

# Islam and Pancasila

## *Muhammad Natsir's Democracy Thought*

Dardiri

Lecture at UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau

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### KEYWORD

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to discuss the thought Muhammad Natsir about Democracy. He was a Muslim intellectual who devoted himself and his life to his people and his country. From our survey of his career, we can see that he was an important figure in the history of the Indonesian revolution. He was an independent as well as critical thinker who was always ready to participate in open debates and polemics in order to discover the truth. He did so not only with his own colleagues, but also with non-Muslims. It was never his intention to attack his opponents, even though he often found himself in the position of defending Islam.*

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### Alamat Korespondensi:

Dardiri  
UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau  
Jl. H. R. Soebrantas KM. 15 Panam  
E-mail: [dardiri@uin-suska.ac.id](mailto:dardiri@uin-suska.ac.id)

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### INTRODUCTION

After World War II many Muslim countries, including Indonesia, accepted democracy as their system of state. Unlike other such nations, however, Indonesia formed a unique and different kind of democracy, the so-called Pancasila democracy. The Pancasila as the basis of the Indonesian state is no longer questioned in any formal sense. The process of the acceptance of Pancasila, however, was a long one, involving much quarrel and debate. In the course of this process, Indonesia experienced many different kinds of democracy, among them liberal democracy and guided democracy, before finally deciding to opt for Pancasila democracy. Indonesian Muslims inevitably became involved in the debate about the basis of the state, because Muslims form the largest segment of the country's population, constituting about 85% of the total. Therefore, politically they are very important.

One of the more interesting figures in the debate about Islam and the Pancasila was Mohammad Natsir. His ideas and position were very influential in the formal debate about the basis of the state in the *Konstituante* (Constituent Assembly) in November 1957 (Bocquet-Siek and Cribb, 1991). He, as the representative of Masyumi (Majelis Syura Muslim Indonesia) offered his own interpretation of the Pancasila, while at the same time proposed Islam as the basis of the new state. In connection with this Deliar Noer (1987:130) says that one cannot understand fully Natsir's thought on Islamic ideology without also knowing his opinion about the Pancasila.

Interestingly, although he proposed an Islamic state instead of the Pancasila, he still supported the government in its struggle for the establishment of the Unity of the Republic of Indonesia. As far as Natsir's political activities were concerned, he was at least consistent where the constitution was concerned. In fact, he often took Sukarno, the first President of Indonesia, to task over the letters on the relationship between religion and state. Also when Sukarno switched the state system to guided democracy, which according to

Natsir was unconstitutional, he joined PRRI Permesta in rebellion against the central government. Unfortunately, because of his involvement in this affair, until the New Order era his name was often linked with rebellion and was used to conjure up “Islam phobia” (Halim, 1993).

This paper looks at the debate about Pancasila and Islam as the basis of the state, with reference to Natsir’s thought on politics. Natsir’s contribution to this discussion will be juxtaposed with the principles, the interpretation and implementation of the Pancasila by Indonesian nationalist leaders during the early years of independence and the Old Order Government era. The choice of Natsir to illustrate this subject was made because he was one of the most involved in the history of the early development of the country. As well as being a prominent figure, he has left a considerable body of writings that might easily be investigated. Besides relying on his writings for an understanding of his thought, I employ both sociological and historical approaches, in order to understand how the history of Indonesia during this period provides a context for his ideas.

### Mohammad Natsir’s Life

Mohammad Natsir, who was also known by the title Datuk Sinaro Panjang was one of the most important and prominent Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia this century. He was born into a devout Muslim family of Alahan Panjang, Solok, West Sumatera, on 17 July 1908, a couple of months after the establishment of Boedi Oetomo. His father, Idris Sutan Saripado, a pious man worked as a clerk in a government office. Natsir’s education consisted of secular as well as religious influences. Like other Indonesian children during the Dutch colonial era, he attended the Sekolah Rendah or Hollands Inlandche School (the elementary school administered by the colonial government), for his elementary education, which took place in the morning. In the afternoon he went to the *madrassa diniyya* (a religious school). Upon completing this level, he went to Padang, the capital city of the province of West Sumatera, to pursue his junior high school studies at an institution called the *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs*.

It was fortunate for him that his father was a government officer at the time, for this enabled him to have easy access to education. Thus, after he completed his primary school and junior high school education in 1923 and in 1927 respectively, he went to Bandung, the capital city of West Java, to pursue his further education. In this city, he attended the senior high school (Algemene Middlebare School or *Sekolah Menengah Tingkat Atas*). He chose this school because it was the only AMS in Indonesia that had a Western Classics division. He gained a degree with top honors and therefore was entitled to a scholarship for his tertiary education, either at the Faculty of Law (Recht Hogeschool) in Batavia (presently Jakarta), or at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Rotterdam, in the Netherlands. He also had other opportunities to work for the Dutch government as a civil servant and for a good salary.

In fact, Natsir did not take advantage of all these opportunities. Instead, he decided to involve himself in the country’s independence struggle. He was mindful at the time of the political, economic, social, and religious problems confronting Muslims in Indonesia. In order to carry out his ideals and commitment, he equipped himself with teacher’s training, which he took from 1931 to 1932 at the Dutch-Native Teachers Training College (Hollands-Inlandsche Kweek School or *Lager Onderwijs*). This, according to his own account, was his last experience with formal education. Thereafter, Natsir worked in the community as a teacher and set up a private Islamic school, an unpromising profession in economic terms. In addition, Natsir, together with A. Hassan, also edited the *Pembela Islam* and *al-Lisan* magazines (Mahendra, 1995:118).

Even though Natsir did not pursue formal higher education, he committed himself to self-study. He taught himself not only religious subjects such as *tafsir*, *fiqh* and *kalam*, but also foreign languages. As far as foreign languages were concerned, Natsir was able to speak several besides Bahasa Indonesia. According to Kahin, a friend of Natsir, he became fluent in English as well as Dutch, developed a good command of French and German, and soon mastered Arabic (Kahin, 1993). His fluency in European languages also enabled him to discover the European heritage in history, philosophy, literature, politics and Orientalism.

Meanwhile, his ability in Arabic also enabled him to evaluate the classical and contemporary works of Muslim thinkers. In *tafsir*, for instance, he was particularly interested in the works of Ibn Taimiyya and Ibn Qayyim. He was also familiar with the works of 19th and 20th century modernist Muslims such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida of the Middle East, as well as those of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Syed Ameer Ali of South Asia. However, it cannot be concluded that Natsir was deeply influenced by these modernists. In this connection, Deliar Noer (1973:325) states that many Indonesian Muslim reformers such as Agus Salim and

Natsir were perfectly able to investigate Islam through its primary sources, and were not forced to rely on modern interpretations. The works of early scholars were equally helpful in providing answers for the challenges of the modern age.

Natsir was very much influenced by his society and the people around him. During his childhood in the village of Ranah Minang, he lived according to the *adat* (traditions) and religious customs practiced by the people of Minangkabau. Indeed, in this environment he witnessed religio-intellectual debates in which there participated local reformers challenging tradition (Abdullah, 1971; Daya, 1990). He also experienced the ideological debates between communism, nationalism and Islam, which swept the Minangkabau communities in the early 1900s. The influence of Engku Modo Amin, a reformist *ustadz* (religious teacher) in Minangkabau, appears to have had a fairly deep impact on his personality. Not surprisingly, when he later moved to Java, he felt somewhat drawn to reformist ulamas, such as Ahmad Surkati, a Sudanese-born scholar and a prominent figure of the modernist movement among Indonesian Arabs, and Ahmad Hassan, an ulama born in Singapore but of Tamil stock, who then resided in Bandung, West Java. This is not to mention his close relationship with Agus Salim, formed at around the same time.

It is important to note here the influence of Ahmad Hassan upon Natsir. The latter undertook a serious study of Islam under Hassan during his stay in Bandung. Ahmad Hassan, who was also known as Hassan Bandung, was a leading modernist scholar who headed an Islamic religio-educational organization called Persatuan Islam (Islamic Unity). At that time, Hassan was famous as a radical ulama, who always waged polemics against ulamas holding different opinions (Federspiel, 1970). The influence of Hassan's approach to polemic was obvious in Natsir's intellectual career. This was partly because he sometimes deliberately involved Natsir in open debates with the *ulama* of different schools of thought. Undoubtedly, on a personal level too, Hassan had a deep influence on his pupil. To quote Natsir (1980:56):

He was a friendly 'alim, who could draw attention and attract the youth around him. ... We felt very fortunate to have received education and guidance from him, which was impossible for us to forget and ignore. We youths around him, were always observed carefully and disciplined strictly, and each of us was given certain responsibility. If we proposed a problem on religion, he did not give us the answer directly, instead we were asked to find the answer in the books available.

Another person who also influenced Natsir's intellectual development was Agus Salim. Salim was also inclined to pursue debate and the polemical method. However, unlike Hassan, who was known to be hard-headed over certain ideas, and who tended to understand Islam from a legalistic point of view, Salim showed himself to be more moderate. He was open-minded and appreciative of different ideas. This is shown from the fact that he often published two different articles on the same topic, one using his own name and the other using his initials only. Of course the two articles would have different views about the same topic, so that, according to Salim, he was able to teach people to appreciate different opinions. By doing so, he also believed that society would learn about the impossibility of absolute truth. In other words, he wanted to show that there are many ways to solve a problem (Mahendra, 1995:119).

The influence of both Hassan and Salim were clearly marked in Natsir's personality. During his career he too often engaged in open debate and polemics. From his youth for instance, he had often involved himself in heated arguments with Sukarno. It is important to note here that although he favoured this approach to resolving issues, he was able to distinguish among differences in opinion, his position and personal relationships. Natsir is reported as having said that people can have a different opinion or even perform a 180 degree turn on an issue, but they still have to be able to communicate openly on the personal level. One example of this is that, in spite of the heated debate that he was having with Sukarno, Natsir and his friends (from Persis) visited Bung Karno, while he was being held in a jail by the colonial government (Pratiknya, 1989:49).

### Natsir's Political Thought

#### *His Ideas on Statehood*

To understand clearly Natsir's ideas about statehood we first of all have to know his understanding of Islam. Natsir considered Islam to be all and everything. To emphasize this he quoted the hadith "*al-Islam ya'lu wala yu'la alayhi,*" which means that Islam is high, and there is nothing above it (Natsir, 1973:193). This belief was affirmed by the Qur'anic verse stating that, "I have only created jinns and men, that they may worship Me"

(al-Dhariyat 51: 56). Based on this verse of the Qur'an and the hadith quoted above, Natsir understands Islam to be not only a body of religious practice limited to the performance of obligatory acts such as the *shahadah*, the five times daily prayers, fasting, almsgiving and hajj, as believed by most Indonesian Muslims at the time, but, rather a set of beliefs that regards every good deed as being performed for God's sake. Islam is therefore, according to Natsir, not merely concerned with the relationship between man and God. It is in fact much more than this: it is also a relationship between man and man and even between man and his environment (Natsir, 1957:59).

Moreover, Islam, according to him, includes all of its norms, rules and *hudud* (what should be and what should not be) (Natsir, 1973; Noer, 1987). Furthermore, he cites H.A.R. Gibb's statement to the effect that "Islam is indeed much more than a system of theology, it is a complete civilization" (Natsir, 1973). For him this meant that Islam covers not only theological or religious matters but also mundane affairs such as economics, culture, education, and politics. Elsewhere in his writings Natsir states that Islam is not merely a system of theology, but a way of life that should be realized in this world by applying the *shari'a* in their daily affairs, whether individually or collectively (Natsir, 1954). From this understanding, he further asserts that in order to apply the *shari'a* fully, Muslims should possess the freedom to practice it without feeling frightened or threatened. This was consistent with his belief that freedom also signifies freedom from exploitation of man by man. In line with this Natsir (1957:125) states further that, essentially, Islamic teaching is revolutionary in the sense that it fights against and overcomes all kinds of exploitation. He believes that in order to uphold and to defend Islam, Muslims simply cannot allow the development of society or country to be guided by foreign customs and ideologies. Consequently, in the era of revolution Indonesian Muslims were not only driven by nationalism but also by Islamic inspiration (Natsir, 1954:65).

This kind of understanding of Islam shows Natsir to have been a pious Muslim who was committed to applying Islam in all aspects of life including politics. His ideas about statehood were also reflected in this perspective. Understandably so, since he had studied Islam under Ahmad Hassan, who also considered Islam to be all and everything.

Natsir's thought on statehood can be discerned from his polemics with Sukarno (1965) as well as from his less polemical writings. His ongoing debates with Indonesia's first president are particularly illustrative of his views on the relationship between religion and state, and on Islamic modernism. Sukarno in his speeches often emphasized that as a Muslim he really loved Islam and wanted to assign it the highest possible position in his life. However he did not agree with the use of Islam as the ideology of the Indonesian national struggle. He insisted that Islam and the state were two separate entities. To support his opinion, he began in the 1930s to quote the ideas of Shaykh 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq and Mustafa Kemal regarding Turkish nationalism, which would eventually lead to secularism.

Natsir replied by saying that Islam is not an ideology. Instead, Muslim belief is shaped by Islamic teachings, which maintain that the purpose of worldly life is to serve God's will. The universal values of Islam therefore cannot be separated from the idea of creating a state. According to Natsir, the elements of morality and *akhlaq alkarimah* (decent behavior) must be the basis of political attitude in the state (Mahendra, 1994).

Furthermore, Natsir believed that the Prophet guided mankind in how to administer a strong and prosperous state in order that the people can attain their goals in life (Noer, 1987). Basing himself on the Qur'anic verse 51:56 (quoted above), he develops his theory by saying that Muslims living in this world have a goal, that is, to be the servant of Allah in the fullest sense of the word, so as to achieve prosperity in this life and victory in the next. So, between worldly goals and those of the *akhirat* (hereafter), there can be no separation.

To achieve these ideals, God has provided guidance in the form the Qur'an and the *Sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad. These contain broad guidelines not only on religious but also on state affairs. However, like other laws and regulations, Natsir (1968:15) argued, neither the Qur'an nor the *Sunna* can do everything by them selves; their laws and rules cannot be enforced unless the state, which has power, does so. To put it simply, Natsir believed that the state "is a necessary tool for the common good, even though it is not an end in itself. The state's affairs are essentially and basically an integral part or '*intergreerende deel*' of Islam". However, by stating this Natsir did not mean that, as Watt puts it, "..... one cannot be a Muslim except in an Islamic state" (Watt, 1988:93). By asserting the unity of state and religion, Natsir (1968:15) means that the state would guarantee the realization of the "complete enforcement of God's laws, which are related to individual or

collective lives, and which either concern mundane affairs or the hereafter.” Natsir believed that there was no Muslim state in which religion and state were truly separated; if there were, it actually meant that the state did not want to apply some parts of Islamic law related to statehood and *mu'amala* (mundane affairs) (1968:76).

Does this mean therefore that the state should be a theocracy? Natsir (1954:4) answers this question by saying that:

“Muslims do not need priests..... There are scholars of theology, the *ulamas*: in Islam. They are religious teachers in different branches of the theological sciences: the *Mullahs*, the *fuqaha*, teachers of Islamic law, ..... But they are not priests. They do not require ordination or investiture by any authority, religious or secular..... There are *imams*, leaders of the *salah*, the ritual services of worship, colloquially called prayer. But the institution of official professional *imams* is not a requirement of the religion. It is solely a measure on practical grounds for its administration. He is not an official functionary required or prescribed by the religion.”

On one occasion Soekarno cites 'Abd al-Raziq's work, *al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm*, in which the latter insisted that no verses in the Qur'an encouraged Muslims to build a state. Muhammad's mission was purely religious, not political or geared towards statehood. Natsir replies by allowing that, the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. did not in fact command Muslims to establish a state; and indeed, he says, the existence of a state does not depend upon whether or not Islam exists. If we compare society and the state, it will be like comparing the existence of thing and its form, each of which depends one upon the other. The idea of building a state was a historical necessity of human society. Therefore, the state must have deep and direct roots in the society (1957:7).

However, since many kinds of state had existed at different times, featuring different systems, and holding different objectives, the prophet Muhammad had to set an example throughout his life, thereby providing Muslims with guidelines on how to govern a state, Islamic or otherwise. Nonetheless, Natsir warns, since the state is only a “tool”, the Qur'an merely provides general guidance to Muslims on how to build it. Among the contents of this guidance are the necessity of maintaining equality, responsibility, and trusteeship, upholding the law, developing economic and social prosperity, and taking the side of the weak in society. These general guidelines were *hudud* (boundaries) that had been determined by God (Alimin, 1972:127).

Natsir also agreed that the Qur'an did not give any detailed regulations on the affairs of a modern state. He acknowledged that the Qur'an naturally is of little practical help in the drafting of a state budget, the arrangement of a quota system, the regulation of foreign exchange or traffic laws; this is because, according to him, such things are subject to change, according to the demands of time, place and circumstance. The Qur'an stipulates only general and eternal principles (Alimin, 1968); Natsir, 1951), Natsir comments, nor does he elaborate any further.

In line with this, Natsir also expressed his ideas and his preferences about the head of a state. He bases himself on the Qur'anic verse “Your (real) friends are (no less than) God, His Apostles, and (the fellowship of) believers, those who establish regular prayers and regular charity, and they bow down humbly (in worship)” (Al-Qur'an, 5:58). For him the head of the state may bear whatever title he considers appropriate, be it president, caliph, *imam*, or *amir al-mukminin*. The title is not a *conditio sine qua non* (primary requirement), Natsir asserts. The most important thing to be kept in mind is that the behaviour, the rights and the responsibilities of the head of the state should be in line with Islam. From these quotations we can see that Natsir's criteria for choosing the head of state were based not only on his intellectual knowledge, but also on his religious values, his character and behavior, his ethics and his ability to hold the authority, which was entrusted to him.

In the course of his polemics with Sukarno, Natsir also expressed his opinions about democracy. He believed that in many respects Islam concurs with democracy, because of the institution of the *shura* (consultation-deliberation). Islam is also democratic in the sense that it is opposed to *istibdad* (despotism), absolutism and authoritarianism. Nonetheless, in his eyes this did not mean that all problems have to be decided in terms of majority votes. This is because particular social practices such as those mentioned above are forbidden in Islam. Within this context, deliberation is seen to prevent these forbidden practices. Thus, Islam is, according to him, neither “100 percent democracy” nor “100 percent autocracy.” Islam is Islam; it has its own *begrip* (outlook) on statehood. This meant, according to him, that Islam is a synthesis of the two opposites - democracy and dictatorship. This synthesis allows for the evolution of whatever is required by the

circumstances. What Natsir meant, perhaps, was that Islam would allow for the development of rules or institutions about which the Qur'an and the *sunna* are silent.

Although he considered consultation to be important in Islam, not every problem is open for discussion. He says:

In the parliament of an independent Islamic state, one does not necessarily discuss the question of what should be the basis of the state, nor should the government await the blessing of the parliament in order to eliminate *hamr* (alcoholic beverage), gambling and prostitution. The same is true of the elimination of *khurafat* and *mushrik*.

In this case he refers back to the concept of *hudud*, according to which Islam contains permanent rules and regulations that have been determined by God.

The different outlooks of Sukarno and Natsir may best be summarized in their own words. While Sukarno was fond of quoting Zia Gokalp's maxim "We come from the East, we walk to the West," Natsir declared that, "Whether in the West or in the East, we walk towards God's pleasure." However, Natsir's statement does not imply that he saw everything coming from the West as totally bad and everything from the East as good. He simply believed that progress should not be an imitation of the West in every respect. He points out in one of his articles that "The West is God's property, as is the case with the East. Both have sound characteristics, but both also have certain defects and shortcomings, which should be removed. Neither the West nor the East constitutes the standard for us."

### ***Islam and Pancasila***

On August 17, 1945, two days after Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed by the United States of America, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta proclaimed Indonesia an independent country. On the following day, the 1945 constitution, which had been drafted earlier by the BPUPKI, was enacted as the temporary constitution; with it the Pancasila was adopted as the state philosophy of the Republic of Indonesia.

In the early years of independence Natsir was appointed as one of the members of the KNIP (Working Committee of the Central National Indonesian Committee). On January 1946, however, he was given the post of minister of information in the first Syahrir Cabinet and continued in this position until June 27, 1947. He was later reappointed to the Hatta Cabinet (January 29, 1948 - Agustus 4, 1949).

Natsir's political career reached its peak when he was appointed to serve as the prime minister of the unitary state (*Negara Kesatuan*) of the Republic of Indonesia. Although at that time he was inclined to Masyumi, which was the largest political party at the time, he did not appoint his ministers from his own party's alone. Out of the eighteen members of his cabinet, only four, including him, were from Masyumi. He perhaps intended to form his cabinet with the support of as many as possible in order to give it national color and to obtain support from parliament. Like previous cabinets, Natsir's cabinet lasted for only a short period. However, according to Herbert Feith (1968:176), a leading scholar on Indonesian politics, "In the very short time it had been in office, the Natsir cabinet pursued its policy goals intently and with some success." He adds, "It moved the country several steps along the road to civil security, administrative reutilization, increased production, and planned economic growth."

These points are touched upon to show that while Natsir was an Islamic nationalist, who idealized Islam as the basis of the state, as he had expressed in the pre-independence period (Woodward, 1995), he did not hesitate to accept the democratic form of government based on the Pancasila. It showed his flexibility in the sense that he was ready to accept whatever decision had been reached by the people of Indonesia, as long as it was constitutional. He emphasized the unity of the nation more than that of the Muslims, or the *umma*. In the words of Adnan Buyung Nasution (1993), a leading expert on law and well-known advocate in Indonesia, "Natsir is a genuine democrat."

The political thought of Natsir only become apparent when he came to interpret the Pancasila as the basis of the state. While it is necessary to discuss the implementation of the concept of Pancasila, we will limit this discussion to Natsir's own involvement in the process. In 1952, Natsir made a speech in front of an audience of the Pakistan Institute of World Affairs, Karachi, in which he stated that Pakistan was decidedly an Islamic country on account of its Muslim population and its choice of Islam as the state religion. Similarly, Indonesia could also be categorized as Islamic country because, though it was not recognized in the

constitution, Islam was the faith of the majority of Indonesians. Denying that Indonesia excluded religion from any involvement in the state, Nasir pointed out that "In fact it has put the monotheistic belief in the one and only God, as the head of Pancasila." He went on to say that "The Five Principles are adopted as the spiritual, moral and ethical foundation of the state and the nation." Indeed the first principle of the Pancasila reflects the spirit of tawhid, which is, in the words of al-Faruqi (1982:18), "the essence and core of Islam."

Pancasila had, thus far been democratically accepted by the Indonesian people. Even when President Sukarno made his speech in Amuntai (East Kalimantan) in 1953, in which he suggested to the Indonesian people that they rely on the Pancasila and refuse Islam as the basis of the country, Natsir and other top Masyumi leaders chose not to make any strong protest. Natsir viewed Sukarno's action as a reflection of popular misunderstanding of Islamic ideology, and he added further that using the labels "national state" or "Islamic state" would only confuse people more. He also reemphasized the importance of tolerance and protection for other religions.

Thus, for Natsir, the core of the problem was a problem of interpretation of the Pancasila. He writes that no one, including the founders of the Pancasila themselves had a monopoly over interpreting it, for this was a right that everybody shared. Indeed it is because of the nature of the Pancasila itself that, as has been stated by Suharto (the current president of Indonesia) "Pancasila is an open ideology" (Ma'arif, 1994). Therefore, Natsir, as an Indonesian, also had a right to interpret it. Consequently, he gave considerable thought to the problem of how to fulfill this open ideology. Natsir came to have the view that it should be fulfilled by Islamic teaching. The reason was, he strongly believed, that not one of the founders of the Pancasila ever agreed with a formulation of the latter that contradicted the teaching of Islam. Nevertheless, while the formulation of the Pancasila did not contradict the Qur'an, there was always the danger that if it were implemented with other elements, this could happen. Hence, he was of the view that the Pancasila would flourish only in the soil and climate of Islam. Furthermore, he believed that the Pancasila would be meaningless if it only paid a lip service to religion without really applying its principles in the daily life of individuals and groups, and in social and political affairs.

In short, Natsir basically did not see any contradiction between the Pancasila and Islam. He regarded its five ideal virtues as all being in line with Islamic teachings. This is illustrated by a series of rhetorical questions: 1) Would Islam, which teaches tawhid, arbitrarily contradict the idea of Belief in a Supreme God? 2) Would Islam, whose teachings are full of the duty to establish '*adalah ijtima'iyah*', contradict the idea of Social Justice? 3) Would Islam, which fights any feudalistic system or *istibdad* (dictatorship), and which teaches the foundations of *syura* (consultation), contradict the idea of the people's sovereignty? 4) Would Islam, which established the term "*islahu bain an Nas*" contradict the idea of Humanity? And 5) Would Islam, which supports the existence of nations and provides a healthy foundation for nationality, contradict the idea of nationality, i.e. the Unity of Indonesia?

However, he warned people not to regard the Pancasila as identical with Islam. This was, again, because the Pancasila would suit Islam or not depending on the interpretation made of the Pancasila itself. This was understandable, because Natsir himself interpreted the Pancasila within the framework of Islam, and its five principles as always living and developing in the context of Islam. Conversely, should the Pancasila be left in the hands of atheists or religious skeptics, its first principle would disappear and only its skeleton would remain. Natsir's opinion about this was clearly expressed in his speech to the Constituent Assembly, in 1957, when he refused to accept the Pancasila as the basis of the state, and proposed Islam for this function instead.

Many Indonesian political observers, including Munawir Sjadzali, have opined that there were some shifts in the development of Natsir's outlook concerning the Pancasila, beginning with what he stated in Pakistan and continuing up to his proposal to the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia in 1957 about the state's foundation (Sadzali, 1988). To be fair however, this shift must be seen in the context of how Natsir interpreted the Pancasila. One should consider also the fact that it was not only Natsir who interpreted the Pancasila differently; indeed, many people from different parties and outlooks also had their own interpretation of the Pancasila. Therefore, what Natsir proposed in his interpretation can also be seen as a counter-weight to the many other interpretations advanced.

Among the latter, for instance, was that made by Sutardjo, a leading PNI (Indonesia National Party) member. His interpretation, according to Alisjahbana (1961:149-150), was "a synthesis of indigenous Indonesian and Hindu cultural ideals, often called 'Kejawen' (Javanism), which totally rejects the ideas of a

man like Natsir, who attempts to think rationally and realistically about the world in the framework of a modernized Islam.” For Sukarno, the Pancasila could be summarized into an *ekasila* (single point), that is, *gotong royong* (lit. community self-help or mutual cooperation), wherein the principle of belief in the oneness of God disappears. This kind of summary of the Pancasila had strong support from the communist faction as expressed, for example, by Sakirman in his speech in the constituent Assembly (Maarif, 1988:143). In 1954, Sukarno commented in one of his own speeches to a meeting of the *Gerakan Pembela Pancasila* (Movement of the Pancasila Defenders) on the significance of the first *Sila*, Belief in one Almighty God:

Many of the nations, which have left behind the agrarian phase and have entered the phase of industrialism, have left their religiosity as I have said before, for they live in the realm of certainty. Even in this very phase the ‘isms’ which do not acknowledge the existence of God..., (such as) atheism came into being.”

This should indicate the situation and atmosphere in which the Constituent Assembly began its work in November 1956. It must have been clear to Natsir that the Pancasila, as interpreted by its own supporters, was regarded as identical with “secularism”. Consequently there were only two choices left on which to base the state: “religion” or “secularism”. Natsir had no other choice but to side with the religious option.

Unlike secularism, Natsir (1957:22) argues, “Religion provides a basis which is free from relativism ....Religion gives a permanent basis and stability.” For Natsir, the best religion was, of course Islam. This, according to Natsir, was due to the fact that the teachings of Islam provide all the requirements for the life of the state and society, in which pluralism and tolerance are fully protected and guaranteed (Natsir, 1957:11-12). On the question of who would be sovereign in a state based on Islam, Natsir was of the view that this sovereignty is vested in God. He is the absolute source of law and the values of life. Natsir (1957:39) believed that if the state philosophy were not based on the sovereignty of God, the decisions of the parliament would merely be “dry grains of sand which are meaningless.”

However, Natsir did not see a state based on Islam, at least as he imagined it, being a theocracy, wherein rule was invested the religious elite. Rather, he saw it in terms of an Islamic democratic state, which might be termed a Theistic Democracy (Natsir, 1957:39). What he probably meant by this term is that all rules and regulations stipulated by the government should be in accordance with the spirit of the *shari’a* and their application based on a democratic system.

In governing the Islamic state, according to Natsir, the government must base itself on *shura* (consultation). He derived this view from the Qur’anic verse, “...and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs.” Islam, according to him, had affirmed that the habit of consultation in governing a state, whether the life of society or the life of state, should be preserved, supported and encouraged. In line with this, he also argued that the government must gain the support of and recognition from the people. It must be involved in consultation on all matters concerning the life and interests of the people (Natsir, 1957:22). Nonetheless, as we have already noted, Natsir urged that the government should not be fully dependent on the decisions of the consultative assembly. On matters which are clearly stated in the Qur’an and the *Sunna*, the government should not await the decision or the blessing of parliament. All that needed to be discussed was, according to him, the way of carrying out the law.

Summarizing Natsir’s ideas on statehood, Maarif reaffirms that in dealing with and managing political affairs, unquestionably, the principle of *shura* has to play a pivotal role. The development and adaptation of the mechanism of the *shura*, however, depend on the *ijtihad* of the Muslim *umma*, because Islam did not set rigid rules in this respect. Furthermore, according to Natsir, an Islamic state is a synthesis between democracy and autocracy (dictatorship). But how this unique synthesis was to work, Natsir never really explained in full.

## CONCLUSION

Mohammad Natsir was a Muslim intellectual who devoted himself and his life to his people and his country. From our survey of his career, we can see that he was an important figure in the history of the Indonesian revolution. He was an independent as well as critical thinker who was always ready to participate in open debates and polemics in order to discover the truth. He did so not only with his own colleagues, but also with non-Muslims. It was never his intention to attack his opponents, even though he often found himself in the position of defending Islam.



His intellectuality was very much influenced by his early childhood, having grown up largely around modernist Muslims. Among of the most influential figures were A. Hassan and Agus Salim. Although some reformists such as Abduh also had an influence on him, this was only superficial. From his works, which remained fragmentary until his death, we can observe that he was more inclined to be an intellectual activist than a scholar. He never wrote a volume on one subject in any detail. His writings are much more a kind of response to social surroundings where he struggled for the cause of *dakwah*, which he consistently pursued until he returned to the life of an ordinary civilian.

Natsir was a democrat in the sense that even though he had his own ideas about the state, he still supported the government of the country. His thought and proposals about the Islamic state must be seen in the framework of democracy, because he always expressed his ideas democratically. At the time, he was of the hope that the Constituent Assembly could be a 'sanctuary', a place where people could express their ideas and confront others without a feeling of interference. Only thus did he feel that the Constituent Assembly could be useful for the state and the nation of Indonesia. He was furthermore, in general agreement with the provisions of the Pancasila as the philosophical basis of the state of Indonesia, as long as these were interpreted in line with the teachings of Islam.

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