

## A Comparative Analysis of Minority Political Participation from an Islamic Perspective in Indonesia and Singapore

\*Mujar Ibnu Syarif,<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Tholabi Kharlie,<sup>2</sup> Arip Purkon<sup>3</sup>  
Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Corresponding author: \*mujar@uinjkt.ac.id

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v9i2.11124>

Received: 19-08-2024

Revised: 11-19-2024

Accepted: 17-10-2024

Cite this article:

Syarif, M., Kharlie, A., & Purkon, A. (2024). A Comparative Analysis of Minority Political Participation from an Islamic Perspective in Indonesia and Singapore. *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam*, 9(2), 495-518. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v9i2.11124>

### Abstract

This study aims to examine the Islamic political concept of minority political participation and compare its implementation in the contexts of Indonesia and Singapore. The research is a qualitative study utilizing a comparative method, combined with descriptive and analytical approaches. The data sources are twofold: primary sources, such as the Constitutions of the Republic of Indonesia and Singapore, and secondary sources, including several academic works relevant to the research topic, sourced from both print and online media. Data analysis was carried out in four stages: data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings of this study indicate that political participation refers to the actions of citizens to influence government policies, enabling the government to be guided towards issuing egalitarian policies. Minorities in Indonesia include Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus, and Confucians, while minorities in Singapore comprise Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Confucians, Taoists, and atheists. Indonesia is a moderate country that blends Islamism and secularism, whereas Singapore is a secular state. The conclusion of this study reveals that most Islamic scholars argue that non-Muslim minorities cannot fully participate in politics unless in emergency situations. On the other hand, liberal Muslim intellectuals believe that non-Muslims can fully participate in politics, even outside of emergency contexts. The majority of Muslim intellectuals in both Indonesia and Singapore allow full political participation for minorities, including becoming

Copyright © 2024 Mujar Ibnu Syarif, et.al

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

president, as there are no restrictions in either country preventing minorities from holding the presidency. The comparative analysis shows that minorities in both Indonesia and Singapore have equal standing with the majority. However, in Indonesia, no minority has yet succeeded in becoming President, whereas in Singapore, Halimah Yacob, a Muslim minority, became the country's first female president.

**Keywords:** Southeast Asia; Indonesia; Singapore; minorities; political participation

## Introduction

It is undeniable that academic concerns remain among advocates of political equality for minority groups. The argument stems from the fact that in contemporary times, non-Muslim minorities who are citizens in Muslim-majority countries, such as Tunisia, Jordan, and Pakistan,<sup>1</sup> cannot fully enjoy their political rights. In these countries, they are unable to participate politically to become president. Conversely, in several Christian-majority countries, such as Argentina, Armenia, Bolivia, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, Hungary, the United Kingdom, Iceland, Switzerland, Costa Rica, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco, Norway, Samoa, Scotland, and the Vatican,<sup>2</sup> Muslim minorities also cannot fully obtain their political rights, as they are similarly prohibited from becoming head of state.

The writing of this article is an important and urgent agenda to raise international awareness of the importance of treating minority citizens, wherever they reside, on an equal level with majority citizens. In fact, the issue of minority political participation has been a key focus in research and policy in many countries, especially in Southeast Asia. However, the substance of this issue has not yet been fully understood comprehensively. This research is unique and intriguing as it not only discusses the Islamic political concept of minority political participation but also examines its implementation in Indonesia and Singapore.

Before this article was written and published, there have been several previous articles discussing minority political participation. For instance, Maria Sobolewska et al.<sup>3</sup> mentioned in their research that minority churches in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Mujar Ibnu Syarif, "Islamic Political Discourse on Nonmuslim Leadership in the Muslim State," *Jurnal Syariah* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 223–42.

<sup>2</sup> "Which Countries Are Officially Christian Republics?" Quora, accessed September 19, 2024, <https://www.quora.com/Which-countries-are-officially-Christian-republics>.

<sup>3</sup> Maria Sobolewska et al., "Understanding the Effects of Religious Attendance on Political Participation among Ethnic Minorities of Different Religions," *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 2 (2015): 271–87, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12081>.

United Kingdom have played an effective role in motivating their congregations to actively engage in politics. On the other hand, Marco Giugni et al. found that Muslims involved in cross-ethnic organizations are more likely to engage in political activities in Switzerland,<sup>4</sup> as these organizations provide them with the resources and social capital needed to participate politically. Francesco Palermo and Jens Woelk asserted that the right to political participation can only be effectively implemented if it is enshrined in the constitution.<sup>5</sup> Ghulam Mustafa et al. stated that during the Pakistan Movement, Muhammad Ali Jinnah admired the support from leaders of other religions for the creation of Pakistan. As a result, he promised to grant equal rights to Pakistan's non-Muslim minorities. However, after the establishment of Pakistan, these minorities experienced marginalization<sup>6</sup> and discrimination, as they are unable to participate politically to become the President of Pakistan. This is because the Constitution of Pakistan stipulates that only a Muslim can be the President of Pakistan.

Unlike some of the previous studies, which only discuss political participation in local contexts such as Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Pakistan, this study presents a novelty that has not been explored in earlier academic works, a comparative study on the implementation of the concept of political participation for minority groups in two countries located in Southeast Asia: Indonesia and Singapore. Additionally, the novelty of this article lies in its analysis of the political participation of Muslim minorities in a non-Muslim country. This discourse can be regarded as novel because this theme has rarely, if ever, been addressed in previous scholarly works, which typically focus on the political participation of non-Muslim minorities in Muslim-majority countries. The fundamental difference between this research and earlier studies is its focus on the political participation of minorities in Southeast Asia, particularly through a comparative analysis of the implementation of the political participation concept for minorities in Indonesia and Singapore—an issue that has yet to be addressed in previous research. This study aims to fill the gap in earlier research and make a significant contribution to enriching the existing political literature related to minority political participation.

Two hypotheses can be proposed in this study. First, the ongoing opinions of scholars who still oppose full political participation for minorities are

---

<sup>4</sup> Marco Giugni et al., “Associational Involvement, Social Capital and the Political Participation of Ethno-Religious Minorities: The Case of Muslims in Switzerland,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 10 (October 3, 2014): 1593–1613, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.864948>.

<sup>5</sup> Francesco Palermo and Jens Woelk, “No Representation without Recognition: The Right to Political Participation of (National) Minorities,” *Journal of European Integration* 25, no. 3 (September 2003): 225–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0703633032000133574>.

<sup>6</sup> Ghulam Mustafa et al., “Political Participation of Religious Minorities in Pakistan a Journey From Joint Electorate to Restoration of Joint Electorate,” *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 4, no. 4 (December 31, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v4i3.266>.

largely due to misunderstandings in interpreting Qur'anic verses regarding the political rights of minorities. According to proponents of this view, the verses prohibiting full political participation for minorities are permanent. However, these verses are, in fact, temporal. Second, misunderstandings also arise from misjudgments about the nature of a state. Those who view Indonesia as an Islamic state will certainly reject full political participation for minorities. As a result, adherents of this view will only allow non-Muslim minorities to hold political positions below the level of head of state. Conversely, those who view Singapore as an infidel state will undoubtedly prohibit Muslim minorities from actively participating in politics, as political participation in Singapore is seen as supporting infidelity.

To address the misunderstanding regarding the interpretation of the Madaniyyah verses that discuss the prohibition of granting full political rights to non-Muslim minorities who are citizens in Muslim-majority countries, which are often cited a contrario to also prohibit Muslim minorities from participating in non-Muslim countries, the method used to resolve this research issue is the new *naskh* method. Unlike the old *naskh* theory, which states that the Madaniyyah verses abrogate the Makkiyyah verses, the new *naskh* theory offers a different explanation. It suggests that the Madaniyyah verses, which are discriminatory towards non-Muslim minorities, such as verse 51 of Surah al-Ma'idah, delay the implementation of the more egalitarian spirit found in the Makkiyyah verses, such as verse 13 of Surah al-Hujurat, which were considered too progressive to be applied during the Prophet's time.

This research is qualitative, employing a comparative method combined with descriptive and analytical approaches. However, it is important to note that the comparative method used in this study is based on a theoretical approach regarding the political participation of minorities from the perspective of Islamic political thought. The data sources are twofold: primary data, primarily consisting of the Constitutions of the Republic of Indonesia and Singapore, and secondary data, which include several academic works closely related to the research subject, sourced from both print and online media. Data analysis is conducted in four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data collection stage, the most relevant data to the research focus is selected. During the data reduction stage, irrelevant data is filtered out, allowing the retention of data pertinent to the research theme. In the data presentation stage, the data is explained in a narrative, comparative, descriptive, and analytical manner. In the final stage, conclusions are drawn from the analyzed data.

This study aims to conduct an in-depth examination of contemporary Islamic political discourse on minority political participation, complemented by a comparative analysis of its implementation in the contemporary political contexts of Indonesia and Singapore. There are three fundamental research

questions addressed in this article. First, how is minority political participation viewed from the perspective of Islamic political thought? Second, what are the views of Muslim political theorists on minority political participation in Indonesia and Singapore? Third, when compared, in what aspects can minority groups in Indonesia and Singapore play their role in political participation?

## Discussion

### Political Participation from the Perspective of Political Experts

According to Joel D. Schwartz, the definition of political participation is the activity or action of citizens specifically designed to pursue<sup>7</sup> or achieve certain political objectives,<sup>8</sup> primarily aimed at influencing government policies. Mostafa Magdy Refaei identifies five types of formal political participation activities: (1) running for official political office, (2) voting in general elections or referendums, (3) joining a political party, (4) campaigning for a specific candidate or political party in an election, and (5) participating in other political activities through civil society organizations. Meanwhile, informal political participation includes six types of political activities: (1) participating in demonstrations and protests, (2) engaging in hunger strikes or civil disobedience, (3) violent activities against state institutions and symbols, (4) following political news by watching television or reading newspapers, (5) discussing political issues and matters with friends, family, colleagues, or coworkers, and (6) keeping up with political developments through social media, being active online via social networking sites, groups, and political blogs.

### Political Participation in International Law

According to Gregory H. Fox,<sup>9</sup> participatory rights were first formally declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. However, as the United Nations began codifying the list of human rights in the late 1940s, popular sovereignty emerged as the justification for the human right to participate in governance. This is stipulated in Article 21 of the UDHR, which states that "The authority of government must be based on the will of the people." To this day, participatory rights are considered not well-defined, posing little threat to traditional forms of sovereignty. The post-Cold War era has brought these rights into sharper focus, and the legal obligation to ensure citizens' participation has become clearer. Post-World War II human rights

---

<sup>7</sup> Joel D. Schwartz, "Participation and Multisubjective Understanding: An Interpretivist Approach to the Study of Political Participation," *The Journal of Politics* 46, no. 4 (November 1984): 1117–41, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2131245>.

<sup>8</sup> Thijmen Jeroense and Niels Spierings, "Political Participation Profiles," *West European Politics* 46, no. 1 (January 2, 2023): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2021.2017612>.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory H Fox, "The Right to Political Participation In International Law" 17 (1992).

conventions guarantee the right to political participation, primarily by requiring signatories to hold regular and fair elections.

One of the most widely ratified treaties guaranteeing participatory rights is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), established in 1976 and adopted by 105 countries by January 1992. Article 25 of the ICCPR contains three main guarantees regarding political rights: non-discrimination, the right to engage in public affairs, and the right to participate in free elections.

Critics often condemn the weak enforcement mechanisms for human rights. This claim appears stronger in the case of participatory rights. Unlike requirements that demand governments halt specific human rights violations, such as stopping the torture of political prisoners, the enforcement of participatory rights often requires a country to restructure its governance or constitutional system. One institutional enforcement mechanism that provides a unique opportunity to enhance the right to political participation is the General Assembly's delegation accreditation mechanism, which provides a global forum for the international community to debate the legitimacy of governments.

According to Thijmen Jeroense and Niels Spierings, the higher the level of public trust and satisfaction with government performance, the stronger the public's enthusiasm for political participation. Moreover, Angela X. Ocampo asserts that the desire to participate in politics to improve conditions<sup>10</sup> is also an important factor that can stimulate public enthusiasm for political engagement. According to Stutzer, having the opportunity to directly participate in the democratic process gives citizens the feeling that their desires are seriously considered in a fair political process.<sup>11</sup>

Political participation, according to Francesco Palermo and Jens Woelk, is part of the exclusive political rights of citizens. Therefore, someone who is not a citizen of a particular country cannot participate in politics, even if they have lived in that country for a long time. Relevant to this theory, the German Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the state of Schleswig-Holstein, which allowed foreign nationals who had been residing for more than five years to participate politically by voting in elections in Germany, was unconstitutional and contrary to the principle of democracy in the uniformity of the German federal state.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Islamic Political Perspective on Non-Muslim Minority Political Participation in Muslim Countries**

---

<sup>10</sup> Angela X. Ocampo et al., "The American Muslim Voter: Community Belonging and Political Participation," *Social Science Research* 72 (May 2018): 84–99, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.02.002>.

<sup>11</sup> Alois Stutzer and Bruno S. Frey, "Political Participation and Procedural Utility: An Empirical Study," *European Journal of Political Research* 45, no. 3 (May 2006): 391–418, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00303.x>.

<sup>12</sup> Palermo and Woelk, "No Representation without Recognition."

In Encyclopedia Britannica, minorities are defined as culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct groups living alongside, but subordinate to, more dominant groups. John Crowley defines a minority as an ethnic group<sup>13</sup> or citizens who are numerically fewer<sup>14</sup> compared to the majority citizens of a country. However, even with their smaller numbers, members of minority groups possess distinct ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics that set them apart from the majority. Additionally, according to Tooba Ahmad, although only implicitly, minority groups also share a sense of solidarity aimed at preserving their culture, traditions, religion, or language.<sup>15</sup>

Among Islamic scholars, there are three differing opinions regarding whether non-Muslims are permitted or prohibited from participating in politics in a Muslim country. The first opinion holds that non-Muslims are not allowed to participate in politics by holding any political positions in a Muslim country, especially the role of head of state. Advocates of this view include al-Jashshash, Ibn Arabi, and Sayyid Qutb. Among these scholars, Sayyid Qutb is the most adamant in rejecting non-Muslim political participation, particularly in becoming a top leader in a Muslim country. Qutb argues that Muslims' loyalty, until the Day of Judgment, can only be given to Allah and the Muslim community. The following verse is often cited to justify this position:

لا يتخذ المؤمنون الكافرين اولياء من دون المؤمنين ومن يفعل ذلك فليس من الله الا ان تتقوا منهم تقية  
ويحذركم الله نفسه والى الله المصير. (ال عمران / ٣ : ٢٨)

*Let not the believers take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers, and whoever does that has nothing to do with Allah, unless you protect yourselves against them as a precaution. And Allah warns you of Himself, and to Allah is the [final] destination. (Q.S. Ali Imran: 28)*

Unlike Sayyid Qutb, Ibn Kathir states that the prohibition against choosing non-Muslim leaders, as mentioned in verse 28 of Surah Ali Imran, does not apply in times of emergency, particularly when Muslims are politically oppressed.

The second opinion allows non-Muslim minorities to participate in politics by holding strategic political positions in a Muslim country, except for the position of head of state. Advocates of this view include Wahbah al-Zuhaili, al-Maududi, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi. According to Wahbah al-Zuhaili, aside from

<sup>13</sup> John Crowley, "The Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities," *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 1 (January 2001): 99–121, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512101221006>.

<sup>14</sup> Maja Savić-Bojanić, "Why Small Ethnic Minorities Participate in Politics: Comparing Jews and Poles in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *European Societies* 25, no. 2 (March 15, 2023): 281–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2022.2030488>.

<sup>15</sup> Tooba Ahmad et al., "Political Participation of Christian Minority In Pakistan: A Case Study of Sindh Province," *Russian Law Journal* 11, no. 3 (April 7, 2023), <https://www.russianlawjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/3038>.

the position of head of state, Muslims are permitted to grant other positions to non-Muslims, as demonstrated by past caliphs, such as the roles of state secretary and other less strategic positions.<sup>16</sup>

As additional support for the prohibition of non-Muslim minorities from becoming head of state for Muslims, al-Maududi references the following Qur'anic verse:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ... ﴿٥٥﴾

*Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession to [authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them...*" (Q.S. An-Nûr: 55)

Based on this verse, al-Maududi concludes that only Muslims can be granted the title of caliphs of Allah on earth. Therefore, in a Muslim country, key positions, especially the head of state, can only be held by Muslims. Non-Muslim minorities are not justified in participating politically to attain the position of head of state in a Muslim country. In line with this view, Yusuf al-Qaradawi asserts that the position of head of state in a Muslim country represents the leadership of Prophet Muhammad in both religious and worldly matters, and therefore, only Muslims can hold such a position.<sup>17</sup>

The third opinion permits non-Muslims to participate politically and hold all political positions in a Muslim country, including the most strategic position of head of state. The argument follows the new *naskh* theory, which holds that the verses prohibiting non-Muslims from becoming top leaders in a Muslim country, such as Surah al-Maidah verse 51, have expired. Therefore, they are no longer relevant for application.<sup>18</sup> Proponents of this view include Abdullah Ahmed al-Na'im, Asghar Ali Engineer, Mahmoud Mohammad Taha, Muhammad Sa'id al-Ashmawi, and Thariq al-Bishri.

Among these three views, the author agrees with the third group's opinion, which asserts that non-Muslims have the right to political freedom to compete for all political positions in a Muslim country. The reasoning is that the role of the caliphate is to govern and prosper the earth, and this responsibility is not exclusive to Muslims. Rather, it belongs to every human being, regardless of their location or religion. If this view is accepted, non-Muslims in a Muslim country should be granted full rights to political participation, allowing them to compete for any political position they desire, including participating in

<sup>16</sup> Wahbah al-Zuhaili, *al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah wa al-Manhaj*, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Mu'ashir, t.th.), volume 4: 56-59

<sup>17</sup> Mujar Ibnu Syarif, *Hak-bak politik minoritas nonmuslim dalam komunitas Islam: tinjauan dari perspektif politik Islam* (Angkasa, 2003), 69–70.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Sa'id al-Ashmawy, *Jihad Melawan Islam Ekstrim*, translated by Hery Haryanto Azumi from *Against Islamic Extremism*, (Depok: Desantara, 2002):181.

democratic elections to run for head of state. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in exercising their political rights, Muslims in various Muslim-majority countries are morally bound to elect a head of state from among their own, that is, someone who is Muslim. It is natural for Muslims to want their president to be a fellow Muslim, just as it is natural for non-Muslims to want their president to share their faith.

### **The Islamic Political Perspective on Muslim Minority Political Participation in Non-Muslim Countries**

Among Islamic scholars, there are two diametrically opposed views on whether it is permissible for Muslims to participate in politics in secular non-Muslim countries. Generally, scholars' opinions on this matter are divided into two camps. The first opinion holds that it is forbidden for Muslims to participate in strategic political positions in secular countries, particularly the role of head of state. One of the proponents of this view is al-Maududi. From al-Maududi's perspective, Muslims who participate in holding political office in non-Muslim countries are not only deviating from the teachings of the Qur'an but are also committing rebellion against Allah and His Messenger.<sup>19</sup>

There are three arguments put forward by those who oppose the political participation of Muslims in secular non-Muslim countries. First, participating in politics in a secular country is equated with supporting the disbelief embraced by the citizens of that country. Al-Zuhaili states that endorsing disbelief by a Muslim categorizes that person as a disbeliever. Additionally, by participating in politics in a secular country, Muslims are actively supporting a tyrannical government, which will result in severe punishment in hell. This is relevant to the following verse from Allah:

وَلَا تَرْكَبُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ (هود: ١١٣)

*And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the Fire, and you would not have besides Allah any protectors; then you would not be helped. (Q.S. Hûd: 113)*

Moreover, participating in politics in a secular country that is not governed by Allah's laws is the same as rejecting Allah's command that Muslims should structure their lives according to the laws He has revealed, as mentioned in the following two Qur'anic verses:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (المائدة: ٥٤)

*And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are the wrongdoers. (Q.S. Al-Mâ'idah: 45)*

---

<sup>19</sup>Asghar Ali Engineer, *Devolusi Negara Islam*, translated by Imam Muttaqin dari *Islamic State*, hlm. 214.

إِن الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ﴿يوسف: ٤٠﴾

*Legislation is not but for Allah.* (Q.S. Yusuf: 40)

Second, Muslims who participate in politics in a secular non-Muslim country are effectively helping to perpetuate the rule of disbelievers. This means that Muslims are assisting in sinful acts. Allah forbids Muslims from assisting one another in committing sins and acts of enmity, as stated in the following verse:

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ﴿المائدة: ٢﴾

*And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression."*  
(Q.S. Al-Mā'idah [5]: 2)

The third argument is that the opinion allowing political participation in secular countries based on the example of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph), who held a political position under a secular non-Muslim ruler, is not valid. This is because the political actions of Prophet Yusuf fall under the category of the laws of previous nations, which cannot be used as evidence for permitting political participation in secular non-Muslim countries.

The second group, which permits political participation by Muslims in secular non-Muslim countries, also presents three arguments. First, the Qur'an mentions that Prophet Yusuf, peace be upon him, held a political position as treasurer or finance minister in a non-Muslim country, Egypt, which at that time was ruled by a non-Muslim king, the Hyksos king. According to Ibn Luwaihiq, the story of Prophet Yusuf, peace be upon him, can serve as evidence for the permissibility of Muslims participating in politics in secular non-Muslim countries. It is true that the political participation of Prophet Yusuf falls under the laws of previous nations, but emulating the actions of Prophet Yusuf is still justifiable. This is because, unless altered, the laws of previous nations remain applicable to Muslims. According to al-Buthi, this is relevant to the principle that states, "The laws of those before us are also our laws, provided there is no evidence that abrogates them, such as the honoring of the Ka'bah, performing tawaf around it, the pilgrimage (Hajj), Umrah, standing at Arafah, and the sacrificial slaughter. All of these practices originated from and were inherited from the time of Prophet Ibrahim."

In line with this principle, Omar al-Ashqar argues that the permissibility of participating in politics in a non-Muslim country applies not only to Prophet Yusuf but also to the followers of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Therefore, Muslims living in contemporary times are permitted to engage in politics in modern non-Muslim countries. To support this view, Umar al-Ashqar cites the following Qur'anic verse:

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿يوسف: 56﴾

*And thus we established Yusuf in the land to settle therein wherever he willed. We bestow our mercy on which we will, and we do not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good." (Q.S. Yusuf: 56)*

From the verse fragment "We bestow Our mercy on whom We will" (نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ), it can be concluded that the permissibility of political participation in a secular non-Muslim country is not limited to Prophet Yusuf alone but also extends to the followers of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Second, political participation in a non-Muslim country is permissible for Muslims due to necessity, to achieve benefits and avoid harm. The state of necessity here includes situations where Muslims cannot obtain their political rights except by doing something otherwise prohibited. This is relevant to the principle of *al-darūrāt tubīḥul-maḥzūrāt* (necessity allows what is prohibited).

According to Muhammad Sulaiman Tubuliyak, if the lack of a political position prevents Muslims from eliminating injustice, then in such a situation, they are allowed to participate in politics to obtain political positions in a secular non-Muslim country. Holding a political position in a non-Muslim country may bring harm, but if the harm is outweighed by a greater benefit, such as helping other Muslims secure their social and political rights, then Muslims are permitted to hold political positions in a secular non-Muslim country, including becoming president or occupying other strategic political roles.

Third, the sin of disbelief committed by a non-Muslim leader in a secular non-Muslim country will have no effect on the Muslims who participate in politics in that country. As Allah says:

﴿أَلَا تَرَىٰ وَازِرَةً وَّزَّرَ أَخْرَىٰ﴾ النجم: ٣٨

*No bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another." (Q.S. An-Najm [53]: 38)*

Based on the arguments presented by the second group, the view that rejects Muslim political participation in secular countries on the grounds that it supports disbelief is incorrect and must be firmly rejected. This is because a Muslim involved in politics in a secular non-Muslim country may not necessarily aim to support the disbelief of the highest non-Muslim leader. Instead, their participation may be intended as a political tactic and strategy to protect themselves from the harm of the non-Muslim ruler. Such political tactics and strategies can be categorized as taqiyyah and are permissible. This is relevant to the Qur'anic verse, "Except to safeguard yourselves against them," which appears in Q.S. Āli 'Imrān: 28:

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكٰفِرِينَ اَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِيْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ تُقٰتًا (ال عمران: ٢٨)

*Let not the believers take disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. And whoever does that has nothing to do with Allah, unless to safeguard yourselves against them. (Q.S. Āli ‘Imrān [3]: 28)*

In addition to the historical example of Prophet Yusuf, peace be upon him, the political careers of two successful Muslim minority politicians who became presidents in non-Muslim-majority countries can serve as good precedents for Muslim minorities to participate in politics in non-Muslim-majority countries. The first is Abdul Pakir Jainul Abdeen Abdul Kalam, a Muslim president in India, where the majority of the population practices Hinduism. The second is Halimah Yacob, who was successfully inaugurated as the first female Muslim president of Singapore, a country where the majority of the population practices Buddhism.

### **Political Participation of Minorities in Indonesia**

Minorities in Indonesia include Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus, and Confucians. Meanwhile, the largest religious group in Indonesia is Muslims, comprising 88 percent of the population. The views of Indonesian scholars on the political participation of non-Muslim minorities in Indonesia are divided into six groups. First, the group that absolutely rejects the political participation of non-Muslim minorities, whether as members of the House of Representatives/MPR, president, minister, governor, regent, mayor, or village head. This view is held by, among others, the former leader of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Habib Rizieq Syihab. The argument of this group is based on the following verse from Allah:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾ (المائدة: ٥١)

*O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you—then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people. (Al-Maidah: 51)*

Second, the group that supports the political participation of non-Muslim minorities in holding all political positions, including the position of the highest leader or head of state of the Republic of Indonesia. This view is held by, among others, Abdurrahman Wahid. According to Abdurrahman Wahid, theoretically, a non-Muslim can become the president of the Republic of Indonesia because Indonesia is not an Islamic state, and there is no constitutional prohibition against non-Muslims becoming president. In Article 6, Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, Wahid explains, it is stated that every citizen of the Republic of Indonesia, regardless of religion, has the same right to become president of the Republic of Indonesia. However, since Indonesia has a Muslim-majority population, Gus Dur argues, it is natural that Muslims would choose a Muslim president.

According to Wahid, the rules in Indonesia are analogous to those in the United States. In the United States, Wahid asserts, every U.S. citizen—whether Muslim or non-Muslim, majority or minority, white or black, male or female—has the same right to become the president of the United States. While it is unlikely that a Muslim minority citizen will be elected as president in the United States, American Muslims are satisfied that, constitutionally, their right to become president is recognized, just like the majority groups. Additionally, Abdurrahman Wahid disagrees with the use of verse 51 of Surah al-Maidah as a basis to prohibit the election of a non-Muslim as president. He argues that the verse forbids taking non-Muslims as "*anliya*", meaning friends or protectors, not as "*umara*", which means leaders.

Third, the group that supports the political participation of non-Muslim minorities in emergency situations. This view is held by, among others, Kiai Zulfa Mustahafa, Rais Syuriah of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (PBNU), and Ibnu Abidin, Deputy Syuriah of the Jakarta Regional Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (PWNU). The argument used by this group is based on the following verse from Allah:

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكٰفِرِينَ اَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِيْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ تُقٰتًا  
وَيُحٰذِرْكُمْ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٢٨﴾ (ال عمران: ٢٨)

*Believers should not take disbelievers as guardians instead of the believers—and whoever does so will have nothing to hope for from Allah—unless it is a precaution against their tyranny. And Allah warns you about Himself. (Q.S. Ali Imran: 28)*

In addition to being based on verse 28 of Surah Ali Imran, the permissibility of accepting non-Muslim leadership in emergency situations is also based on the decision of the 30th Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Congress, held from November 21-27, 1999, at the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School in Kediri, East Java. The emergency situation referred to in the NU Congress decision must meet three criteria: 1) In areas where Muslims themselves are unable to handle the situation directly because there is no one within the Muslim community with adequate competence to address it; 2) In cases where someone within the Muslim community has the capability but there are strong indications that they will act treacherously; 3) The belief that entrusting the affairs of the state to a non-Muslim will bring clear benefits to the Muslim community. Based on the decision of the 30th NU Congress, Kiai Zulfa Mustahafa firmly stated that Muslims, especially members of NU, are obligated to choose a Muslim leader and that it is forbidden to elect a non-Muslim leader.

In line with this view, during the Jakarta gubernatorial election on April 19, 2017, Kiai Zulfa Mustahafa openly supported the Muslim candidates, Anies Baswedan and Sandiaga Uno, rather than the pair of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama and Djarot Saiful Hidayat, of which Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) was a non-

Muslim candidate. According to LSI (Indonesian Survey Institute), Basuki Tjahaja Purnama's defeat by Anies Baswedan can be seen as an indicator that the majority of Indonesian Muslims oppose non-Muslim leadership. This reality is reflected in the results of a survey conducted by LSI. LSI interviewed 1,520 respondents who were eligible voters at the time of the survey. The survey aimed to determine Muslim respondents' support for non-Muslim candidates running for president, vice president, governor, and mayor. For example, in 2016, LSI's survey showed that 48 percent of respondents were opposed to a non-Muslim president. By 2018, this proportion had increased to 59 percent. The survey had a 95 percent confidence level and a margin of error of 2.6 percent. According to Burhanuddin Muhtadi, a senior researcher at LSI, opposition to non-Muslim leadership intensified following the divisive campaigns during the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election.<sup>20</sup>

Fourth, there is the group that supports the political participation of non-Muslim minorities in all political positions, except for the position of head of state or president of the Republic of Indonesia. This view is held by figures such as Ali Yafie. The argument of this group is based on classical Islamic jurisprudence, which categorizes non-Muslim citizens under Islamic rule as *dhimmi*. In the *dhimmi-barbi* concept, non-Muslim citizens are considered subjects living under the rule of an Islamic state and are regarded as second-class citizens.

Therefore, *dhimmi* individuals do not have the full political rights that the Muslim majority enjoys. According to al-Mawardi, the highest position that *dhimmi* individuals can hold is that of *wazīr tanfidz* (executive minister). Based on the *dhimmi-barbi* concept, as adopted by Ali Yafie, minorities cannot become the head of state of the Republic of Indonesia. Responding to criticism that his view may lead Western societies to perceive Indonesia as discriminatory against non-Muslims and violating democratic principles, which demand equal treatment for all, Yafie argued: Is it fair for Western societies to demand something that is not applied in their own countries? Democracy in the Western world, especially in the United States and France—pioneers of the Renaissance and the first republics in Europe—is no more than a slogan, Yafie stated. In Europe, such as in France, Yafie continued, let alone demanding equal rights to become president, Muslim women in France are not even permitted to wear the hijab.

Fifth, according to Didin Hafidhuddin, if we refer to Indonesia's constitutional conventions over the past 50 years, the president has always been a Muslim. Therefore, based on this historical reality, Didin argued, it can be considered a convention that only a Muslim can be the president of the Republic of Indonesia. The sixth argument, presented by Ibrahim Hosen, posits that non-

---

<sup>20</sup> Sheany, "Most Indonesian Muslims Opposed to Non-Muslims in Political Leadership: Survey," accessed September 20, 2024, <https://jakartaglobe.id/news/most-indonesian-muslims-opposed-to-non-muslims-in-political-leadership-survey>.

Muslim minorities cannot participate in politics to become president of the Republic of Indonesia because Indonesia falls into the category of *Darul Islam* (an Islamic state) for two reasons. First, Muslims are guaranteed and protected in their rights and given the freedom to practice their religion. The Indonesian government also actively promotes and supports the spread and development of Islamic symbols. Second, the majority of officials in Indonesia, from the president to governors and other positions, are Muslims.

Islamic figures who hold a different view and support the candidacy of non-Muslims as *waliyyul amri* (president/head of state), according to Hosen, clearly no longer base their stance on the teachings and demands of their religion. Instead, they are oriented toward personal and worldly interests, possibly motivated by a desire to become ministers or hold other positions. If such individuals are referred to as *ulama* by society, Hosen argues that they are *ulama su'* (bad scholars).<sup>21</sup> Hosen's opinion on the Islamic state aligns with the views of Abdul Wahhab Khallaf, who defines an Islamic state (*Dar al-Islam*) as one in which Islamic laws are applied, and all citizens, both Muslim and non-Muslim (*dhimmi*), are equally governed under the rule of a Muslim leader.

Substantively, the definition of an Islamic state as formulated by Abdul Wahhab Khallaf includes two main criteria, as articulated by Ibrahim Hosen. First, the primary characteristic of an Islamic state is the implementation of Islamic law (*Sharia*). Second, the head of the Islamic state must be a Muslim. It is important to note that in the context of contemporary governance, these two criteria are no longer relevant as the primary parameters for categorizing a country as an Islamic state. In the modern era, in addition to these two criteria, two more should be added: first, the explicit mention in the constitution of the state's name as an Islamic state, and second, the explicit inclusion of Islam as the official state religion in the constitution.

An example of a country that includes these two additional criteria in its constitution is Pakistan. The designation of Pakistan as an Islamic state is found in Article 1. Meanwhile, the establishment of Islam as the official religion of Pakistan is enshrined in Article 2 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The full text of these articles reads as follows:

Article 1:

Pakistan is a Federal Republic known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, hereinafter referred to as Pakistan.

---

<sup>21</sup> Mujar Ibnu Syarif, "Political Discrimination against Non-Muslims in Contemporary Indonesia," in *Proceedings of 1st International Conference of Law and Justice - Good Governance and Human Rights in Muslim Countries: Experiences and Challenges (ICLJ 2017)* (1st International Conference of Law and Justice - Good Governance and Human Rights in Muslim Countries: Experiences and Challenges (ICLJ 2017), Serpong, Indonesia: Atlantis Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.2991/iclj-17.2018.16>.

Article 2:

Islam shall be the state religion of Pakistan.

If in empirical reality, there is a country that does not include the term "Islam" in its official name but still establishes Islam as the official state religion in its constitution, then such a country can still be categorized as an Islamic state. An example of such a country is Tunisia. The establishment of Islam as the official religion of Tunisia is outlined in Article 1 of the Tunisian Constitution, which reads as follows:

*"Tunisia is a free, independent, sovereign state; its religion is Islam, its language Arabic, and its system is republican."*

If we only refer to Abdul Wahhab Khallaf's definition of an Islamic state, as cited earlier, without adding the third and fourth criteria—namely, the use of "Islam" in the country's name and the explicit inclusion of Islam as the official state religion in the constitution—many people could fall into a serious mistake. According to Abdul Wahhab Khallaf's definition, if a country does not include "Islam" in its official name but still establishes Islam as its official religion in the constitution, that country can still be considered an Islamic state. Tunisia is an example of such a country, where the establishment of Islam as the official state religion is outlined in Article 1 of the Tunisian Constitution, which reads as follows:

*"Tunisia is a free, independent, sovereign state; its religion is Islam, its language Arabic, and its system is republican."*

If we only refer to Abdul Wahhab Khallaf's definition, as mentioned earlier, without adding the third and fourth criteria—namely, the use of the term "Islam" in the country's name and the explicit inclusion of Islam as the official state religion in the constitution—many individuals or parties could be misled into making a serious error. For example, based on Abdul Wahhab Khallaf's perspective on an Islamic state, someone like Ibrahim Hosen might strongly declare that Indonesia is an Islamic state. However, constitutionally, Indonesia is clearly not an Islamic state. This is because the 1945 Constitution does not include Islam as the name of the country, nor does it mention Islam as the official religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

### **Political Participation of Minorities in Singapore**

Minorities in Singapore include Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Taoists, Confucians, and atheists. The largest religious group in Singapore is Buddhists, comprising 33 percent of the population. According to Mohamad Hasbi bin Hassan, President of PERGAS (Association of Islamic Scholars and Teachers of Singapore), the views of Singaporean scholars regarding the political participation of the Muslim minority in Singapore are divided into two groups.

First, there is the group that forbids political participation by the Muslim minority in Singapore. This view is held by individuals such as Daniel, a Singaporean Muslim who sympathizes with and is influenced by the political doctrine of the terrorist group Islamic State (ISIS), and Abu Thalha bin Samad, a former member of the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Second, there is the group that supports the political participation of the Muslim minority in Singapore, which includes Singaporean scholars affiliated with MUIS (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore), PERGAS, and RRG (Religious Rehabilitation Group) Singapore.

The group that opposes the political participation of the Muslim minority in Singapore presents four arguments. First, a Muslim who participates in politics in Singapore is perceived as supporting the disbelief held by the majority of Singaporean citizens. Second, participating in politics in secular Singapore, which is not governed by Allah's law, is considered a violation of Allah's command that Muslims must make decisions based on Allah's law (Al-Maidah: 45), as only Allah has the right to legislate (Yusuf: 40). Third, Muslims who engage in politics in Singapore are seen as helping to perpetuate the rule of disbelievers, which means they are cooperating in sin. Allah forbids Muslims from working together in sin and enmity (Al-Maidah: 2). Fourth, the argument that political participation by the Muslim minority in Singapore is permissible by following the example of Prophet Yusuf, who held a political position under a non-Muslim ruler, is not accepted. This is because Prophet Yusuf's political actions fall under the category of the laws of previous nations (*syar'u man qablana*), which cannot be used as evidence for the permissibility of Muslim minority political participation in non-Muslim Singapore.

Based on these four arguments, a 17-year-old ISIS sympathizer, who was identified as Daniel by K Shanmugam, Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs, considered any Muslim who participates in politics in Singapore to be an apostate. Therefore, he believed it was permissible to kill them. After posting statements on social media expressing his support for ISIS and requesting that ISIS kill President Halimah Yacob, whom he deemed an apostate for becoming Singapore's president, Daniel was subsequently arrested by Singaporean security forces. In relation to this incident, the South China Morning Post wrote on its February 10, 2020, edition:

*"A 17-year-old Singaporean secondary school student has been detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for supporting the terrorist group Islamic State (ISIS). He was first investigated in September 2017 when he was 15 years old, after he posted a defaced image of President Halimah Yacob on social media and called for ISIS to behead her for supporting Singapore, which Daniel considered an infidel country."*

Regarding Daniel's statement that President Halimah Yacob had become an apostate for participating in politics as Singapore's president, Davina Tham<sup>22</sup> wrote in Channel News Asia:

*"He also adopted the group's us-versus-them worldview and saw Muslim public officials and politicians working for non-Muslim governments, like President Halimah Yacob, as apostates."*

The second group, which permits the political participation of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim Singapore, presents three arguments. First, the Qur'an mentions that Prophet Yusuf, as cited earlier, once held a political position as treasurer in a non-Muslim country, Egypt, which was then ruled by the non-Muslim Hyksos king.

Second, political participation in a non-Muslim country is allowed out of necessity to achieve benefits and avoid harm. If Muslims cannot obtain their political rights without doing something otherwise prohibited, then under the principle of necessity, they are granted a dispensation to do so. Holding political office in non-Muslim Singapore might bring some harm, but if the harm is outweighed by greater benefits, such as helping other Muslims secure their social and political rights, then Muslims are allowed to hold political office in non-Muslim Singapore, including becoming president or other strategic political positions.

Third, the sin of disbelief committed by a non-Muslim leader in Singapore will have no impact on the Muslims who participate in politics in non-Muslim Singapore. This is because the Qur'an states that no one will bear the burden of another's sin (Al-Najm: 38). Therefore, the argument put forward by the opposing group, which claims that the political participation of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim Singapore amounts to supporting disbelief, is incorrect.

When comparing the discourse on minority political participation in Indonesia and Singapore, we can identify both similarities and differences. The similarity is that both in Indonesia and Singapore, the opposition to minority political participation is influenced by militant views on the concepts of total loyalty (*al-wala'*) and total disassociation (*al-bara'*), which require Muslims to give their loyalty only to Allah, the Prophet, and the Muslim community. From the perspective of militant groups, as explained by Mohamed Ali, *al-wala'* is understood as total loyalty to Allah and Muslims, including loyalty to and solidarity with fellow Muslims, maintaining brotherly bonds with them, helping

---

<sup>22</sup> Davina Tham, "Student Detained under ISA Released on Restriction Order, Enrols for Post-Secondary Classes - CNA," accessed September 20, 2024, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/student-detained-under-isa-released-restriction-order-2456171>.

them, and empathizing with them. On the other hand, *al-bara'* is understood as complete disassociation from everything that Allah dislikes. According to Mohamed Ali, the concept of *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* promoted by militant groups is wrong and has negative implications for Islam and the Muslim community. Therefore, the version of *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* often promoted by these groups should be rejected. In this regard, Mohamed Ali states: "The misuse of the concepts of *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* has a negative impact on the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims and the image of Islam. It damages the image of Islam as a peaceful, compassionate, and harmonious religion. Moreover, the militant version of *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* prevents integration between different ethnic and religious groups, fosters intolerance, and leads to extremism and violence. The belief of militant groups that Muslims are forbidden from forming friendships with non-Muslims in the name of *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* is incorrect. Therefore, mainstream Muslims must challenge these militant groups and demonstrate that their understanding of *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* is wrong and inappropriate, especially in the context of Singapore today."

In response to the militant groups' view that prohibits Muslims from participating in politics in non-Muslim Singapore, Mohammad Alami Musa, the chairman of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), stated that they "firmly reject the notion that Muslims cannot live in a secular country and take any role in the government or as head of state." The Muslim community in Singapore is a clear example of confident Muslims who thrive in a secular, multi-religious context and actively contribute to public institutions and society as a whole. Religious authorities emphasize the importance of a strong religious foundation for young people and guidance from credible religious teachers, as well as a strong support network from family, teachers, and friends. Today, the majority of Singaporean Muslims accept the view of the MUIS chairman more readily than the opinion of a small number of militants in Singapore influenced by the political doctrine of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which requires Singapore's Muslim minority to immediately migrate to an Islamic country and forbids them from participating in politics in Singapore, which they consider a non-believer country.

As a counteraction to Jemaah Islamiyah's (JI) view, the minority Muslim community in Singapore, who currently reside, work, and participate in politics in their homeland, Singapore, sought a fatwa from Sheikh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi,<sup>23</sup> the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in Cairo, on May 26, 2006, at the Ritz-Carlton, Singapore, regarding whether it is permissible or forbidden for them to live and participate in politics in secular Singapore. In response to this question, Sayyid Tantawi firmly stated, "The answer is very clear, yes, it is permissible from

---

<sup>23</sup> Mujar Ibnu Syarif and Arip Purkon, "Habib Nuh's Contribution in Contemporary of Singapore Politics" 4 (2024), <https://www.e-jurnal.yadim.com.my/index.php/jurnal-yadim/article/view/175/85>.

the perspective of Islamic politics." His reasoning was that, although living as a minority, Singaporean Muslims enjoy religious freedom and have been granted permission to build no fewer than 70 mosques as their places of worship.<sup>24</sup>

When compared with one another, referring to the constitutions of Indonesia and Singapore, both minorities in Indonesia and Singapore have equal standing with the majority in securing full political participation rights, including the right to become head of state. Article 27 Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia states, "All citizens have equal standing before the law and the government and must uphold the law and the government without exception." In line with Article 27 Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, Article 12 Paragraph (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore also states, "All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law."

The Indonesian and Singaporean governments' policies, which guarantee equality in securing political rights for minorities, can undoubtedly have a positive impact on minorities by providing them with the same opportunities as the majority to democratically compete for all political positions, including the position of head of state. The situation in Indonesia and Singapore is similar to that in the United States, which, on paper, allows Muslim minorities in the United States to fully participate in politics, including becoming President of the United States. Therefore, although no American Muslim has ever been elected president in the more than 260 years of democracy in the United States, American Muslims are somewhat satisfied that, on paper, they are guaranteed the right to full political participation.

Given that egalitarian policies on minority political participation can have practical implications for securing full political rights for minorities, it is time for other countries around the world with similar situations to Indonesia and Singapore to adopt policies that guarantee equal political participation rights for minorities. On a practical level, the findings of this study are expected to be useful for policymakers or civil society organizations in improving political inclusion for minorities. For researchers with a strong interest in securing political rights for minorities, it is recommended that they conduct further research to explore certain aspects that have not been discussed in detail in this article.

## Conclusion

Most scholars hold the view that non-Muslim minorities cannot fully participate in politics in Muslim-majority countries, and therefore cannot become

---

<sup>24</sup> Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭanṭāwī, *Transcript of Inaugural Muis Lecture, Distinguished Visitors Programme: HE Dr. Sheikh Mubammad Sayyid Tantawi, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Cairo: 26 May 2006, Ritz-Carlton, Singapore* (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, 2006).

head of state, except in emergency situations, such as when Muslims are politically oppressed. Some liberal Muslim political observers hold the opposite view, arguing that non-Muslims can fully participate in politics, including becoming head of state in Muslim-majority countries, even outside of emergency situations. Their reasoning is that the verses prohibiting such participation are no longer applicable in contemporary times. The majority of Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia and Singapore allow minorities to participate in politics, holding any political office, including head of state, as there are no prohibitions against minorities holding these positions in either country. Only a small number of Indonesian citizens, influenced by radical Islamic teachings, primarily from the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), and Singaporean citizens influenced by radical Islamic doctrines, especially ISIS and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), hold the opposite view, prohibiting minority political participation. A comparative analysis shows that minorities in both Singapore and Indonesia have equal political standing with the majority. However, to date, no minority has been elected president in the Republic of Indonesia. Conversely, Halimah Yacob, a Muslim woman from Singapore's Muslim minority, has successfully been elected as Singapore's first female president.

## References

- Ahmad et al., Tooba. "Political Participation of Christian Minority In Pakistan: A Case Study of Sindh Province." *Russian Law Journal* 11, no. 3 (April 7, 2023).  
<https://www.russianlawjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/3038>.
- Crowley, John. "The Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities." *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 1 (January 2001): 99–121.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512101221006>.
- Fox, Gregory H. "The Right to Political Participation In International Law" 17 (1992).
- Giugni et al., Marco. "Associational Involvement, Social Capital and the Political Participation of Ethno-Religious Minorities: The Case of Muslims in Switzerland." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 10 (October 3, 2014): 1593–1613. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.864948>.
- Ibnu Syarif, Mujar. "Political Discrimination against Non-Muslims in Contemporary Indonesia." In *Proceedings of 1st International Conference of Law and Justice - Good Governance and Human Rights in Muslim Countries: Experiences and Challenges (ICLJ 2017)*. Serpong, Indonesia: Atlantis Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2991/iclj-17.2018.16>.

- Jeroense, Thijmen, and Niels Spierings. "Political Participation Profiles." *West European Politics* 46, no. 1 (January 2, 2023): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2021.2017612>.
- Mustafa et al., Ghulam. "Political Participation of Religious Minorities in Pakistan a Journey from Joint Electorate to Restoration of Joint Electorate." *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 4, no. 4 (December 31, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v4i3.266>.
- Ocampo et al., Angela X. "The American Muslim Voter: Community Belonging and Political Participation." *Social Science Research* 72 (May 2018): 84–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.02.002>.
- Palermo, Francesco, and Jens Woelk. "No Representation without Recognition: The Right to Political Participation of (National) Minorities." *Journal of European Integration* 25, no. 3 (September 2003): 225–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0703633032000133574>.
- Quora. "Which Countries Are Officially Christian Republics?" Accessed September 19, 2024. <https://www.quora.com/Which-countries-are-officially-Christian-republics>.
- Savić-Bojanić, Maja. "Why Small Ethnic Minorities Participate in Politics: Comparing Jews and Poles in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *European Societies* 25, no. 2 (March 15, 2023): 281–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2022.2030488>.
- Schwartz, Joel D. "Participation and Multisubjective Understanding: An Interpretivist Approach to the Study of Political Participation." *The Journal of Politics* 46, no. 4 (November 1984): 1117–41. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2131245>.
- Sheany. "Most Indonesian Muslims Opposed to Non-Muslims in Political Leadership: Survey." Accessed September 20, 2024. <https://jakartaglobe.id/news/most-indonesian-muslims-opposed-to-non-muslims-in-political-leadership-survey>.
- Sobolewska, Maria, Stephen D. Fisher, Anthony F. Heath, and David Sanders. "Understanding the Effects of Religious Attendance on Political Participation among Ethnic Minorities of Different Religions." *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 2 (2015): 271–87. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12081>.
- Stutzer, Alois, and Bruno S. Frey. "Political Participation and Procedural Utility: An Empirical Study." *European Journal of Political Research* 45, no. 3 (May 2006): 391–418. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00303.x>.
- Syarif, Mujar Ibnu. *Hak-hak politik minoritas nonmuslim dalam komunitas Islam: tinjauan dari perspektif politik Islam*. Angkasa, 2003.

- . “Islamic Political Discourse on Nonmuslim Leadership in the Muslim State.” *Jurnal Syariah* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 223–42.
- Syarif, Mujar Ibnu, and Arip Purkon. “Habib Nuh’s Contribution in Contemporary of Singapore Politics” 4 (2024). <https://www.e-jurnal.yadim.com.my/index.php/jurnal-yadim/article/view/175/85>.
- Ṭantāwī, Muḥammad Sayyid. *Transcript of Inaugural Muis Lecture, Distinguished Visitors Programme: HE Dr. Sheikh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Cairo : 26 May 2006, Ritz-Carlton, Singapore*. Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, 2006.
- Tham, Davina. “Student Detained under ISA Released on Restriction Order, Enrols for Post-Secondary Classes - CNA.” Accessed September 20, 2024. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/student-detained-under-isa-released-restriction-order-2456171>.

