

## Islamic Caliphate: Conflict of Beliefs in the State System in Indonesia

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### Abstract

*This article aims to describe and discuss the conflict of Islamic beliefs within the state system, with a focus on the concept of the Islamic caliphate (khilafah). Religious conflicts often arise due to differences in interpretation and contextualization of the application of religious laws. The conflicts that arise can lead to negative radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. The emergence of radical movements and terrorism is triggered by beliefs in religion that are believed to be the will of God. The Islamic caliphate, as one form of such movement, has diverse views among Islamic intellectuals, including right-wing extremists, left-wing extremists, and moderates. In this study, a qualitative descriptive method was employed with data collection techniques through literature review. The results and discussion of the article explain that the caliphate is a governing institution in Islam led by a caliph. There are differing views on the obligation to establish the caliphate. Some groups argue that establishing the caliphate is a duty for Muslims, while others reject this view. The views of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia are that Islam does not explicitly require the establishment of an Islamic state or caliphate. Both organizations argue that Muslims have the authority to design a governance system in accordance with the demands of time and place. This article provides an understanding of conflicts in religious beliefs, particularly related to the Islamic caliphate. With a better understanding of these differing views, it is hoped that society can avoid extremism, radicalism, and terrorism, which can threaten the nation and state's well-being.*

**Keywords:** Conflict, Islam, Khilafah, Religion

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the realities of human life is the existence of conflicts. Differences and individual interests are fundamental factors that contribute to conflicts. Among these differences are gender, social and economic strata, legal systems, ethnicities, cultures, religions, beliefs, political ideologies, and different life goals. Conflict can be defined as clashes of various ideologies, beliefs, disagreements, lack of consensus, friction, and even physical fights or armed resistance (NB, 2020).

One particularly sensitive cause of conflict is conflicts rooted in beliefs or religious convictions. Even within the same belief system or religion, differences in interpretations of religious scriptures or divine words often lead to divergent meanings. These differences in beliefs ultimately give rise to conflicts within the religion itself. Such conflicts can occur not only within religious contexts but also in various dimensions of human life. The major problem arises when these beliefs, which are supposed to promote goodness, frequently lead to prolonged conflicts that violate human values.

The emergence of negative radicalism, extremism, and terrorism is the result of beliefs within a religion, where some followers believe that these movements are justified by God. The pinnacle of such movements is the establishment of the Islamic Shariah comprehensively in the governance system, known as the Islamic Caliphate (a state based on Islamic law and social system). Within the intellectual Muslim community, there are different responses to this issue,

which determine their political and religious ideology openly. In this context, some religious communities, such as Hizbut Tahrir, perceive the caliphate as an obligatory Islamic teaching to be implemented as a governance system. On the other hand, others argue that the concept of the caliphate contradicts the national political system in Indonesia (Jauhari et al., 2021).

At least three views and understandings of the caliphate exist: right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism, and moderation. Right-wing extremists believe that the caliphate should be implemented and established to replace the existing governance system, in other words, to enforce Islamic law and teachings. Left-wing extremists view the proponents of the caliphate as rebels and troublemakers who seek to overthrow a legitimate and agreed-upon government (Munawar et al., 2021).

These differences in interpretation and contextualization of laws among these groups make them try to convince the wider society of their understanding. Some individuals understand it well, while others easily justify the concept of the caliphate. Consequently, they often join radical groups and sometimes justify acts of terror as a form of obedience to God. The lack of sources of knowledge and understanding of religion is one of the reasons why they interpret sacred scriptures literally, coupled with excessive fanaticism. Ultimately, this situation can lead to exclusivism, extremism, and even terrorism (Jauhari et al., 2021)

These differing views on the state system attempt to transform the democratic system of Indonesia into an Islamic ideological state. However, this cannot be accepted as it contradicts the national aspirations agreed upon by the Indonesian people. To this day, this conflict of beliefs remains a threat to the country due to its implications for terrorism networks in Indonesia. These doctrines continue to evolve within society. If allowed to persist, it can have dire consequences for the nation's existence and governance (Munawar et al., 2021). Therefore, based on the aforementioned background, the author is interested in delving deeper into the topic of "Islamic Caliphate: Conflict of Beliefs in the State System in Indonesia."

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research employed a qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques conducted through library research. The data collection technique involved gathering various data sources from books, journal articles, and other relevant materials related to the topic under investigation. The researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of these sources to draw conclusions.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The history of the term "khalîfah" and the institution of khilâfah began with the selection of Abu Bakar as the leader to succeed Prophet Muhammad, one day after the Prophet's passing. Successively, Umar bin Khathâb, Uthmân bin`Affân, and `Ali bin Abi Thâlib were chosen. In the matter of khilâfah, there are two main issues: the procedure for their appointment as successors to the Prophet in leading the Muslim community, while neither the Qur'an nor the Prophet's hadîth provided explicit explanations on this matter (Zain, 2019).

The word "khalîfah," which is quite familiar in Indonesia, carries a dual meaning. Khalîfah is understood as the head of state in the governance and Islamic kingdom of the past, with a similar meaning to "sultan." Khalîfah also means the representative of God on Earth. The concept of being a representative of God can be understood in two ways. Firstly, it is embodied

in the position of a sultan or head of state. Secondly, it refers to the function of human beings themselves on Earth as the most perfect creation of God (Zain, 2019).

Caliphate is a governing institution in Islam led by an Islamic leader (khalifah, sultan, or shah). The term "khilafah" in Arabic grammar is a verbal noun that requires an active subject or agent called the caliph. Thus, khilafah refers to a series of actions carried out by someone, namely the person referred to as the caliph. Therefore, there cannot be a khilafah without a khalifah (Ghulam Nabi Ganai, 2001:59). According to this view, the concept of Islam encompasses "din wa ad-daulah" (religion and state) (Sudrajat, 2009).

Linguistically, "khalifah" means representative, successor, or the position of a caliph. This term originates from the word "khalif," which means representative, successor, or ruler. The term khilafah, synonymous with imamah (governance), emerged in the history of Islamic civilization as a political institution. A person who fulfills the function of khilafah is called a caliph. The plural forms are "khulafa" or "khalaif." Khalifah can be understood as someone who replaces another's position and takes over their place in various matters. Khalifah can also mean "as-Sulthân al-A`zhâm" (the greatest or highest power) (Zain, 2019).

In the Quran and Hadith, various references to leadership can be found, including the primary task of humans as Khalifah, the duties and responsibilities of leaders, the obligations of leaders, the obligations of the community towards leaders, and even the prohibition of seeking positions of authority for a Muslim. These matters are expressed by Allah and His messenger in various forms of words such as Khalîfah, Mâlik, Wâli, Shulthân, Ulil Amri, Imâm, Râ`in, and Amîr (Zain, 2019).

History continues to unfold, and throughout the ages, the caliphate has indeed had positive impacts. Among them are the expansion of Islamic territories, advancements in knowledge and civilization, and the emergence of many Muslim thinkers during the era of the caliphate whose works have been widely adopted by modern thinkers. However, the implementation of the caliphate system has also been marked by the loss of human lives, both of those from different religions due to territorial expansion motives, and of groups differing from the desires of the ruling caliph. The majority of these suppressed groups were from within the Muslim community itself (Abdullah, 2021).

### **The Law of Caliphate (khilafah)**

According to one view, establishing the khilafah is an obligation for all Muslims. In the book "al-Fikr al-Islami," it is emphasized that it is a fatal mistake to interpret the understanding of "wajib kifayah" as the exemption of obligation for some Muslims due to the actions of other Muslims, even if the obligation has not been realized. According to their understanding, the correct interpretation of "wajib kifayah" is that if some individuals truly fulfill that obligation, then the obligation is exempted for others. This means that establishing the Islamic khilafah is a "wajib kifayah." As long as the Islamic khilafah has not been established, every accountable Muslim individual has the obligation to establish it until the khilafah is truly established. Therefore, establishing the khilafah is a "wajib kifayah," but because the ability of the Islamic movement to establish the khilafah is not sufficient, the "wajib kifayah" becomes a "wajib ain." It is even stated more explicitly that the tolerance limit in Islam for establishing the khilafah is three days. Since the khilafah has collapsed since 1924, the efforts to establish the khilafah are not only a "fardh" but have become "qadha" (PS et.,al 2018).

According to Hizb al-Tahrir, the obligation to establish the khilafah is the crown of all obligations imposed by Allah on the Muslim community. Establishing the khilafah is the greatest obligation in religion. Meanwhile, those who do not intend to establish the khilafah will incur sins, even committing the greatest act of disobedience. This sin not only affects Muslims in

general but also the dictatorial rulers who obstruct movements attempting to establish the khilafah, as well as the non-Muslims who colonize Muslim lands (PS et.,al 2018).

On the other hand, there are also Islamic groups that reject the notion of the obligatory nature of establishing the caliphate, both in terms of reason and Sharia. Among those who reject this notion is al-Asamm, who comes from the Mu'tazilah group. According to them, what is obligatory is to implement the Sharia laws because, in their view, if Muslims have established justice and implemented the laws of Allah, the existence of an imam is no longer needed, including the establishment of the khilafah.

However, the majority of scholars believe that the obligation to appoint or choose a leader does not necessarily apply to selecting a government system or leadership system. There is a fundamental difference. The Quran and Hadith clearly specify the obligation to appoint a leader, but they do not provide detailed instructions regarding the process of selecting a leader and the mechanisms of leadership.

From various opinions, actually the majority of scholars believe that the obligatory nature of appointing or choosing a leader in Islam, as mentioned in the hadith, does not necessarily apply to selecting a government system or leadership system. There is a fundamental difference. The Quran and Hadith clearly specify the obligation to appoint a leader, but they do not provide detailed instructions regarding the process of selecting a leader and the mechanisms of leadership (Abdullah, 2021).

Abdullah (2021) also adds that the problem of the caliphate system also arises in the concept of the qualifications or characteristics of the leader (caliph). There is no historical evidence that indicates the existence of standardized qualifications for a leader that have been strictly adhered to by the Islamic community. The selection of a leader is often influenced by cultural dominance of tribes and political aspects prevailing at that time.

### **Views of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah on Khilafah**

In the context of Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, as the two largest Islamic organizations, also have their perspectives on the concept of khilafah. NU and Muhammadiyah believe that there is no explicit Islamic teaching that obligates its followers to establish an Islamic state or caliphate. According to NU in the Alim Ulama National Consultation held in Jakarta on November 1-2, 2014, decided on several important points regarding the caliphate, as follows:

1. Islam as a comprehensive religion (din syamil kamil) cannot ignore the issues of state and governance in its agenda. Although not in a complete concept, the values and basic principles (mabadi` asasiyyah) of Islam have provided adequate guidance for its followers.
2. Appointing a leader (nashb al-imam) is a legal obligation because human life would be chaotic (fawdla/chaos) without a leader. This is reinforced by statements from several prominent scholars, including: first, Hujjat al-Islam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*: "Religion and state power are twin brothers. Religion is its foundation, while state power is its guardian. Something without a foundation will collapse, and something without a guardian will be wasted." Second, Syaikh al-Islam Taqi al-Din Ibn Taimiyyah in *as-Siyasah al-Syar'iyah fi Ishlah al-Ra'i wa al-Ra'iyah*: "The task of organizing and managing the affairs of the masses (in a government and state) is one of the greatest religious obligations. This is because religion cannot stand upright without the support of the state."
3. Islam does not specify or mandate a specific form of government and governance for its followers. The community is given the freedom to organize and design a system of governance according to the development of time and place. However, the most

important aspect is that a government must protect and ensure its citizens to practice and implement religious teachings and create an environment conducive to prosperity, well-being, and justice.

4. The caliphate, as one of the systems of governance, is a historical fact practiced by the al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun. The Rashidun Caliphate was a model suitable for a time when human life was not yet under the influence of nation-states. At that time, it was highly possible for the Islamic community to live under the caliphate system. However, in the present era, where humanity lives under the influence of nation-states, the caliphate system has lost its relevance for the global Islamic community. In fact, reviving the idea of the caliphate in the present time is utopian.
5. The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) is the result of a noble national agreement among the founding fathers of the nation. NKRI was established to accommodate the diverse elements of the nation in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, and religion. Every element of the nation has an obligation to preserve and strengthen the integrity of NKRI. Therefore, any movement that threatens the unity of NKRI must be opposed as it will cause great damage and division among the society.
6. Muslims should not be trapped in symbols and formalities that appear Islamic, but they must commit themselves to the substance of everything (Hadrawi, 2019).

Muhammadiyah's perspective on the caliphate can be seen from the results of the 2015 Congress, which emphasized Pancasila as "Dār al-'Ahdi wa al-Shahādah" (the abode of covenant and witness). The concept of the caliphate in the perspective of Muhammadiyah scholars is not different from the views of the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) leadership. This was evident in late 2018 when NU and Muhammadiyah decided that the caliphate system would never be applicable in Indonesia due to various reasons. This agreement aimed to achieve mutual benefits and wisdom, both for Muslims and non-Muslims, in living together in harmony.

Additionally, the chairman of Muhammadiyah's Central Leadership, Prof. Syafiq Mughni, stated that the most important aspect in Islam is the application of an Islamic way of life, whether in the form of a khilafah or a nation-state. Syafiq also emphasized that Muhammadiyah does not prioritize the agenda of realizing an Islamic state or khilafah as the main focus of its struggle. In Muhammadiyah, the khilafah is a mandate from Allah for humanity to bring mercy to the universe (Ilham, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

Islam, as a religion, consists of various groups that have their own beliefs. One of these beliefs pertains to the social order of society. Khilafah, as a concept, is believed by some groups to be an obligation, where the entire implementation and rules of life are based on Islamic Sharia. However, in other perspectives and opinions, the khilafah system is not a direct command from Allah and is not an obligation to establish.

Conflicts arising from differences in beliefs within Islam are often exploited by terrorist groups as a justification for considering the khilafah as the ultimate solution to all problems. This is evident in the beliefs of organizations like Hizbut Tahrir. However, the main problem is that terrorist groups use it to carry out acts of terror that victimize innocent people. This extreme view needs to be rejected as it contradicts human values and even the values of Islam itself. Therefore, Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah reject the notion of khilafah as an obligation. They emphasize the importance of maintaining a diverse and inclusive society, where

the government system protects and guarantees the rights of its citizens to practice their religious teachings while fostering an environment of prosperity, welfare, and justice.

It is crucial to promote understanding, dialogue, and education to counter radical ideologies and foster a more moderate and inclusive interpretation of Islam. By rejecting extremist views and embracing the values of compassion, tolerance, and respect for human dignity, it is possible to create a society that upholds the principles of Islam while promoting peace, harmony, and coexistence.

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