the *'ulama* that religion and the state must not be unified? There also isn't one. If one wishes to use consensus among the *'ulama* as a justification regarding this point, then I guarantee that one person will seek separation on the grounds that there is no consensus among the *'ulama* to unify and another will seek unification on the basis that there is no consensus among the *'ulama* to separate. Next, another question will emerge: What is consensus? Is it a simple majority vote? Does it require a full 100%? Then, questions will emerge regarding which religious scholars have to reach the consensus. Is it just the Egyptian scholars, the Meccan scholars, the four founders [of the major schools of jurisprudence], or all of those? And, when must the consensus be reached? In the era of the

Four Righteous Caliphs, in the era of the Abbasid dynasty, in the era of Atatürk? And, the questions continue.

Ultimately, the definition of consensus among the 'ulama is flexible; the concept is stretchable and has no certain end point. Yet, why must we prolong this philosophical debate? In reality, the issue of unifying religion and the state is not all that complex if we do not desire to make it complex.

For example, Islam requires that all Muslim men and women seek knowledge. Islam has laws about compulsory education for the entire population. How is it possible to implement these Islamic laws if there is no state to ensure their implementation? Islam obligates Muslims to pay their required zakat. How is it possible to implement these social laws properly if there is no state to supervise their implementation? Islam has laws that establish the obligatory rights of both parties in marriage and divorce and that protect, with perfect justice, the rights of both men and women better than any other matrimonial law does. However, those laws will certainly not function as they should if there is no worldly power to punish the guilty who violate the legal limits. Islam prohibits extra-marital sex and establishes several rules to prevent it since it is the root of every community's downfall. How is it possible to avoid the surge of extra-marital sex if the reigning state shrugs its shoulders and considers this to be merely a private matter? We see this happening in Western nations where religion and the state are separate and where extra-marital sex and obscenities run rampant.

Islam prohibits gambling, drinking alcohol, and other social cancers that destroy the pillars of communal life. How is it possible to implement these rules if the state in power says "whatever," even if the consequences of such a "whatever" are clear in states that prefer separation? Islam fights against idolatry and beliefs that destroy the spirit of all communities. How is it possible to achieve this goal if the state and

its leadership shrug their shoulders and allow such beliefs to run rampant under the false slogan that “the state is religiously neutral?” There is much more to say, but it would take too much time. For now, this is sufficient for answering the question of what we truly mean by “the unity of religion and state.”

In summary, our Muslim community does not consider the state to be a separate entity that constitutes an end in and of itself. Nor do we use the phrase “the unity of religion and the state” to communicate that “religion” must be inserted into the “state.” No! For us, the state is not its own end but rather a tool. The state is an essential, inseparable part – an integral part – of Islam. Its purpose is perfecting the implementation of God’s laws, whether they address individual or social behaviors or whether they concern life in our mortal world or in the more permanent world to come.

Supposedly, Sheikh Ali Abdel Raziq (1888-1966), the former Egyptian professor, once stated that the Prophet only established a religion, not a state. Even if he did indeed say these words, we need not be surprised. The Prophet did not establish a state but only established a religion. Really?! Indeed, there was no need for the Prophet to order the establishment of a state.

A state can emerge on its own, with or without Islam. In fact, it already existed before and after Islam. It exists wherever and whenever human beings live together as a group in one society. There was a state in the era of camels and date palm trees; there is also a state in the era of airplanes. The state of the camel era was appropriate to its time. The state of the airplane era must also be appropriate to its time. Some are organized, and some are less so. Regardless, both are states. With or without Islam.

The Prophet Muhammad only brought forth principles to

guide and strengthen the state so that it could flourish and become the best possible resource to help its population achieve their aspirations of individual and collective salvation as well as of individual and communal peace. Accordingly, whether the head of the government uses the title “caliph” is not a matter of prime importance. The title of caliph is not a requirement nor an essential condition as long as the ruler fulfills the specific requirements to become *Ulil Amri*⁸ over the Muslim community and as long as that leader uses the state to implement all the necessary Islamic regulations in both principle and practice.

If Sheikh Abdel Raziq meant this in his book, then why would we find it upsetting? It is no problem at all. However, if our Sheikh meant that the Prophet only brought forth so-called “religious” commands - meaning worship through prayer and fasting alone to the exclusion of social and political regulations – then that understanding would abandon Muslims to oppressive and immoral governments and put them at the mercy of whomever wants to govern and colonize them through whatever means they please. If our Sheikh denies that a Muslim government must abide by certain limits and norms, if he opposes any required rights or obligations, if he denies or is unfamiliar with such matters, then we have no reason to be surprised that he was fired from his teaching position at Al-Azhar University! That is simply appropriate. Moreover, the committee of ‘ulama that fired him cannot be accused of fanaticism because someone who needs to attend Grade 3 of Elementary School is simply not qualified to teach as a professor at the famous Al-Azhar University. Since people often cite the Sheikh’s name as support, we will in-

⁸ *Ulil Amri* is an Arabic phrase that means “those in authority.” It is a reference to Qur’an 4:59, which reads “You who believe, obey God and the Messenger, and those in authority among you. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day: that is better and fairer in the end.” – trans.

investigate what he actually wrote in the following pages.

As for “progress,” it is not our habit to follow the West’s style on all matters. The West has its God, and the East has its God. Both have their positive qualities; both also possess ugly characteristics that must be overcome. The West and East should not become standards of measurement for us. We define progress as fusing together worldly success and heavenly rewards. We must achieve those goals in life if we are to have the right to call ourselves servants of God in the fullest sense. Whereas the Turkish writer Zia Keuk Alp said, “We come from the East, and we head towards the West,” we say, “Whether in the East or the West, we seek peace in God.”

Illogical “Logic”

The former Turkish Minister of Justice Mahmud Essad Bey once said, “When religion is used to govern human societies, it is always used as an instrument of punishment in the hands of kings, oppressors, and the iron-fisted. By separating worldly matters from spiritual matters, modernity saved the world from many disasters and enthroned religion as an all-powerful force in the hearts of those who believe.” Any readers who possess even a little critical sense will surely ask themselves how a seemingly intelligent person like Minister Essad Bey so easily expels such nonsense words in a single breath.

Anyone who wishes to make such a harsh accusation has, at the very least, the obligation to show which Islamic teachings can be used as tools by an oppressor to oppress. Something cannot possibly be made into a tool for oppression and evil if it does not possess an oppressive or evil nature. Nevertheless, His Excellency Essad Bey feels no need to provide evidence and instead simply issues this *fatwa* (opinion) as if such common sense “logic” was not illogical.

His Excellency also stressed that Islam “always” becomes a tool for oppression when used to govern. His Excellency did not support this accusation with evidence so that those who hear his opinion can evaluate it as true or false. There is no explanation other than his ministerial title.

If His Excellency said that oppressive and evil individuals often like to use religion as a guise, then there would be no need to deny such a statement. Oppressive and evil individuals will surely use whatever they can to disguise their oppressiveness. There are many such oppressors, both in the East and the West. There are even oppressors who wear ascot caps and top hats. Similarly, it is possible to use Christianity and Buddhism or even “democracy,” “aristocracy,” and the historical materialism of Karl Marx as guises for oppression. Or, even the Swiss laws adopted by Atatürk...

Essad Bey is not stupid. He and his colleagues repeatedly declare that they are “not against true Islam.” Such statements imply that they can ascertain what “true Islam” is. He and his colleagues certainly understand well enough that oppressive rulers in Ottoman-era Turkey used Islam as an excuse to pursue their selfish desires. However, that is neither an appropriate nor a logical reason to banish Islam itself from all affairs of the state.

Can the Qur’an Oversee the State?

People often ask, “Brother, how do you intend to run an Islamic state? Is your Qur’an sufficient for managing all the complicated affairs of a 20th century state?”

We respond that, indeed, if we open the Qur’an, we will not find an instruction manual for designing a state budget, handling quotas, regulating currencies and foreign exchange, and more. We will not find methods for managing traffic. There is no “Islamic” method for installing an antenna. There

are no Qur'anic or prophetic regulations for evacuations and air defense. There are another 1,001 such matters that make our modern state inter-connected and complex. No. All of these matters cannot and need not be managed according to God's eternal revelation. These are worldly matters that constantly evolve depending on time, place, and context. Islam oversees those matters that do not change. Foundational principles regulate human society, and their importance and necessity will not change as long as humanity is still humanity, whether in the era of the camel, the airplane, the spaceship, or whatever else the future may bring.

In order to protect the human community, Islam warns that power should not be handed over to just anyone and even enumerates the characteristics required for a person to be chosen as a leader. As we already discussed, the title bestowed on the head of state is not an important condition. That title can be caliph, commander of the faithful, president, or whatever else as long as the person's characteristics, rights, and obligations meet Islamic requirements. Islam does require that the leader must consult with the proper people on matters concerning the community. (The matters that require consultation cannot clash with set religious laws.) Our religion does not establish whether consultation must occur in the same manner as Abu Bakr consulted with "those in authority" in the desert under a date palm tree, in a 20th century parliamentary style, or through individual or collective voting. Islam freely delegates those details to our own *ijtihad*⁹ so that we can do what is appropriate for our particular era. What matters is that the consultation is valid.

Islam establishes a broad outline for the rights and obligations between rulers and the ruled. The ruler has the obli-

⁹ *Ijtihad* is an Islamic legal concept that refers to returning to the Qur'an and the Sunnah to derive one's own reason-based interpretation. It is the opposite of *taqlid*. – trans.

gation to be responsible and the right to be obeyed as long as he acts justly according to religious principles, and the ruled have the obligation to follow and the right to correct. The ruled have the right, if there is no other option, to disobey a ruler who adopts the wrong path and violates God's laws. Islam also establishes prohibitions against a number of serious social illnesses that existed in the past and continue to exist in our developing world. They include alcohol consumption – which has run rampant from the palm wine era to the whisky era - and the diseases of thievery, gambling, and obscenity. These have always existed, whether in the East or the West and whether in donkey or camel societies. They are even more prevalent in the society of the airplane and motion picture. Islam establishes certain laws to regulate the affairs of households, which then become members of the broader society. They include marriage, divorce, bequests, and inheritance. Islam establishes some laws concerning larger-scale social matters. For example, zakat regulations exist to fight poverty, and the prohibition on excessive interest protects against the emergence of a permanent gap between the rich and the poor. Across the centuries, these are perhaps the most important factors that shape all types of societies. I offer the above as examples. There are perhaps others still, which I have forgotten to explain fully.

In summary, we can conclude that Islam establishes all of these matters. The laws of Islam - meaning both the manifold principles for individual living as well as the regulations for communal life – are equitable. As long as we human beings are not angels but are rather made of blood and bones, none of these laws will change. They exist for the sake of individual and social salvation.

We continue. What about the matters that fall beyond the scope of established religious laws? We can manage them in ways that are appropriate to our times as long as we do not violate any set religious laws. We may nowadays use ijti-

had - based on consultation with experts in their respective fields - to establish regulations, just like other countries do. Furthermore, if other states already have desirable regulations and legal systems, then we Muslims have the right to borrow from them. No nation or state has a monopoly over the products of wisdom. We have the right to borrow good regulations that do not conflict with the aims of our religion, whether from Britain, America, Russia, France, or Switzerland. After all, non-Islamic states have similarly imitated or borrowed from the constitutions of earlier and/or more intelligent states.

Still, our Muslim community should avoid the blind acceptance of just any foreign model. Whether we borrow from others or develop new ideas, our ijtihad must always position the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah as the criteria by which we determine what should be used and what should be eliminated.

Islam and "Democracy?"

Oftentimes, people make the following argument. "In a secular democratic country where the government truly represents the people, all religions can be incorporated into the state, into each law used within the state, and into each policy conducted by the state. As long as the majority of parliamentarians hold religious political positions, then all parliamentary decisions will also take on a religious character. As long as the majority of parliamentarians hold Islamic political positions, then the parliament will not implement even one non-Islamic proposal..."

Okay, but if – by chance – the majority of parliamentarians are religiously neutral nationalists who do not think that religious regulations are worth a penny even though they identify as Muslim, then what will happen? What happens if the majority, or 100 percent, of parliamentarians do not hold Is-

lamic political positions even though their mouths say that they are Muslim? We must repeat once again that our Muslim community's outlook is that Islam is not merely an addition or something extra that must be incorporated into the state. Rather, according to our outlook, the state must become a tool for Islam. It is on this point that the Islamic and other outlooks differ.

Perhaps, someone will then say, "Isn't Islamic democratic in nature?" Islam's democratic nature means that Islam is against arbitrary despotism and absolutism. However, it does not mean that an independent Islamic state delegates all matters to the public assembly for deliberation. An independent Islamic state does not need to wait for parliamentary consultation before it decides on the foundation for governance, and it need not wait for the parliament's blessing on whether it is necessary to eliminate alcohol or not, whether it is necessary to prohibit gambling and obscenity or not, whether it is necessary to eradicate superstitions and idolatry or not, and so on. No! These issues do not fall under the scope of parliamentary deliberation. The parliament may certainly discuss *how* to implement all of these laws. It has authority only over their technical execution. If a principle and its foundation are already firm, then they must not and cannot be re-made. They must not depend on the lottery of that famous "simple majority" system. They cannot and must not be surrendered to the tides that rise and fall along with state politics.

Democracy is good! However, an Islamic state system does not leave all matters to the mercy of democratic institutions. Across the centuries, the democratic process has already demonstrated some of its positive characteristics. However, it is not free from a variety of dangerous weaknesses. Our Muslim community is sufficiently familiar with how democracy can degenerate into "party-ocracy" or even full "clique-ocracy," with everyone attacking, defending, and practicing

magic tricks behind the scenes. As a result, Islam does not wish to pin all decisions and regulations on this thing called democracy.

Islam has its own understanding and has its own character as well. Islam is not 100% democratic, but neither is it 100% autocratic or dictatorial. Islam is.... well, Islam. We can view it as a synthesis (life-guide) of these two antitheses. This synthesis provides sufficient flexibility to launch a revolution for matters that indeed require a revolution, but it also possesses several anchoring elements – several eternal and divine pillars that do not change – that protect it from floating away in whichever way the waves or currents of the era might carry it.

Islam only has the chance to stick to its teachings a little bit here and there *if* it receives a simple majority of votes and *if* the parliamentary system is not dissolved in some rush. Such an Islam is neither fertile nor flourishing. If it is okay, I use Hitler's concept here – that is Islam "in protective custody." That is not the ultimate goal behind the Muslim community's struggle.

Dualism in Caesaropapism¹⁰

We thus never defend the "Caesaropapism" that is said to have existed in Turkey during the Ottoman Era, for example. As I mentioned above, the title "caliph" or "sultan-caliph" is not an absolute requirement or a necessary condition for Islamic governance. We do not need to discuss the origins of Caesaropapism and whether it came from the Byzantines or somewhere else here. Nor do we need to discuss whether the Caesaropapist theory of the Islamic state is merely an empty concept that continues to linger, thanks to the oft-repeat-

¹⁰ Caesaropapism refers to a political system that places control of the state and the church (or other religious institution) in the hands of a single individual. – trans.

ed warning of Snouck Hurgronje, in Orientalist and Western political circles. Here, we only need to confirm that Caesaropapism is *not* an Islamic teaching or political concept. In an earlier section of this essay, I already explained briefly what the unity of religion and the state means according to Islam.

The Caesaropapist theory can only persist as long as people still believe that religion exists here, the state exists there, and then they are forcibly united. The Islamic concept is not like that. To repeat yet again: state affairs are an integral part of Islam itself.

Islam does not recognize a “head of religion” like the Pope or the Patriarch. Islam only recognizes the Prophet Muhammad as the “head of religion.” He has already passed away and has no successor. Indeed, there will never be a successor. This only and ultimate “head of religion” left behind a system named Islam that the Muslim community must follow and protect so that the “worldly leaders” who hold power in Muslim states (sultans, caliphs, commanders of the faithful, presidents, etc) implement it. The Prophet’s Companions who held state power after his death – like Abu Bakr and others – did not double as the “head of religion.” They were only worldly leaders who ran their governments according to the system left by the true “head of religion,” i.e. that final Messenger. They were no more than that.

Whereas a Caesaropapist government produces dualism, conflict between “worldly” and “religious” affairs, and tension between the will of society and the will of religion, these dynamics do not emerge from Islamic teachings. Islam does not permit such conflict. Despite what some groups maintain, it is not possible for “genuine Islam” to conflict with the peace and prosperity of humanity. It is quite the opposite. The will of Islam must be implemented for the prosperity, peace, and progress of society. Those matters that might conflict with religious teachings are not human prosperity,

peace, or progress but rather human desires, negative thinking, prejudices, and lusts.

Other groups, which like to proclaim that they are not against genuine Islam (assuming they understand genuine Islam), will certainly not deny this. If conflict arises between the will of society and the will of Islam, then there are two possibilities: either the will of society is wrong, or its "Islam" is not genuine Islam but rather a made-up Islam. There is absolutely no place for dualism and such conflicts in Islamic governance. Moreover, if a Muslim who already has the opportunity and strength of an Atatürk – for example - encounters a Caesaropapist system that produces such dualism and conflict, then he cannot allow that Caesaropapism to continue. Muslims must adopt the attitude that, if human laws and desires truly contradict with the laws and desires of genuine Islam, then the divine laws and desires must stand. It is the human laws and desires that must fall.

Praise to God! For better or for worse, Islam does not call for Caesaropapism. Islam does not call for dualism, and Islam does not call for the Atatürk model of "freedom" that people often demand.

Raziqism

Some decades ago, Sheikh Abdel Raziq published a book entitled *Al-Islam Wausulul Hukum (Islam and the Foundations of Governance)*, and half of our people now cite that book's thesis as their support. There are even those who make their arguments purely by reciting Sheikh Abdel Raziq's opinion as their own, even though they themselves have not read the book nor do they even know what Abdel Raziq said. They feel that it is enough to rely on a Western scholar's book, written in a European language, which summarizes his ideas in four or five lines. They can find such a summary in Max Meyerhof's *Le Monde Islamique* (1926) among other works.

Although they would not dare do so, they should investigate the Sheikh's writings before they take his words as their rationale.

The Sheikh divides his book into three parts and further splits each of those parts into three chapters. The first part explains the linguistic and conceptual meaning of "caliphate" as well as the caliph's rights according to the 'ulama. It investigates the "caliphate" issue from a sociological and an Islamic historical perspective. It examines everything in great detail and concludes that there is no clear or straightforward religious reason to establish a caliphate.

He reaches this conclusion in a strange way. First, he presents the definition of the caliphate that religious experts generally use. He provides the following definition, "The caliph, as the successor to the Prophet, is the head of both religious and worldly matters." Next, he highlights some events from Islamic world history related to the caliphate issue. Here, he gets the opportunity to point out how ugly the practices of several past caliphs were. He presents the poetry of a man who excessively praises a certain caliph. It reads, "Do as you desire and not what is desired by fate. Then order it. You are the only one who has the power." He selects such ugly historical events and cites poetry from books such as *The Unique Necklace* in order to erase the definition of caliphate intended by religious experts. Abdel Raziq does not reproach or criticize this poetry for violating the true will of religion. No. Rather, he uses it as evidence to eliminate the need for a caliphate in the contemporary Muslim community. His approach resembles that of a person who says, "Erase all national laws because someone has violated those rules." It seems that people do not hesitate to use such circular arguments.

Next, Sheikh Abdel Raziq counters the hadith that religious experts cite as the foundation for establishing a caliphate.

“Whoever dies without having pledged allegiance to a caliph dies in *jahiliyya* (pagan ignorance).” According to Sheikh Raziq, there is indeed a hadith to that effect, but the Prophet did not say those words to order the establishment of a caliphate. The Sheikh instead interprets the hadith to mean that, if there is a caliph, then we must pledge allegiance. If there happens to be no caliph, then that is no problem. Hence, if someone says, “Close the door to your house tightly at night,” it does not mean – according to Professor Abdel Raziq’s logic – that our house should have a door. The order is to close the door only if there happens to be a door. Otherwise, just let the house hang gaping open at night so that a thief can easily come and go.

Similarly, we have already said that the Prophet did not issue a special, firm order to appoint one person, one imam, or one caliph for our Muslim community because, with or without a prophetic command, there is surely already such a leader. It is not merely the consensus of the ‘ulama but the global consensus - plus Sheikh Abdel Raziq himself - that has already confirmed the impossibility of achieving salvation and social tranquility without regulations. And, these regulations will not possibly be effective unless there is a ruler who ensures their effectiveness. On page 34 of his book, Sheikh Raziq himself states, “However, we do not know of even one religious scholar who denies that a community needs a variety of laws, regardless of their form. Nor does anyone dispute that human beings cannot achieve peace in a chaotic condition.” In order to strengthen his position, Sheikh Abdel Raziq then cites a statement that Abu Bakr made when the Prophet had just recently passed away. “Muhammad has died. And this religion absolutely requires someone who will sustain it.” If we all already acknowledge this statement, then why must we continue to make a fuss about the “separation” or “unification” of religion and the state?

We should not take issue with the particular title held by

the leader of the Muslim community. We must not elongate the philosophical debate over whether or not the Rightfully Guided Caliphs had the right to call themselves caliphs or successors to the Prophet. We do not feel the need to continue debating the meaning of the above-quoted hadith "whoever dies." Et cetera. It is already clear that:

1. Every society or state needs a ruler, whether or not the Prophet issued a firm command.
2. The religion of Islam establishes certain principles and regulations that a ruler must implement.

To repeat again what I already stressed once or twice before examining Raziq's book: it does not matter what we name a state. What matters is that God's laws prevail. Regardless of how harsh Raziq's words are or how modern his opinions appear in his section on the caliphate, not a single sentence can be used to defend Atatürk's actions in Turkey, as we already discussed in the previous sections.

In another part of his book, Sheikh Raziq reveals his philosophy about prophecy and kingship. He states that a king's work and a prophet's work are two different things. If the Prophet performed a king's work, then it was *not* – according to Raziq – part of his role as prophet. He advances this thesis with a shaky hesitation. This thesis is not well known among nor recognized by the Islamic schools of law. Nevertheless, he thinks it is an acceptable opinion. Raziq even declared, "I do not consider that opinion to be a sign of disbelief." However, after a long discussion, he also said, "But, it is a very unlikely thought."

While reading his book, we repeatedly get the impression that he advances all of his arguments in a less than decisive manner. In a few places, he reproaches some regulations as archaic but does not explain which exactly are archaic and must be changed. Is the required laws' substance itself ar-

chaic, or is it merely the old-fashioned methods that old governments use to implement them that is archaic?

The Council of 'Ulama asked, "Is Sheikh Raziq capable of dividing Islam into two parts and then letting go of those religious laws associated with worldly affairs? Can he cast certain Qur'anic verses and parts of the Prophet's Sunnah "outside the fence?"¹¹ He responded, "that he absolutely did not say anything of that sort, and he would never utter a statement that even resembles that." See *Al Manaar*, Vol 26.5: 367. Upon further examination, page 84 of his book re-confirms this testimony: "Indeed, the Prophet conveyed some foundational principles, manners, and general laws concerned primarily with daily life and community matters. Among them were criminal and commercial laws as well as manners for walking, sitting, etc." Sheikh Raziq does not deny any of this. Furthermore, his testimony proves that, according to his ideology, Sheikh Raziq never wants to cast all of religion's worldly regulations "outside of the fence." His position on this is clear and firm. How then can a Kemalist use Raziq's opinion to support Atatürk's actions? After all, as the Turkish feminist writer Halide Edib Hanum has also explained, Atatürk's actions have already "cast the laws of Islam outside the fence" and even imperiled Islamic living (fetter the religious life) in Turkey.

There is a proverb that reads, "A drowning man will grab onto anything he can, even if it is his own foot...."

Sheikh Raziq next states on page 84 of his book that, if we collected all religious regulations relating to worldly matters, their total would only constitute a small fraction of what a

¹¹ The phrase "outside the fence" (*ke luar pagar*) is a literal translation of the original Indonesian. While its meaning is not particularly clear, Natsir seems to use it here to denote "beyond the jurisdiction of the state." – trans.

modern nation needs in terms of constitutional and political principles. Agreed! There are indeed only a few, as I already stated in one of the earlier sections of this essay. God's revelation does not, in fact, establish many regulations at all. However, those few matters are absolutely necessary in all states – whether they are modern or not – for society and the state's own salvation. The focus of conversation is not whether they are many or only few in number but rather whether those "few" regulations will be implemented or "thrown away." In our opinion, their small number is never a rebuke of Islam. Rather, it is an extension of God's mercy to His servants, who live in time periods with their own characteristics and requirements.

To re-iterate: for issues beyond those few set matters, the Muslim community has the full freedom to exercise *ijtihad* and to consult one another to create the new approaches that our times and contexts require. Abdel Raziq makes a similar statement in the conclusion of his work. He writes, "There is absolutely nothing in Islam that prohibits Muslims from competing with other communities in sociology, politics, and all other fields."

My objections to Raziq's writings lie primarily in how he advances his thesis in equivocal and vague ways. When he states that judicial matters do not fall under the jurisdiction of religion, he does not clarify which matters are unrelated to religion, what the function of the *qadi* (religious judge) is, or which laws should become foundational in implementing the legal process itself. When he claims that our Muslim community must dispose of the old-fashioned system, he does not clarify whether he seeks to dispose of all the oppression, insubordination, and idolatry that clung to some of the caliphates found in history (as depicted in various books of poetry that contradict religion), whether God's revelation must become the basis for organizing an Islamic state, or whether it is something else altogether. When he calls for racing to con-

struct a modern government according to the results of reason-based ijtiḥād on page 103, he does not clarify whether we should do so in an unlimited fashion or whether we should remember and pay attention to clear, eternal religious laws.

Some sections of his essay give us the impression that, every time he uses the term “caliphate,” he imagines the caliphates that he used to read about in history books and that, in reality, are prohibited by Islamic laws. These are apparently what he wishes to throw away. When he mentions “the state,” he imagines all the modern features of a 20th century state such as a parliament, ministries, budgets, and various institutions that, in reality, absolutely do not conflict with Islamic religious desires. Rather, Islam approves of them. According to our ijtiḥād, they do not violate any eternal rules. Even our Sheikh very much encourages such ijtiḥād.

Whether we want them or not, words sometimes arise in our heart. “He is our Sheikh. If this is his aim, then why did he try so hard to philosophize about prophetic Medina and the caliphate? Why do his ideas swing back and forth until people become confused and must ponder what he really said?” We cannot read the contents of Raziq’s heart. We can only ascertain a man’s position from the words that he says. According to his testimony in front of the Egyptian ‘ulama council that examined his work, he absolutely did not intend that his writings would separate religious teachings into two parts nor did he mean to toss aside even a small fraction of the religious teachings in the Qur’an or the Sunnah. Now, the longer that we read the Sheikh’s – or the Professor’s – writings, the more confused we become because they are vague and contradictory to the point that we do not know what he intended with his endless words.

Let us place the Qur’an in front of us and examine it closely. The Qur’an firmly and clearly explains what Islam – i.e. the Qur’an itself and the prophetic Sunnah - means. Allah states,

“Verily, we send down the Scripture to you with the truth so that you can judge [exercise *ijtihad*] between people in accordance with what God has shown you.” (Qur’an 4:105) Those who “can judge between people” refers to those who hold state power. “So let the followers of the Gospel judge according to what God has sent down in it. Those who do not judge according to what God has revealed are lawbreakers.” (Qur’an 5:47) If those who hold power and have the right to implement the law among a country’s populace do not take God’s laws as their foundation... If they instead follow the lusts and trends of their era and the ever-changing rationalism that knows no limits, then they are not “separating” religion from politics. Rather, they are tossing aside those religious laws.

Allah commands, “Then fight in the path of those who give life in this world and the hereafter. And fight them until there is no more persecution and all worship is devoted to God alone.” (Qur’an 8:39)¹² Elsewhere, Allah commands, “Take alms from their wealth.” (Qur’an 9:103) Here, the taking should be done by the rightful group in power, meaning the state. “Fight those of the People of the Book who do not truly believe in God and in the Day of Judgment, who do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, and who do not obey the rule of justice. Fight until they pay the *jizyah* (poll tax). (Qur’an 9:29) Here, “fighting” does not merely mean waging war and killing. The order is to fight those who do not have religion until they pay the *jizyah* as the above verse states. It is impossible for Muslims to do so as private individuals; only an Islamic state can do this. Accordingly, how can we even consider that an Islamic state must be “neutral” on religious matters or must “stand above all religions?”

¹² Only the second quoted verse is from Qur’an 8:39. The origins of the first verse are unclear. – trans.

These are just a few examples from the dozens of Qur'anic verses that prove to our Muslim community that the religion of Islam is not merely a private matter. Rather, the state is one tool for perfecting the implementation of God's laws for the sake of human peace and salvation. Such an "essential" tool is non-negotiable. This tool enables the Muslim community to work towards pleasing God by fulfilling our obligations and responsibilities to God as well as to all of humankind.

Conclusion

Speaking about Islam as an ideology deepens the understanding of Muhammad's religion across our country. Do the teachings of Islam address state affairs? Are there any provisions listed in the Qur'an or the hadith about the state? If there are, then what type of state does Islam desire? What would the status of law be in such a state? How would such a state implement laws and regulations for the people? We must especially review whether "religion" and "the state" should be united or separated.

If only people were eager to delve into history, then this phrase "Islam as an ideology" would reassure them that Islam is not, in fact, merely a private matter but also attaches importance to communal and state affairs. The Prophet Muhammad, in addition to being God's messenger for overseeing communal worship, also administered a form of government that is admired the world over. Islam once ruled over the majority of the planet. Therefore, even if it seems that speaking about "Islam as an ideology" opens a new chapter, this subject is actually nothing new. It is not merely the result of ijtiḥād practiced by progressive 'ulama. On the contrary, this phrase is already well worn and has existed for thousands of years.

Today, there is much discussion about the concept of the "Islamic state" among Islamic political parties, the 'ulama,

and Muslim intellectuals both in Indonesia and beyond. This trend seems to be an expression of the Muslim soul that has, for so long, been suppressed by the wrath of colonialism in every Muslim country across the globe. Admittedly, there is still not a single country in the world today that can truly be called an Islamic state according to the definition in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The idea is new and still under development. However, the Muslim community can rejoice that there are sparks of fire igniting everywhere.

One thing that we must not forget is that the Muslim community's political aspirations are not of ultimate concern. The state is not the defining limit of the Muslim community's struggle; it is only a tool to perfect the implementation of God's laws for the peace and salvation of humanity. Even if the Indonesian Muslim community fights until it realizes an Islamic state in our country, its struggle will not end there. The Muslim community will continue to fight for the fulfillment of that state, i.e. for prosperity and justice for all of humanity. Moreover, it is destined that the community will only achieve such "prosperity and justice" once the livelihoods and distribution of necessities enable the people to live prosperously and once justice prevails in all matters.

Yet, even when those goals are achieved, the struggle of the Muslim community is still not over. The struggle will only end when the Muslim community has achieved its ultimate aspiration: "God's mercy." This is captured in God's words "for your land is good and your Lord most forgiving." (Qur'an 34:15) What a long journey the Muslim community will travel in its struggle! It will certainly require much time and call for extraordinary patience.

About the Author and Translator

Mohammad Natsir (1908-1993) was a prolific writer and a powerful Islamic politician in 20th century Indonesia. In the 1950s, he served as the national chairman of the Masyumi Party and even served briefly as the country's prime minister. Later in his life, he established the Indonesian Dawah Council (*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia / DDII*), an important Islamic grassroots organization.

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