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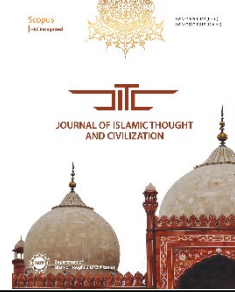
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**The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama' (NU) Diplomacy in Promoting Islam
Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin Exegesis to Strengthen Indonesian State-Religion Concepts:
A Study of Gus Dur's Thought**

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Abstractct

This research aims to examine the role of *Nahdlatul Ulama'*s (NU) diplomacy in spreading the values of *Islam Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* to strengthen the conceptions of state and religion in Indonesia. This study is beneficial in understanding the fundamental religious organization (NU) that can contribute to interfaith and international dialogue and cooperation, support social harmony, and reinforce an inclusive and tolerant national foundation in Indonesia. Therefore, the current study deployed a qualitative research methodology. The analysis was conducted using data collected through a literature review, in-depth interviews with leaders and members of NU, and a content analysis of videos and netizen comments on the NU Online YouTube channel regarding discussions by Gus Dur about the formation of an Islamic state. This study also explores the genealogy of NU, the state and religious conceptions advocated by NU, and the biography and views of Gus Dur on the topic. The findings indicate that NU, through *Gus Dur's* thinking and an inclusive diplomatic approach, has actively promoted an interpretation of Islam oriented towards universal values such as justice, peace, and tolerance. NU reflects this by actively promoting Islam *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* as the foundation for a stronger, pluralistic, and democratic state. The study also examined the polemics of state and religious conceptions that trigger public discussions and explores the NU differences through cross-faith dialogue and understanding.

Keywords: diplomacy, Gus Dur, Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, *Nahdlatul ulama'* (NU), state and religion

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Introduction

Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has faced complex challenges in integrating religious values with state principles. *Nahdlatul Ulama'* (NU), the largest religious organization in Indonesia, plays a strategic role in shaping a moderate Islam that can synergize with the concept of a modern state. However, many are still unaware of the importance of NU's diplomacy in instilling the Islamic values of *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin*, which upholds mercy for all creation—the political thoughts of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, better known as Gus Dur, is one of the main foundations of this effort. *Gus Dur* was a religious leader and a statesman whose vision of pluralism and tolerance has inspired many. With the rise of radicalization and polarization in various parts of the world, Gus Dur's approach offers an alternative that prioritizes both harmony and peace. This research explores how NU's diplomacy, through *Gus Dur's* thoughts, can strengthen the intriguing relationship between the state and religion in Indonesia. The findings of this study are expected to enlighten many about NU's great potential in creating a harmonious and inclusive society amidst increasingly complex political and social dynamics.¹

This research is centralized around the significant contribution of *Nahdlatul Ulama'* (NU) in fostering the Islamic values of *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* to strengthen the conception of state and religion in Indonesia. The research problem formulated is how *Nahdlatul Ulama's* diplomacy can play a role in fostering the Islamic values of *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* and how this can enhance the abiding relationship between the state and religion in Indonesia. The main objective of this research is to understand the concrete contribution of *Nahdlatul Ulama'* in creating harmony between religious values and state principles, mainly through the political thoughts of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (*Gus Dur*). This research aims to achieve several benefits. Firstly, it aims to identify the strategic role of NU in strengthening the synergy between religion and the state through diplomatic approaches. Secondly, this research will provide in-depth insights into how the values of Islam *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* can be integrated into public policy and government practices to create a harmonious and inclusive society. Thirdly, this research aims to serve as a reference for policymakers in developing strategies based on moderate and tolerant religious values.² Thus, this research contributes academically and offers practical benefits for strengthening the concept of state and religion in Indonesia.

The significance of presidential decrees and their role in legal politics has been extensively examined in various contexts. Ahmad and Fadillah (2021),³ in “Presidential Decree as the Norm in

¹Warren S Goldstein, “On the Religious State, the Secular State, and the Religion-Neutral State,” *Critical Research on Religion* 10, no. 1 (2022): 3–6, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20503032221081837>; Johny C Ruhullessin and Yohanes Parihala, “Being an Indonesian Christian: Exploration of a Theology of Nationalism in the History of the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence on 17 August 1945,” *Hts Teologiese Studies-Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.V77I4.6891>.

²B Intan, “Religious Violence and the Ministry of Religion: ‘Public Religion’ in the Pancasila-Based State of Indonesia,” *International Journal of Public Theology* (2019): 227-246, https://brill.com/view/journals/ijpt/13/2/article-p227_7.xml. <https://sci-hub.se/10.1163/15697320-12341573>; A T Kuru, “Islam, Catholicism, and Religion-State Separation: An Essential or Historical Difference?,” *International Journal of Religion* 1, no. 1 (2020): 91–104, <https://doi.org/10.33182/ijor.v1i1.982>; Goldstein, “On the Religious State, the Secular State, and the Religion-Neutral State.”

³J Ahmad and N Fadillah, “Presidential Decree as the Norm in Legal Politics (A Comparative of the Presidential Decree in Tunisia and Indonesia during Soekarno and Abdurrahman Wahid),” *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 21, no. 2 (2021): 163–181, <https://doi.org/10.30631/alrisalah.v21i2.897>.

Legal Politics: A Comparative Study of the Presidential Decree in Tunisia and Indonesia during Soekarno and Abdurrahman Wahid,” provide a detailed comparative analysis, highlighting the historical and political influences on presidential decrees in Tunisia and Indonesia. Despite the comprehensive nature of their study, they fall short in exploring the long-term effects of these decrees on current legal systems. Rusydiyah (2020),⁴ in her work “Social Education through Digital Literacy among Indonesian Female Muslim Activists: The Experience of Abdurrahman Wahid's Daughters,” focuses on the social and educational effects of Abdurrahman Wahid's initiatives, particularly emphasizing digital literacy. However, the study lacks an in-depth analysis of how these educational initiatives influence broader societal structures and political frameworks. Ghofur (2017)⁵ investigates the “Implications of Democratization towards Deformalization of Islamic Law in Indonesia,” concentrating on Abdurrahman Wahid's thoughts. While this research offers valuable insights into the intersection of democratization and Islamic law, it does not sufficiently address the contemporary applications of Wahid's philosophies in modern Indonesia. Anis and Yuliarti (2016),⁶ through “The Implementation of Abdurrahman Wahid's Vision in Leadership to Create a Pluralistic Muslim Society in Indonesia: A Sufism Perspective and Discourse Analysis,” delved into Wahid's vision of a pluralistic society. Their study is rich in historical context but lacks a forward-looking perspective on how Wahid's vision can be operationalized in today's political climate. Rochmat (2014)⁷ explores, “The Fiqh Paradigm for the Pancasila State: Abdurrahman Wahid's Thoughts on Islam and the Republic of Indonesia,” providing a theological perspective on Wahid's integration of Islamic principles with Indonesian state ideology. However, the study does not address the practical challenges of implementing such a paradigm in a diverse and modern society. Given these gaps, the proposed research titled “Nahdlatul Ulama's Diplomacy in Cultivating Islamic Values of *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin*”⁸ for Strengthening the Conception of State and Religion in Indonesia (Political Thought of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid-Gus Dur),” aims to fill these knowledge gaps by examining how *Nahdlatul Ulama's* diplomatic efforts can actualize Wahid's political thoughts in contemporary Indonesia. This study explored the practical implications of Wahid's vision, particularly in promoting a harmonious relationship between state and religion, thereby, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of his political and religious legacy.⁹

⁴E F Rusydiyah, “Social Education through Digital Literacy among Indonesian Female Muslim Activists the Experience of Abdurrahman Wahid's Daughters,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 1 (2020): 210–47, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jiis.2020.14.1.210-247>.

⁵A Ghofur, “The Implications of Democratization towards Deformalization of Islamic Law in Indonesia: Study on Abdurrahman Wahid's Thoughts,” *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology* 8, no. 6 (2017): 70–84, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85026204673&partnerID=40&md5=c0a3683c8220b328ed1bf6113f3115c6>.

⁶M Y Anis and M S Yuliarti, “The Implementation of Abdurrahman Wahid's Vision in Leadership to Create a Pluralistic Muslim Society in Indonesia: A Sufism Perspective and Discourse Analysis,” *Advanced Science Letters* 22, no. 12 (2016): 4524–4527, <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2016.8209>.

⁷S Rochmat, “The Fiqh Paradigm for the Pancasila State: Abdurrahman Wahid's Thoughts on Islam and the Republic of Indonesia,” *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 52, no. 2 (2014): 309–329, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2014.522.309-329>.

⁸The concept of “*Rahmatan lil 'Alamin*” is a fundamental principle in Islam, meaning “mercy for all creation.” It highlights the universal and inclusive nature of Islam, aiming to promote peace, justice, and compassion for all beings.

⁹D Wanto, J A Jamin, and R Ali, “Asserting Religiosity in Indonesian Muslim Urban Communities through Islamic Education,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 12, no. 2 (2022): 116–35, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.122.09>; A H Ridwan et al., “Implementing and

2. Methodology

The methodology used in this research aims to analyze the role of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) in disseminating the values of Islam *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamīn* as a means to strengthen the conceptualization of state and religion in Indonesia, focusing particularly on reinterpreting the thoughts of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur). This study adopts an in-depth qualitative approach to understand the complexities of interactions between religious and political values in Indonesia. First, the research delves into the genealogy of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) through the analysis of historical documents and interviews with key figures in the NU.¹⁰ This involves the examination of archives, publications, and official documents related to the history and development of the NU. Additionally, the study examines NU's conception of state and religion, focusing on *Gus Dur*'s views and teachings. This analysis is carried out through a review of existing literature and content analysis of speeches, writings, and other public materials produced by *Gus Dur*. The goal is to identify how NU, through *Gus Dur*, interprets the relationship between state structures and religious demands. Lastly, this study aims to investigate the biography of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid to gather insights into how *Gus Dur*'s personal experiences and policies have influenced NU's policies and directions regarding state and religious issues. This research utilizes primary and secondary sources and analyses of published biographies to establish the argument.

Moreover, the current study examined the controversies surrounding the conception of state and religion through case studies related to media content, particularly transcriptions and netizen comments on the NU Online YouTube channel featuring *Gus Dur*'s videos titled 'Is It Necessary to Create an Islamic State?'. The study also employs sentiment analysis and discourse analysis to interpret how the public and NU followers respond to the ideas presented in these videos. The research explores NU's diplomacy in propagating the values of Islam *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin*. This involves studies on initiatives and programs undertaken by the NU that reflect the principles of Islam as a mercy to all. The analysis examined how NU interacts with various governmental and non-governmental entities domestically and internationally, and its influence on public policy and international diplomacy. Data collection methods involve triangulation techniques to ensure the accuracy and depth of analysis, including in-depth interviews, document studies, media analysis, and observation. Data analysis uses a grounded theory approach to identify major themes and construct a data-based theory.

3. Discussion and Results

3.1. Biography of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid

K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, commonly known as *Gus Dur*, was a key figure in the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU)¹¹ and significantly influenced the relationship between religion and the state in

Interpreting Fazlur Rahman's Islamic Moderation Concept in the Indonesian Context," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 12, no. 2 (2022): 58–73, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.122.05>.

¹⁰S Katz, "Qualitative-Based Methodology to Teaching Qualitative Methodology in Higher Education," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (2015): 297-311, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1093720>; J Smith and F Dunworth, "Qualitative Methodology," in J. Valsiner, and K. Connolly (eds.), *Handbook of Developmental Psychology* (London: Thousand Oaks, 2003), 78.

¹¹*Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) is a major Islamic organisation in Indonesia, recognised for its traditionalist approach and considerable impact in religious, educational, and political spheres. Established in 1926, NU has been instrumental in shaping religious discourse, advocating for religious moderation, and participating in socio-political activities.

Indonesia.¹² Born on August 4, 1940, in Denanyar, Jombang, East Java, he came from a highly respected religious family. The title “Gus” in Javanese culture denotes the son of a kyai, and *Gus Dur* was the eldest of six children. His father, K.H. Abdul Wahid Hasyim, was Indonesia's first minister of Religious Affairs and played a key role in drafting the Jakarta Charter. His grandfather, K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, was a revered leader who founded both the Tebu Ireng Islamic boarding school and *Nahdlatul Ulama*. *Gus Dur*'s maternal lineage was equally distinguished, as his mother, Ny Hj. Solehah, was the daughter of K.H. Bisri Syamsuri, who founded the Denanyar Islamic boarding school. *Gus Dur* received his early education in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, before studying at various Islamic boarding schools, where he quickly excelled.¹³ He was an avid reader, self-taught in English, and later pursued higher education at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Disillusioned with the curriculum, *Gus Dur* left Al-Azhar and continued his studies at the University of Baghdad, earning a degree in Arabic Literature. Upon returning to Indonesia, *Gus Dur* became deeply involved in NU and other NGOs, eventually leading the NU for three terms. His political career peaked in 1999 when he became President of Indonesia, although he was removed from office 20 months later because of allegations of embezzlement and controversial policies. Despite this, Gus Dur remained active in both politics and religious affairs until his death.¹⁴

3.2. The Genealogy of *Nahdlatul Ulama*' (NU)

Nahdlatul Ulama' (NU) is a long-established organization that has become Indonesia's largest Islamic organization that was founded on January 31, 1926. NU resulted from negotiations among religious leaders and scholars at the residence of K.H. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah in Surabaya. Its purpose was to preserve traditional Islamic values by creating a dedicated space.¹⁵ Previously, traditional Islam had been already engaged in similar efforts, as evidenced by the actions of K.H. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah and K.H. Mas Mansyur with the establishment of *Nahdlatul Wathan*, or “National Awakening,” in 1916. *Nahdlatul Wathan* operated a madrasah housed in a large, multi-story building in Surabaya, which had branches in several other regions, including Malang, Semarang, Jombang, and others. In 1918, K.H. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah founded a cooperative for

¹²Rosidi Rosidi, “Dakwah Multikultural Di Indonesia Studi Pemikiran Dan Gerakan Dakwah Abdurrahman Wahid (Multicultural Da'wah In Indonesia Study of Abdurrahman Wahid's Da'wah Thought and Movement)” *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 13, no. 2 (2013): 481–500, <https://doi.org/10.24042/AJSK.V13I2.708>; Greg Barton, *Abdurrahman Wahid, Muslim Democrat, Indonesian President: A View from the Inside* (UNSW Press 2002), 125–135; Fatkhur Rohman, “Intellectual Tradition and Openness Think K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid (Study of k.h. Abdurrahman Wahid Thought Figures),” *JHSS (Journal of Humanities and Social Studies)* 6, no. 3 (2022): 314–321, <https://doi.org/10.33751/jhss.v6i3.6387>; Benyamin Fleming Intan, “Islam and Politics in Indonesia: The Political Thought of Abdurrahman Wahid,” *International Journal of Phytoremediation* 21, no. 1 (1999): 339–352, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596419908721191>.

¹³Barton, *Abdurrahman Wahid, Muslim Democrat, Indonesian President: A View from the Inside*; Raha Bistara and Farkhan Fuady, “The Islam Wasathiyah of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid in the Islamic Political Arena,” *Journal of Islamic Civilization* 4, no. 2 (2022): 125–135, <https://doi.org/10.33086/jic.v4i2.3611>.

¹⁴Rochmat, “The Fiqh Paradigm for the Pancasila State: Abdurrahman Wahid's Thoughts on Islam and the Republic of Indonesia,” 309–329.

¹⁵Khoirun Niam, “The Discourse of Muslim Intellectuals And 'Ulama' In Indonesia: A Historical Overview,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 4, no. 2 (2010): 287–316, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2010.4.2.287-316>; Ismatu Ropi, “Al-Islām Wa al-Madd Wa al-Jazr Fī al-'Alāqāt Bayn al-Dīn Wa al-Dawlah Fī Indonesia (Islam and the ebb and flow of religion-state relations in Indonesia),” *Studia Islamika* 23, no. 2 (2016): 335–71, <https://doi.org/10.15408/SDI.V23I2.3715>.

traders named *Nahdlatul Tujjar*, or “Traders' Awakening.” These two organizations eventually laid the groundwork for establishing *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU).

In the 1920s, the debate between traditionalist Muslims and Islamic reformists intensified. In 1922, the resignation of a madrasah teacher from *Nahdlatul Wathan*, K.H. Mas Mansur, who left to establish and lead the Muhammadiyah reform movement, stirred the traditionalist community. This development did not deter the older generation from continuing their fight. Instead, they remained steadfast in their efforts to preserve traditional Islam. In January 1926, before the Al-Islam Congress, K.H. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah presented the traditionalist view on religious practices on behalf of the Indonesian delegation. However, this proposal was not well-received, as part of the Islamic reformist faction agreed to the “purification,” of Islamic worship practices in Saudi Arabia. This response cornered the traditionalist Muslims, compelling them to champion traditional Islam in their own way. Thus, on January 31, 1926, with a firm resolve, several kiai (Islamic scholars) gathered at the residence of K.H. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah and decided to establish an organization representing the Sunni orthodoxy, *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah*.¹⁶ This organization was officially named *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), translating to “The Awakening of the Ulama.”

3.3. Polemics on the Conception of State and Religion

A nation is composed of diverse individuals,¹⁷ and Indonesia acknowledges six religions: Islam, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Islam, with 87.2% of the population,¹⁸ is the largest religion. Before independence, a significant debate occurred between Soekarno and Muhammad Natsir on the state's relationship with religion. Soekarno, representing nationalists, argued for separation, while Natsir, an Islamic modernist, believed in integrating Islamic principles into governance. This debate resurfaced in the 1945 BPUPKI¹⁹ sessions,²⁰ where factions

¹⁶Alexander R Arifianto, “From Ideological to Political Sectarianism: *Nahdlatul Ulama*, Muhammadiyah, and the State in Indonesia.” *Religion, State and Society* 49, no. 2 (2021): 126–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2021.1902247>; Mutaqin, Zezen Zaenal Mutaqin, “Gus Yahya and the NU's New Path: Note on the 34th Congress,” *Studia Islamika* 29, no. 1 (2022): 205–211. <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v29i1.26627>.

¹⁷I Ketut Ardhana, and Ni Wayan Radita Novi Puspitasari, “Adat Law, Ethics, and Human Rights in Modern Indonesia,” *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023): 443, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040443>; Arifianto, “From Ideological to Political Sectarianism: Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the State in Indonesia,” 126–141.

¹⁸Leni Winami, “The Political Identity of Ulama in the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election.” *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 52, no. 2 (2014): 257–69, <https://doi.org/10.14421/AJIS.2014.522>; Abu Hapsin, “Polemic on Sharia Tourism between Muslim and Christian in Indonesia,” *Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies* 79, no. 2 (2023): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8510>.

¹⁹The Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Independence (Japanese: 独立準備調査会, Hepburn: Dokuritsu Junbi Chōsa-kai, Nihon-shiki: Dokuritu Zyunbi Tyoosa-kai, abbreviated as “BPUPK”), more commonly known as the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence (abbreviated as “BPUPKI”), was an organisation established by the Japanese occupation government in Java. The Japanese military administration, represented by the 16th and 25th Army Commands, approved the formation of the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence on 1 March 1945, as these two commands were responsible for Java (including Madura) and Sumatra. BPUPKI was created solely for these regions, while in *Kalimantan* and Eastern Indonesia, under the control of the Japanese Navy, no similar body was formed.

²⁰Ropi, “Al-Islām Wa al-Madd Wa al-Jazr Fī al-‘Alāqāt Bayn al-Dīn Wa al-Dawlah Fī Indonesia (Islam and the ebb and flow of religion-state relations in Indonesia),” 335–371

disagreed on whether Indonesia should be based on religious ideology or nationalism. The Jakarta Charter, a compromise, reflected these opposing views. On August 18, 1945, just after independence, amendments were made to the Constitution, altering provisions that had tied the state explicitly to Islam. The phrase "Belief in God with the obligation for its adherents to follow Islamic law," was changed to "Belief in the One and Only God," ensuring inclusivity. The position of president, originally restricted to Muslims, was also broadened. These adjustments solidified Pancasila as the foundational principle of the state, resolving the long-standing debate over the role of religion in governance. Pancasila, rooted in extensive discussions, has since ensured stability in balancing religious diversity and nationalism, even amidst ongoing challenges.²¹

3.4. *Mufasssir* and *Fuqaha's* Perspective on the Concept of *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin*²²

Exegetes, such as Al-Tabari,²³ Al-Baghawi,²⁴ and Al-Qurtubi²⁵ coincided that the Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad, serves as a flawless guide for those who worship Allah by fulfilling His decreed obligations. Ka'b al-Ahbar emphasizes that the Qur'an provides ample lessons for the devout, especially those who perform the five daily prayers whom Allah calls the pious people. In a broader context, the verse stating that Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to all creation has sparked differing views among scholars. Some argue that this mercy encompasses all humanity, both believers and non-believers. For believers, this mercy offers guidance and a path to paradise, while for non-believers, it prevents the disasters that befell earlier peoples. Thus, the prevailing view is that Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to all humanity, benefiting believers and shielding non-believers from immediate punishment.

Fuqaha, such as al-Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Maliki have interpreted the verse "(وما أَرْسَلْنَاكَ)" "We did not send you," in the context that the sending of Prophet Muhammad was not only to deliver laws and Sharia but also as a manifestation of mercy to all creation. The clause "(إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ)" "except to be a mercy to the universe," asserts that the primary purpose of his mission was to extend mercy, which includes all beings, not just humans but also angels, as debated by scholars. This mercy is not limited to believers but also encompasses non-believers, giving them a chance to receive guidance through the teachings brought forth.²⁶ However, ultimately, they may choose not to follow it. The debate regarding the inclusivity of 'all creation' in the Prophet's mission reflects the diversity of interpretation among scholars. Still, the essence of this teaching is the universality of mercy emphasized in Islam.²⁷ This debate delves deeper into how this mercy is interpreted in the contexts of law, worldly and eternal happiness, and its impact on the daily lives of humans. Recognition of

²¹Ma'mun Murod et al., "Islam and the State: Indonesian Mosque Administrators' Perceptions of Pancasila, Islamic Sharia and Transnational Ideology," *Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7382>. 611-623; Timo Duile, "Being Atheist in the Religious Harmony State of Indonesia," *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 21, no. 5 (2020): 450-465, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2020.1829022>.

²²Al-Anbiya' 21:107.

²³J Al-Tabari, *Jami'al-Bayān 'An Ta' Wil Ayāt al-Qur'ān (Jami' al-Bayan on the interpretation of the verse of the Qur'an)*. (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2008), IV/765.

²⁴A Al-Baghawi, *Ma 'ālim Al-Tanzīl Fī Tafsiṛ Al-Qurān* (Tafsīr al-Baghawi) [Milestones in the interpretation of the Qur'an]. Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi, 1999.II/299.

²⁵I Al-Qurthubi, *Tafsīr Al-Qurthubi/Syeikh Imam Al-Qurthubi*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2007), V/211.

²⁶Imam Muhammad bin Idris Al-Syafi'i, *Kitab Al-Umm* (Bulaq, Cairo: Darul Wafa, 1997), https://archive.org/details/alom00_201908/alom00/.I/141.

²⁷Farra'-Baghawī, *Al-Tahzīb Fī Fiqh al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī (Al-Tahzīb Fī Fiqh al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī)* (Refinement in the jurisprudence of Imam Shafi'i), (Beirut: Darul Kitab 'Ilmiyah, 1997). 303-340. shorturl.at/GHxg2

this mercy also adds a broader dimension to Islamic teachings, which focus not only on obedience but also on universal goodness and the overall well-being sought through the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.²⁸

3.5. The Interplay of Religion, State, and It's Influence in National Life

Religion has a role in the lives of individuals and society, providing moral, ethical, and spiritual guidance that influences various aspects of life, including public policy and state governance. In many countries, religion forms the foundation of cultural and social identity, creating unity in diversity and providing a framework of values that guide individual behaviour.²⁹ Religion serves as a foundation for laws and policies in some countries, where religious norms, like Sharia law, are incorporated into the legal system, influencing governance and societal rules. The influence of religious perspective is also reflected in state symbolism, state ceremonies, and national celebrations rooted in specific religious traditions, reinforcing a sense of togetherness among citizens. However, on the other hand, religion can also become a source of conflict when used to legitimise power or when clashes occur between different religious norms in a multicultural society.

State is a political entity recognised as a sovereign government with the authority to govern a specific territory and its population. Thus, a state's government structure includes executive, legislative, and judicial institutions, which enforce laws, maintain order, and provide public services.³⁰ It also has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, which is used to support domestic security and protect sovereignty from external threats. In a global context, the state is a critical player in international relations, negotiating and participating in alliances, treaties, and international organisations. Additionally, the state ensures projects' human rights and its citizens' social, economic, and cultural welfare. However, state power can also be a source of abuse, particularly in authoritarian government systems, where individual freedoms may be suppressed for stability or political control.³¹ The relationship between the state and its citizens is dynamic, where the legitimacy and authority of the state are often tested through political participation, adherence to laws, and demands for accountability and transparency.

3.6. The Contribution of *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* as a Strengthening Force for Religion and State Principles

The concept of *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin*, or mercy to all creation, embodied by Prophet Muhammad, has been widely interpreted by exegetes such as Al-Qurtubi, Al-Baghawi, and Al-Zamakhsyari as a universal manifestation of mercy, not limited to the Muslim ummah but encompassing all humanity and other beings. According to jurists, such as al-Shafi'i, Hanbali, and

²⁸M A G Al-Bajiqany, *Al Madkal: Ila Usul al Fiqh al Maliki* (Entrance: To the Principles of Maliki Jurisprudence) (Dār Lubnan, 1968), 180.

²⁹A Azra, "Guarding the Faith of the Ummah: The Religio-Intellectual Journey of Mohammad Rasjidi," *Studia Islamika* 1, No 2 (1994): 87-119. <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika/article/view/859/731>; A Zaman, and M Ahmad, "Reevaluating the Religio-Political Policies of Aurangzeb Alamgir: A Critical Insight from Indian Historians," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 2 (2023): 120-133, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.08>.

³⁰A Azra, "Globalization of Indonesian Muslim Discourse: Contemporary Religio-Intellectual Connections between Indonesia and the Middle East," *Islam in the Era of Globalization* (2005), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203988862-4>; Erica Baranski et al., "Personality and Conceptions of Religiosity across the World's Religions," *Journal of Research in Personality* (2024): 104496, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2024.104496>. 110

³¹M R M Nor, and M K Ibrahim, "From Separation between State and Religion to Religion-Freeing State: The Changing Faces of Secularism in Turkey," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 13, no. 1 (2023): 85-114, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v13i1.85-114>.

Maliki, the Prophet's mission as a bearer of mercy affirms that Islam not only brings laws and Sharia but also conveys values of goodness and peace that have a broad impact on social and political life. This view reinforces the position of religion as a crucial pillar in the formation of public morality and ethics, which, in turn influences state policies and societal governance. *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* serves as a fundamental foundation that directs the state to enforce laws and create a standard welfare system that embraces all elements of society, both believers and non-believers. This reflects the inclusivity dimension in religion that contributes to social stability and justice in national life, where the state is expected to protect and advocate for the welfare of all its people without discrimination.³²

The concept of *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* asserts that the mission of the Islamic religion is to create universal peace and welfare that transcends religious, ethnic, and national boundaries. Within this framework, the state is obligated to implement the principles of justice and virtue from Islamic teachings, which offer mercy to all its citizens. In scholars' interpretation, this mercy provides spiritual guidance for individuals and forms a solid ethical framework for the state in performing its duties. Thus, the state plays a crucial role in ensuring that public policies and laws are fair and beneficial to all its citizens, regardless of religious background. This inclusive approach fosters a harmonious and stable social environment where and spiritual values and state norms can align, strengthening the foundations of national life. In the long term, *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* creates a more peaceful world order where nations can cooperate in a spirit of justice and humanity driven by Islamic principles.³³

3.7. Transcription of Netizen Comments on the NU Online YouTube Channel Gus Dur - Is it Obligatory to Establish an Islamic State?

After conducting a literature selection process involving several individuals who viewed the YouTube video of Gus Dur discussing the topic, "Is it Obligatory to Establish an Islamic State?,"³⁴ several comments were gathered and analyzed, most of which favoured Gus Dur's ideas presented in the video. Out of many, only 15 comments were handpicked from the YouTube video for the in-depth analysis. It was found that 53.3% of the commenters were male, 13.3% were female, and 33.3% had undisclosed identities. Below is the transcription of the video:

Gusdur: "In Indonesia, if there is an external attack, defending the nation is a religious duty, and dying in defence is considered martyrdom. Why must the Republic of Indonesia be defended even though it is not a religious-based state? Kiai Subadar stated that the kiai have played a crucial role in the history of this nation: first, in achieving independence; second, in defending it; third, in fulfilling it. I repeat, it is now the year '35." Gusdur: "In 1935, a decade before the Proclamation of Independence on August 17, 1945, the Nahdlatul Ulama' Congress took place in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, not Kuala Lumpur. At that

³²Stanley Stowers, "The Concepts of 'Religion,' 'Political Religion' and the Study of Nazism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007): 9–24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009407071628>; N Ghobadzadeh, and S Akbarzadeh, "Religionization of Politics in Iran: Shi'i Seminaries as the Bastion of Resistance," *Middle Eastern Studies* 56, no. 4 (2020): 570–584, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2020.1748013>.

³³M Radjab et al., "Religious Tolerance Practices: A Case Study of Family with Different Religions in Toraja Ethnicity South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia," *International Journal of Management* (2020): 1145–1154, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3632700; A Makin, "'Not a Religious State' A Study of Three Indonesian Religious Leaders on the Relation of State and Religion," *Indonesia and the Malay World*, (2018): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2017.1380279>.

³⁴NU Online, "Gus Dur - Wajibkah Bikin Negara Islam?," (Is it obligatory to create an Islamic State?) 2000, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgmpeY2STC0>.

congress, NU typically held a Bahtsul Masail session.” Gusdur: “At that time, participants discussed whether Muslims in Indonesia needed to defend the Dutch East Indies, which were still under Dutch colonial rule. The scholars, led by Kiai Subadar, answered with '*Qulil haqqa walau kaana murrān*,' meaning 'speak the truth even if it is bitter': obligatory.” Gusdur: “Although they disliked the Dutch, the scholars declared it obligatory to defend the territory because, at that time, there were Islamic kingdoms and Muslims in Indonesia could freely practice their religious teachings.”

Gusdur: “I ask you all: Is there a specific law for Friday prayers? No, but all Muslims go to Friday prayers because it is a command of Sharia, not of the state. Therefore, according to the Islamic view, a religious state is not necessary, but the existence of a state is obligatory.” Gusdur: “On October 22, about 60 days before the proclamation, the PBNU in Surabaya decided to issue a 'Jihad Resolution'. If Indonesia is attacked, defending it is a religious duty!” Gusdur: “Although Indonesia is not a religious state, the ulama thinks about the interests of the nation and state, not just a specific group.” Gusdur: “Before last year's fasting, it was mentioned in the National Work Meeting that if the ulama do not distinguish the rights of the people, then the ulama are the ones most fearful of God.” Gusdur: “Ulama is the heirs of the prophets, inheriting not wealth but morals because that is the sign of the prophet's excellence.” Gusdur: “You will not hear of pesantren clashing because their morals are upheld by the kiai, even though sometimes there are differences of opinion.” Gusdur: “Separating state from religion is not a problem according to the NU Congress. I remember someone asked about the Ulama Council because many thought it was about creating an Islamic state.” Gusdur: “In Indonesia, it is better not to create an Islamic state because of its diversity, from Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, to Confucianism, which forms the basis of the nation's diversity.”

This video featuring Gus Dur stresses the importance of preserving Indonesia's sovereignty, even though it is not a religious state. Gus Dur begins by asserting that defending the nation from external threats is a religious duty, with those who die in defence considered martyrs. Kiai Subadar underscores the historical role of Kiai in Indonesia, from securing independence to maintaining it. The video recalls the 1935 *Nahdlatul Ulama* Congress, affirming that Muslims were obliged to defend the Dutch East Indies. The “Jihad Resolution” by PBNU declares that defending Indonesia if attacked, is a religious obligation. Despite Indonesia's secular nature, the ulama prioritize national interests over specific groups.

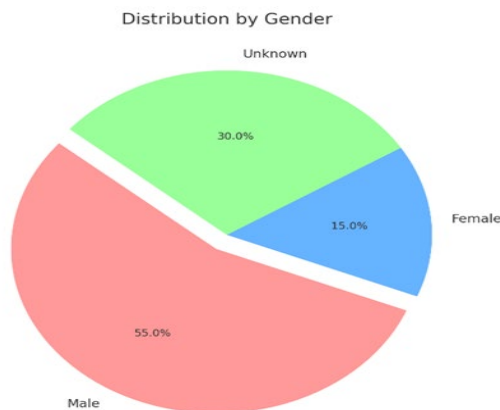


Figure 1. Distribution of Study Participants by Gender

Figure 2 presents the characteristics of commentators or individuals from the entire dataset based on the type of their comments. Some provided positive comments, others were negative, and some were neutral. Accounts that expressed positive comments constituted 60% of the nine accounts, those that expressed negative comments represented 20% of the three accounts, and those that stated neutral comments comprised 20% of the subject point of view.

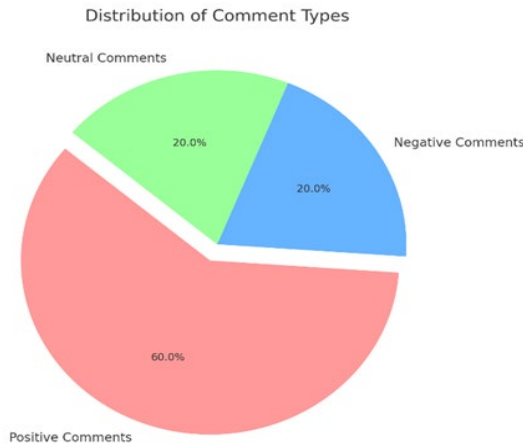


Figure 2. Classification of Comments from the Subject Point of View

Table 1 displays a collection of 15 YouTube accounts, along with their positive and negative comments gathered by the author to complete the research data.

Table 1. Indonesian Public Comments on the Video "Is it Obligatory to Establish an Islamic State?"

Number	Name	Commentary
1	Takk937 5 years ago	The concept of Pancasila follows what the esteemed Prophet Muhammad SAW implemented, which is the creation of the world's first renowned constitution in the town of Medina, and it was agreed upon by Muslim, Christian, and Jewish residents to live in harmony, order, and neighbourliness. (Charter of Medina)
2	Wachidin Indiro Hushodho 5 years ago	Colouring Indonesia with more Sharia is better and easier than making it an Islamic state. Please create advanced religious education, advanced Islamic financial institutions, and advanced Islamic hospitals, as these are more concrete needs for the Muslim community.
3	Risafdian Nursanto 5 years ago	During the era of HTI and the Caliphate, before any accusations of a tyrannical government were made, Gus Dur had already invited us to protect this country and preserve its diversity and pluralism. All of Gus Dur's statements, which I once found strange and even nonsensical, he would say, "Just wait and see; let history prove it." And now, I finally understand, Gus! Your thoughts were far ahead. Now, thankfully, I understand.
4	user- z8gnl7te9p 5 years ago	It is not an Islamic state, but Islamic Sharia must be upheld, and respect for diversity is obligatory. It is imperative to protect diversity. Islam has 73 branches. The most favoured by Allah are the followers of Sunni Islam. Everything in the world originates from Islam, from Prophet Adam and Eve, and all from the light of

Number	Name	Commentary
5	Timurlink 5 years ago	Prophet Muhammad SAW. Allah is the Creator. Allah is the one who decrees diversity. From Allah we come, and to Allah we return. The best laws and regulations are those of Allah. It is not. Usually, there is no need to admire him overly; treat him usually. In Aceh, many people like him, and his presence is even more significant.
6	Hanna Cindy 5 years ago	The presence of Islam is not an Islamic state. Allah did not command Islam to be made into a state, but Allah commanded that Islam is made the pillar of religion.
7	Siti Sulasih 5 years ago	It is obligatory to proclaim the Sharia of Allah's religion! What do you think?
8	Moderasi1008 5 years ago	Indonesia is not an Islamic country, but its foundational philosophy, Pancasila, already embodies Islamic values. However, the proponents of a caliphate still insist on imposing their will.
9	Aki Zakik 5 years ago	Those who must implement Islamic law should start with their own families first... If they don't teach their families the true principles of Islam
10	Adi Psauq 5 years ago	Instead of an Islamic state, it is necessary <i>to make</i> the people prosperous by prospering the mosque
11	Oka Nasrullah 5 years ago	Islam "YES"... Islamic state "NO" !!!
12	Serdadu Kambang 5 years ago	Why is NU so preoccupied with an Islamic state? It's the same issue they've been dealing with forever, and it's never resolved.
13	Teuku Muhammad Nasir 5 years ago	Gus Dur is a hero for non-Muslims and the Chinese community in Indonesia. He was also a friendly figure who established good relationships. Many people still miss Gus Dur to this day.
14	Arif Gerarrd 5 years ago	True Islam is like Gus Dur and his followers. Adhering to 'Bhineka Tunggal Ika', Islam is diverse yet united in purpose. Islam does not teach coercion but gently embraces everyone. Your religion is yours, and my religion is mine.
15	Yusuf Firdausi 5 years ago	Agreed, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia embraces diversity, maintaining harmony and unity despite differences.

In reviewing the comments on the video, "Is it obligatory to establish an Islamic state?" delivered by Gus Dur, the dominant participation of men reflects a potentially higher interest in this issue from their side. Most of them agreed that Islamic values are already embodied in the concept of Pancasila and appreciated Gus Dur's role in promoting tolerance and diversity, especially within the framework of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. Although women only contributed 13.3% of the comments, their perspectives provided a unique dimension. The 33.3% who did not identify their gender may have chosen to participate anonymously or to keep their identities private. While their positions may be more challenging to identify, their contributions could offer a neutral or skeptical nuance to the existing arguments.³⁵

³⁵NU Online, "Gus Dur - Wajibkah Bikin Negara Islam?," (Is it obligatory to create an Islamic State?) 2000, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgmpeY2STC0>.



Figure 3. Indonesia Public Comments on the Gus Dur Video

Most of the Indonesians affirms that Indonesia does not need to come an officially Islamic state. They believed that the diversity embodied within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) already includes the interests and rights of all citizens, including those who are Muslims. While they respect and understand Islamic values, an inclusive and non-coercive approach is a stronger foundation for building unity and mutual welfare. Majority have agreed that the concept of Pancasila already encompasses Islamic values in Indonesia, with support for an approach that embraces diversity.³⁶ They have highlighted Gus Dur's important role as a symbol of tolerance and a proponent of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. However, minority voices question the urgency of an Islamic state and criticize NU's focus on this issue. Despite distinct opinions, the overall impression is positive, with the majority supporting diversity within the context of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

3.8. NU's Contribution towards Islamic Values for Strengthening the Conception of State and Religion

Nahdlatul Ulama' (NU) has significantly contributed to the nation from before independence to post-independence. NU has always prioritized nationalism, placing the nation's interests above all else. One of NU's notable contributions to the conception of state and religion is evident through the

³⁶Goldstein, "On the Religious State, the Secular State, and the Religion-Neutral State"; Ristapawa Indra and Fitrah Santosa, "Government Control of Islamic Ideology Movement: A Case of Indonesia," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 18, no. 1 (2023): 129–44, <https://doi.org/10.22452/jat.vol18no1.11>. 129–144

involvement of two NU figures, K.H. Abdul Wahid Hasyim and K.H. Masykur, in the nine-member committee responsible for formulating Pancasila as the foundation of the Indonesian state. K.H. Abdul Wahid Hasyim proposed the second principle, which emphasizes justice. He argued that while humanity is essential, it must be paired with justice.³⁷ The story of Siti Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, inspired his idea of justice. According to the Prophet, even if his daughter were to commit theft, he would be the one to cut off her hand, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to justice.

Furthermore, K.H. Abdul Wahid Hasyim and K.H. Masykur emphasized that five principles were sufficient and should not increase the number of principles in *Pancasila*. This was intended to match the number of the pillars of Islam. They argued that the five principles were adequate and could be further developed individually.³⁸ This demonstrates that *Nahdlatul Ulama'* (NU) also incorporated Islamic values into Pancasila. While they did not explicitly declare Islam as the foundation of the Indonesian state, NU leaders chose to integrate Islamic values as essential components of Pancasila without explicitly mentioning Islam when reciting *Pancasila*.³⁹

NU's role in shaping the conception of state and religion continued with removing the "seven words" phrase and the obligation to implement Islamic law for its adherents.⁴⁰ Initially, K.H. Abdul Wahid Hasyim proposed a constitutional article stating that Islam was the state religion and that the president should be an indigenous Indonesian Muslim. However, this proposal received substantial criticism, leading K.H. Abdul Wahid Hasyim to agree to the constitutional changes, including removing the "seven words." Despite not explicitly mentioning Islamic law, he accepted these changes for national unity and to prevent conflict. He was a person who loved both his religion and his country, believing that there was no contradiction between the two.

Besides its contributions during the independence era, *Nahdlatul Ulama'* (NU) also played a significant role during the New Order period under the leadership of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, fervently advocating for democracy. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid was very open to various religions that he encountered. He did not seek to make Indonesia an entirely Islamic state or separate religion from the state. He was an advocate for human welfare and frequently spoke about religious freedom. He was known for his commitment to humanism and pluralism.

³⁷Indra and Santosa, "Government Control of Islamic Ideology Movement: A Case of Indonesia"; Ardhana and Puspitasari, "Adat Law, Ethics, and Human Rights in Modern Indonesia," 129–144.

³⁸B F Intan, *Public Religion" and the Pancasila-Based State of Indonesia: An Ethical and Sociological Analysis* (New York: American University Studies, 2006), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=OXmRwiYEy1IC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=religion+and+state+indonesia&ots=LdIQXqinW&sig=ArF20-5ha5EUXKqQGktIJyOlpGc>. <https://sci-hub.se/10.1163/157254307x225098>. 415–417.

³⁹A Basid, "Islam Nusantara; Sebuah Kajian Post Tradisionalisme dan Neo Modernisme (Islam Nusantara; A Study of Post Traditionalism and Neo-Modernism)," *Tafâqquh: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Kajian Keislaman*, (2017): 1-14, <http://jurnal.iuibafa.ac.id/index.php/tafaqquh/article/view/65>; A Basid, "I'tikaf Therapy as an Effort to Prevent Terrorism: A Study of Al-Qurtubi's Interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah: 187," *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis*, (2022): 947-964 <http://journal.iaincurup.ac.id/index.php/alquds/article/view/4279>.

⁴⁰Moch Nur Ichwan, and Martin Slama, "Reinterpreting the First Pillar of the Nation: (Dis)Continuities of Islamic Discourses about the State Ideology in Indonesia," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 23, no. 4 (2022): 457–474, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2022.2139687>; Imron Rosidi, "From Political Parties to Cultural Organizations: Indonesian Islamic Movements during the New Order," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 17, no. 1 (2022): 43–53, <https://doi.org/10.22452/jat.vol17no1.4>.

During the New Order era, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid defended the Chinese ethnic community and the Confucian religion, which faced discrimination. He believed that the discrimination experienced by the Chinese ethnic community was completely inconsistent with Indonesia's motto, "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," (Unity in Diversity). He also saw it as a betrayal of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, which the founders established as the foundation of the Indonesian state. In October 1999, when K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid became president, he repealed Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967, restricting Chinese Indonesians' religious, cultural, and customary practices.⁴¹ He replaced this instruction with Presidential Decree No. 6 of 2000. Various measures followed this policy change to eliminate discrimination against minority religions and beliefs in Indonesia.

Even after stepping down from his presidency, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid continued to express his views on the relationship between state and religion. He consistently emphasized the necessity of having a state, but argued against the need for an Islamic state.⁴² For him, what is essential is the practice of Islamic principles. In Gus Dur's words, Islamic teachings—as components shape and enrich the communal life of our citizens—serve as complementary factors alongside other elements. They are not competing factors that would lead to the disintegration of national unity.

In one of his popular lectures, Gus Dur explained the non-obligation of establishing a religious state. He stated, "If a foreign nation attacks Indonesia, it must be defended as a religious duty. Dying in that defence leads to paradise. Therefore, we should not be confused when asked, 'Why not establish an Islamic state?' Establishing an Islamic state is good, but not establishing one is also fine. For Indonesia, it is better not to establish an Islamic state. Why? Because its religions are diverse. There are Christians, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucianists. So, the reasons for the state's existence include maintaining this diversity and unity."⁴³

Gus Dur's views on state and religion remained a guiding principle. Despite facing criticism for his statements, his opinions remained steadfast. Gus Dur's teachings and perspectives continue to be studied and applied by scholars and thinkers in contemporary discussions about the relationship between religion and the state, even after his passing. His legacy is a testament to his commitment to pluralism, tolerance, and maintaining a harmonious balance between religious values and national unity.⁴⁴ Gus Dur's emphasis on inclusivity and respect for diversity remains relevant. It provides valuable insights and guidance for fostering Indonesia's cohesive and just society.

⁴¹Bárbara Azaola-Piazza, and Miguel Hernando de Larramendi, "The Interplay of Regional and Domestic Politics in Egypt: The Case of Salafism," *Contemporary Politics* 27, no. 2 (2021): 141–159, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2020.1858565>; Sebastian Elischer, "Autocratic Legacies and State Management of Islamic Activism in Niger," *African Affairs* 114, no. 457 (2015): 577–597, <https://doi.org/10.1093/AFRAF/ADV039>. <https://sci-hub.se/10.1093/afraf/adv039>.

⁴²Khoirun Niam, "Nahdlatul Ulama and the Production of Muslim Intellectuals in the Beginning of 21st Century Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 11, no. 2 (2017): 351–388, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2017.11.2.351-388>.

⁴³M Z Nazi, A R Qadri, and F Ali, "The Role of Religion in Establishing Peaceful Coexistence in Society," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 8, no. 2 (2018): 163–182, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.82.10>; F Zatari, "Religion as a Pillar for Establishing a Civilization: Al-Māwardī's Perspective," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 11, no. 1 (2021): 240–257, <https://doi.org/10.32350/JITC.111.13>.

⁴⁴Joost Drost, "The Islam Wasathiyah of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid in the Islamic Political Arena," *Journal of Islamic Civilization* 4, no. 2 (2022): 125–135, <https://doi.org/10.33086/jic.v4i2.3611>; Hapsin, "Polemic on Sharia Tourism between Muslim and Christian in Indonesia," 1-8.

The comments on Gus Dur's video regarding the necessity of an Islamic state emphasize Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) pivotal role in reinforcing Indonesia's spiritual and national unity.⁴⁵ The commentary reflects an appreciation for NU's historic commitment, as highlighted by Gus Dur, who stressed national defence as a religious duty. This sentiment aligns with NU's role in shaping an Islamic identity intertwined with nationalism. The 'Jihad Resolution' issued by PBNU advocated defending the nation as a religious duty, without an Islamic state, supporting a pluralistic society that respects Indonesia's religious and cultural diversity.⁴⁶

4. Conclusion

Islamic mass organizations like *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) in Indonesia are the "bedrock" for upholding religious diversity in the country. History has recorded NU's contributions to the struggle for national independence and in shaping the philosophy of the Indonesian nation. Indonesia encompasses the country's largest Muslim population in the world, which has a natural inclination to establish itself as a religious state, specifically as an Islamic state. However, history has indicated the debate among national figures regarding the state's foundation that could not overcome our society's sociological aspects, where people favoured a nation-state over a religious state. Gus Dur, a prominent figure at NU, became a primary advocate for maintaining the concept of a nation-state. His pluralistic views on the relationship between the state and religion were not just theoretical; he actively practiced what he believed. It is no wonder that after his passing, he continued to be revered by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. His grand ideas remain relevant, particularly when the nation faced groups aspiring to establish a religious state. Gus Dur (K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid), a prominent leader of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), played a vital role in promoting a pluralistic and inclusive version of Islam in Indonesia. *Gus Dur* deeply believed that Islam could coexist harmoniously with Indonesia's diverse cultural and religious landscape. As a president and NU leader, *Gus Dur* emphasized the importance of justice, humanity, and national unity, principles that are evident in his support for *Pancasila* as the foundation of the Indonesian state. He rejected the idea of establishing an Islamic state, arguing that Indonesia's diversity necessitated a state that could accommodate all religious groups. His advocacy for religious freedom and protection of minority rights, such as the Chinese ethnic community and the Confucian religion, highlighted his commitment to pluralism. *Gus Dur's* efforts to repeal discriminatory laws and promote inclusivity solidified his legacy as a defender of both Islamic values and national unity. His teachings continued to influence contemporary discussions on the relationship between religion and the state, reinforcing the idea that Islam should foster social justice and ethical leadership without seeking political dominance.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

⁴⁵NU Online, "Gus Dur - Wajibkah Bikin Negara Islam? (Is It Obligatory to Create an Islamic State?)."

⁴⁶Y M Royani, "Hate Speech During the Caliphate of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and Its Relevance to Regulations in Indonesia: The Study of the Islamic Law History," *Al-Ahkām* 31, no. 2 (2021): 223–40, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2021.31.2.8956>; G Barton, "Indonesia's Nurcolish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Intellectual 'Ulama': The Meeting of Islamic Traditionalism and Modernism in Neo-Modernist Thought," in *Studia Islamika* 4 (1997): 29–81, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v4i1.786>.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to anonymity concerns but are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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