

Establishment of Caliphate in Indonesia: Recent Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

The caliphate is home for the entire muslims ummah regardless of their nation of origins such as Indonesians, Turkish, Pakistani, Egyptians etc. In reality, however, the caliphate needs time to unite fragmented muslim nation under its singular authority. In the beginning, the caliphate will have to be formed in a certain region of the muslim world. As time goes by, the caliphate will expand its borders as more muslim pledge their allegiance and effectively persuade their respective national authorities to integrate into the fold of this new superstate. At least, there are four factors that guarantee the return of Caliphate state and some chances of the establishing the caliphate in Indonesia. It would not be easy because there are many challenges preventing the formation of Caliphate in Indonesia. In fact, the challenges seem to be more dominant than opportunities. But, with the will of Allah Ta'ala, all these obstacles and challenges will eventually be overcome.

Keywords: Establishment, Chaliphate, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, Challenges, Opportunities

Introduction

The caliphate is home for the entire muslims ummah regardless of their nation of origins such as Indonesians, Turkish, Pakistani, Egyptians etc. In reality, however, the caliphate needs time to unite fragmented muslim nation under its singular authority. In the beginning, the caliphate will have to be formed in a certain region of the muslim world. As time goes by, the caliphate will expand its borders as more muslim pledge their allegiance and effectively persuade their respective national authorities to integrate into the fold of this new superstate (Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani, *At-Takattul al-Hizbi*, hal. 7; M. Khair Haikal, *Al-Jihad wa Al-Qital fi al-Siyasah Al-Syar'iyah*, Juz I, page 323).

Therefore, it will be an interesting and timely topic to analyze the possibility of Caliphate to be formed in the largest muslim state in world, Indonesia. We aim to explain the following points: the probability of forming Caliphate state in Indonesia, and obstacles or challenges

facing Caliphate in Indonesia.

Guaranteeing Factors of Returning Caliphate

There are four factors that guarantee the return of Caliphate state as outlined by leader of Hizb ut Tahrir, Syaikh Atha Abu Rasyta. Having learnt these factors, one, we are convinced that the Caliphate will return to rule.

First, Allah has promised (*wa'dullah*) that Allah will grant ruling authority to those who believe and act righteously (QS An-Nuur [24] : 55).

Second, information of glad tiding as mentioned by Muhammad PBUH that the Caliphate in the way of prophethood will return replacing the era dictatorship (*mulkan jabriyatan*) as seen these days. Narrated by Hudzaifah bin Al-Yaman RA, Rasulullah PBUH said, "*Tsumma takunu Khilafah 'Ala Minhaj al-nubuwwah, tsumma sakata*" (HR Ahmad).

Third, the presence of mass movement demanding the return of the Caliphate and safeguarding its establishment (QS Ali 'Imran [3] : 110).

Fourth, the presence of groups that work sincerely, believed in the revelation, and convinced with what the Prophet PBUH, as shown in the following hadeeth collected by Muslim (HR Muslim) (See *Kalimah Amir*, journal *Al-Waie* [Arabic], edition No 258-259, Rajab - Sya'ban 1429 H / July - August 2008, page 5-6).

Chances of the Establishing the Caliphate in Indonesia

The chance or probability having the Caliphate established in Indonesia is highly likely in comparison to other muslim states where Hizb ut Tahrir (HT) is active like in Middle Eastern states. The seed of establishing the Caliphate in the Middle East where HT was founded has found stiff resistance due to extreme repression of the rulers who are agents of imperialist states. There are at least five factors supporting the possibility of having the Caliphate established in Indonesia:

First, support of Indonesian muslims to Hizbut Tahrir has gained traction as shown in (1) a number of surveys about public opinion regarding sharia and Caliphate, and Hizb Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). (2) different segments of Indonesian society have shown public support for HTI cause.

Setara Institute, a secular non-governmental organization (NGO) who has pushed for pluralism and human right issues and funded by USAID (*United States Agency for International Development*) has released in November a recent survey about social tolerance in Indonesian urban population.

The most interesting results of the survey showed that 34.6% of greater Jakarta residents (comprising several municipalities such as Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, and Tangerang) have

supported the idea of the Caliphate. On the other hand, 16.2% respondents admit did not know about Caliphate, and close to a half (49.2%) respondents reject the idea. Although those who disagree are in majority, Setara Insitute concludes that the idea of the Caliphate has been welcomed by significant portion of the society. Specifically in Bogor alone, those respondents who support the Caliphate (46%) is more than those who reject (42%).

Assuming that the survey may serve as surrogate barometer to measure public acceptance of ideas, Setara Insitute claimed that the results reflect the acceptance of the public to the concepts of Islamic Sharia and Caliphate system. On page 40, Setara stated,

“In line with idea, movement to promote Caliphate as an alternative ruling system has gained popularity. Though small, the support is real.” Moreover, “Claim of flowing supports for the ideas as voiced by these activists is not an illusion. It is real.”

This survey confirms what another survey has found, which was conducted by SEM Institute (an independent national polling organization) between March to April 2010. SEM surveyed 1220 respondents in 31 cities drawing from wide segments of the population such as members of the local and national parliaments, government officials (both national and local levels), judges, members of the media, Islamic groups and schools, NGOs, security forces (police and military), political parties, and general public.

The result showed that 65% of respondents support the cause to establish Caliphate and Islamic Sharia and 12% showed interest to join HTI movement. On the other hand 21% showed indifference and small minority 2% rejected the ideas. In conclusion, the majority of the respondents support HTI.

Asked about specific question surrounding Sharia and Caliphate, majority of respondents (74%) favored the implementation of Sharia rules, and 80% of them said that Sharia is the only answer to address national problems. Regarding Caliphate, 83% of respondents support the establishment of Caliphate and 65% of them were convinced that the Caliphate is able to unite the muslim ummah and remove injustice.

Admittedly, in the 1980s HTI mainly recruited college students or recent graduates. As time went by, HTI supporters have varied which include Islamic scholars, intellectuals and thinkers, students, laborers, farmers, and business owners.

The growing numbers and diversity can be measured in several conferences and public seminars organized by HTI. For instance, International Caliphate Conference that is the first HTI’s public event in year 2000 was attended by 5,000 people. Seven years later, another conference with the same title took place in national football stadium Gelora Bung Karno, the largest sport facility in the nation. This 2007 event drew a whopping crowd of 100,000 attendees representing many areas in Indonesia and abroad.

Beginning in year 2009, HTI has organized public gathering attended by more focused

audience. In July 2009, HTI sponsored National Islamic Scholars Conference attended by 7,000 scholars both local and international. In October 2009, HTI rallied Muslim Student National Congress that took place in Jakarta attended by 5,000 students. In March 2010, HTI organized Mukhtar Muballighah Indonesia that aimed to gather 6,000 muslim women preachers and activists both local and international. Lastly, in October 2010 HTI held Muslim Intellectual Conference at State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta with 100 participants of both academics and intellectuals representing different Indonesian universities to criticize United States-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership, which is a facade of American imperialistic ambition. Therefore the increasing popularity of HTI among different segments of Indonesian society may smooth the path of Caliphate establishment in Indonesia.

Second, notable HTI public existence and the ability of HTI to move freely in Indonesia. Launched in Palestine in the 1950s, HTI was founded by Shaykh Taqiyyudin an-Nabhani *rahimahullah* and has spread in more than 40 countries, including Indonesia. Started in 1980s in Indonesian small city of Bogor 60 kilometers south of Jakarta, HTI is now spread its influences over 300 cities in 33 provinces. Specifically in Java island, HTI branch offices are set up in villages as well. At the early stage, HTI activity was limited to campus environment training college students and young graduates. The repressive regimes of Suharto caused every Islamic movements went underground including HTI, which slowed recruitment process.

Moreover, as an Islamic group, HTI moves according to methods outlined and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. The movement begins with individual recruitment and culturing, interacts with the society at large, and culminates into the implementation of Sharia as an indicator of Islamic way of life. At the culturing phase, HTI must be careful where to start the movement and whom Islamic calling should be focused upon. At this stage, very few people on campus even aware of HTI existence.

Culturing phase may take years in limited geographical areas. Therefore, there was no growth in other areas. However, as time goes by, the call of Islam has begun to take root and spread. Thus, prominent existence of HTI and public gathering it organizes make the chance to Caliphate establishment in Indonesia is getting more likely.

Third, public trust to Indonesian ruling regime has steadily eroded. This fact is admitted even by Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) himself. When addressing the crowd on Tuesday February 2011 commemorating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, SBY specifically pleaded the people to trust the government (*Media Indonesia*, 19 February 2011).

It is strange for a President asking the people to trust the government, especially when SBY won the presidency by more than 60% of the vote and 80% approval rating. But recently the rating has dropped to about 54.6% in 2010 (*Al-Waie*, No 126, Year XI, February 2011).

Loss of public trust toward its government is actually expected, because the government or State has failed to perform its duties as shown in increasing level of poverty, school drop-outs, lack of affordable housing, education, and healthcare. Moreover, vulgar displays of moral decadence, corruption, crimes, pornography are getting worst by the day. Rampant corruption is shown by court proceeding against 148 of 244 elected public officials including 17 governors and city mayors on corruption charges.

It is no wonder that the public has lost its trust to the ruling authority, who has not set a better example. Recent policies have also made life worst. In 2011 alone, the government has increased its debt to 200.6 trillion rupiah. The burden of this huge debt falls into all citizens by form of ever increasing taxes.

According to official figures, there are 30 million poor citizens. This number may increase with the passing of new legislation that end state subsidy for energy and fuel prices. Definitely, the people will be poorer. Managing Director ECONIT Hendri Saparini predicted that this policy will affect 80 percent of small business owners and industries.

On the other hand, the end of fuel subsidy is a glad tiding for foreign companies investing in Indonesian lucrative market. There are 45 foreign gas stations, including 19 Dutch Shell and 5 French Total. They have been waiting patiently, not to seek reward from God, but to embrace the day state subsidy is to be lifted.

Having witnessed widespread failures, Indonesian Rectors Forum has stated its concerns that Indonesia has moved toward Failed State. In 2010, Indonesia ranked 61 out of 170 failed states (www.detik.com, 4/2/2011). Lost of public trust has reached its peak when prominent religious and public figures have released joint statement lambasting the government of committing lies and deception.

In this atmosphere of public distrust, HTI accelerated its campaign calling Indonesian people to change the regimes and the systems as well. Regime change means replacing individual rulers with muslim rulers who are capable and trustworthy. Moreover, the system must also be changed from democracy and capitalism into Islam and its Caliphate. Therefore, the erosion of public support may signal the likelihood of establishing Caliphate in Indonesia.

Fourth, Indonesia has enormous natural resources and huge population. that may serve as backbone supporting newly founded Caliphate. In 2009, Indonesian population is around 202.87 million people, of which 88.2% are muslims. The number of muslims in Indonesia contribute to about 12.9 % of global muslim in the world according to study by *Pew Research Center*.

Indonesia has 13,662 islands located in crossroads of international trading routes and main waterways in Southeast Asia (Malaka Strait, Lombok strait, and Sunda strait). Indonesia ranks 6th of country with rich sources of mining with annual production of 246 million tonnes, ranks 21 in producing crude oil with daily production of 1 million barrels, and ranks 6th in producing

gold contributing 6.7% of total world gold.

Indonesia is also rich with biodiversity with total forest area about 147 million hectare, farm fields 100.7 million hectare and fish production 6.2 million tonnes per year. These rich resources will help sustain the newly formed Caliphate state in Indonesia.

Fifth, Indonesia has historical experience in implementation of Islamic Sharia. This historical evidence has not been highlighted under secular perspective. If one only focused on Indonesian history starting on 1945, then there is a dark portrait of Islamic terror as shown by muslim rebellion with various forms of local Islamic State against national government in the 1950s. This unbalanced view gives dangerous notion in the mind of Indonesian people about dark experience when dealing with political Islam.

On the other hand, historical evidence shows that Islamic sharia has been implemented in Indonesian territory since the 7th century. Islam has entered the realm of politic and institutionalized being Islamic state. Perlak Sultanate (840-1292 M) was the the first Islamic state in what is now Indonesian province of Aceh, led by Sultan Alauddin Syed Muhammad Abdul Aziz Shah.

Since the formation of Sultanate Perlak (840 M) to the demise of Aceh Sultanate (1903 M), Islamic Sharia (read: being the ultimate political authority) has been implemented for around 1,000 years. Moreover, a close look at other parts of Indonesia prior to 1945 one would see various Islamic Sultanate in different islands of Indonesia such as Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, and Ternate (Anonymous, *Khilafah dan Jejak Islam: Kesultanan Islam Nusantara*, Bogor : Pustaka Thariqul Izzah, 2009, page 1-2; Salim Segaf Al-Jufri et.al, *Penerapan Syariat Islam di Indonesia Antara Peluang dan Tantangan*, Jakarta : Pusat Konsultasi Syariah, 2004, page 9).

This endogenous Islamic authority was put to an end by colonial powers such as Portuguese, Dutch, English, and Japanese (1602-1945 M), who forced the implementation of secular capitalistic ideology. Islam is largely confined into religio-social sphere instead of political sphere it used to enjoy for centuries. When Indonesia gained independence in 1945, secular-nationalistic group led by Soekarno-Hatta continued to implement secular ideology of the former colonial masters. Their struggle against the colonialists was merely competing for political interests instead of ideological struggle. Thus, Indonesian independence is a political independence but remain shackled with and bound by colonialist ideology.

With this overall historical perspective, one can see that Sharia being in authority in Indonesia is not a strange matter. Moreover, this fact has been consistently and deliberately overlooked by textbooks taught in all level of Indonesian education system. With the dawn of new reform, information of these pertinent and relevant historical facts begin to emerge and will contribute to the likelihood of establishment of Caliphate in Indonesia.

Obstacles Preventing Caliphate Establishment in Indonesia

Indeed there are many challenges preventing the formation of Caliphate in Indonesia. In fact, the challenges seem to be more dominant than opportunities. Contenders against Caliphate establishment come from two sources: (1) Indonesian government who is agent of colonial western powers, and (2) implementation of secular-capitalistic ideology. These challenges are not unique in Indonesia but commonly found in other muslim states as outlined by Shaykh Taqiuddin An-Nabhani:

أن الأمة الإسلامية منكوبة: ببلاءين أحدهما أن حكامها عملاء للكفار المستعمرين، وثانيها أنها تحكم بغير ما أنزل الله، أي تحكم بنظام كفر

“The muslim nation has suffered from two catastrophes. Their rulers become agents of the colonial masters. Moreover, they have been subjugated by alien law of disbelief instead of ruled by Law that is based on revelation.” (Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *Nida` Har*, page 112)

First, rulers who serve as agents of western powers especially the United States are impediments to Islam because they open Indonesia to foreign western hegemony and intervention.

Indonesian National Intelligence Office has identified three US based institutions such as World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and *United States Agency for International Development* (USAID) being the consultants of more than 72 Indonesian drafts of regulation and domestic policies that are fully laden with foreign interests. Moreover, they are the Big Bosses directing Berkeley Mafia, a collection of Indonesian technocrats who ruled the nation for years beginning in 1967.

The World Bank has been heavily involved in a number governmental Acts such as National Education Act (No 20 Year 2003), National Health Act (No 23 Year 1992), Electric Utility Act (No 20 Year 2002), and Water Resources Act (No 7 Year 2004).

Meanwhile, IMF is involved in drafting State-Owned Public Company Act (No 19 Year 2003) and Foreign Investment Act (No 25 Year 2007). USAID is also involved in domestic policies as shown in drafting Natural Oil and Gas Act (No 22 Year 2001), General Election Act (No 10 Year 2008), and Banking Act that is currently under revision by the government (<http://www.inilah.com/news/read/politik/2010/08/29/779571/kekuatan-asing-makin-cengkeram-ri/>).

When muslim rulers become agents of foreign powers, they build hegemonic structure so strong that is designed to withstand local challenges or rebellion. The structure itself is comprised of four actors who aim to implement neoliberal policies in different countries through globalization projects. These actors are (1) Capitalistic states such as the United States, England, France, and others, (2) Financial bodies or international trade regulators such as IMF,

World Bank, and WTO, (3) *Multi national companies*, and (4) Rulers of the Third World (Nanang Pamuji Mugasejati & Ucu Martanto (eds.), *Kritik Globalisasi & Neoliberalisme*, Yogyakarta: Fisipol UGM, 2006, page 7-8). Rulers of the Third World themselves, especially Indonesia, also build national structure to serve foreign interests, mainly military and economic (Bradley R. Simson, *Economists with Guns: Amerika Serikat, CIA, dan Munculnya Pembangunan Otoriter Rezim Orde Baru*, Jakarta: Gramedia, 2010, page 342).

However, recent history has taught us that western agents, though strong for a long time, will eventually collapse as the people are getting fed-up with lies. The fall of Suharto in 1998 is a real example. Contemporary examples in the muslim world show the fall of longtime Tunisian president Zine El-Abidin Ben Ali on 14 January 2011, followed by Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak on 11 February 2011. Recent trend may be repeated in challenging dictators in neighboring countries such as Libya, Bahrain, Yaman and others.

Faced with current challenges, HTI has concentrated its effort in different fronts. While continue to raise political awareness (*al-wa'yu al-siyasi*) among the muslim ummah, HTI also engages political struggle (*al-kifah al-siyasi*) to expose the treachery of muslim rulers and adopts muslim interests (*tabanni mashalih al-ummah*) in exposing the fallacies of national policies and providing alternative political system that is based on Islamic Sharia.

Second, implementation of secular capitalistic ideology by Indonesian rulers is entrenched in all life affairs including policies in political, economical, educational, media, and other socio-religio matters. These encompassing implementations are clear and present obstacles that poses serious challenges to Islam.

In political arena, secular ideology has been manifested state-sponsored deradicalization program that aims to stop the growing popularity of ideas supporting Caliphate and Sharia by using the issue of terrorism. Through the passing of presidential order No 46 year 2010, the government formed National Counter Terrorism Response Body (BNPT). BNPT is responsible to sterilize the terms *jihad*, *thaghut*, *Khilafah* and other 'sensitive' terms by sponsoring numerous muslim gatherings (*halaqah*). In these gatherings, BNPT socializes and desensitizes the term *Jihad* being 'holding out self ambition', *thagut* being 'holy stone to be worshipped', *khilafah* being not a religious obligation, etc (See *Al-Waie*, No 126, Year XI, February 2011).

In education, secular capitalistic ideology has heavily influenced the way Islam being taught to young generation. Islam in formal education is not being taught as an ideology, but a mere 'religion' in a western sense of a word, i.e. collection of ritual practices. Consequently, the products of secularization of Islamic education in state funded colleges and universities are graduates who reject sharia and caliphate.

Moreover, they also view reinstalling Caliphate is an illusion, as shown in book entitled *Ilusi Negara Islam Ekspansi Gerakan Islam Transnasional di Indonesia (Illusion of Islamic State as promoted by transnational Islamic movement in Indonesia)* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute,

The Maarif Institute, and Gerakan Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, 2009). As a response, HTI remains steadfast to the methods it adopted as exemplified by Rasulullah PBUH, i.e. by launching intellectual struggle (*al-shira' al-fikri*). Through several means and public dialogue, HTI has explained the fallacy of secular capitalistic ideology with all its derivatives and their contradiction to Islam. A number of HTI activists also wrote *Ilusi Negara Demokrasi (Illusion of Democratic State)* (Bogor: Al-Azhar Press, 2008) as a response to the book *Ilusi Negara Islam* that is highly misleading.

With its *al-shira' al-fikri*, HTI aims to propagate correct understanding of Islam and inculcate political awareness (*al-wa'yu al-siyasi*) amongst the muslim masses. Therefore, the ummah will be enlightened that their enemy is not Sharia and Caliphate, but it is the Capitalistic ideology, which has only begets misery and humiliation. Having been aware with this Islamic ideas, the muslim ummah will be empowered and ever motivated to support the emerging Caliphate.

Closing

The probability of forming the Caliphate in Indonesia is quite high, however, the obstacles are even quite daunting.

Yet, we believe with the will of Allah Ta'ala, all these obstacles and challenges will eventually be overcome. In reality, these obstacles are indeed falsehood (*baatil*) that will be destroyed by the truth (*al-haq*) with the help of Allah (*nashrullah*).

The United States *National Intelligence Council* in year 2004 predicted that the Caliphate will be formed in year 2020. Similarly, chairman of the Russian parliament Duma, Mikael Boreyev, in his book *Russia The Third Imperium* predicts in 2020 the majority of large countries will end and 5 new states will emerge including the Islamic Caliphate. Harvard professor Noah Friedman in his book *The Rise and The Dawn of Islamic State* also mentions the future establishment of the Caliphate.

As far as Hizb-ut Tahrir is concerned, 2020 is a bit too long. In political drama, changes may come abruptly. The collapse of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt are examples that changes will take place when the time has come. Having said, there is no surprise if the Caliphate is proclaimed tomorrow morning.

Wallahu a'lam bi al-shawab.

Notes

- 1) The author is the spokesperson for Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia.