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State-Centric versus Human Resource–Centric Khilafah: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

The concept of the *khilafah* has been reduced to a form of governance intended to replace Pancasila. As part of Islamic history, however, the *khilafah* carries significant strategic implications for the development of the Muslim community. This article examines the contestation of the khilafah concept between state-centric and human resource–oriented, contextual perspectives, and the extent to which a human resource–oriented reinterpretation of the *khilafah* can be offered as an alternative beyond the nation-state framework. Methodologically, the study employs a critical–interpretive discourse analysis based on a systematic review of academic literature and primary discursive data. The literature is classified into three groups: works that support the *khilafah* as a political system, works that reject it through the lens of modern state theory, and works that offer contextual reinterpretations of the concept. The primary data consist of public interviews and statements by Yudian Wahyudi, which are analyzed through thematic categorization, comparative interpretation, and contextual analysis. The findings demonstrate that while HTI's discourse remains confined to a rigid state-centric paradigm, Yudian's framework reconceptualizes the *khilafah* not as a system of state power but as an ethical and managerial responsibility oriented toward the development of qualified, competent, and morally accountable human resources capable of managing diversity (*ikhtilāf*) and responsibility (*amanah*). Theoretically, this reinterpretation advances a post-nation-state model of Islamic political ethics by positioning the *khilafah* as a portable moral vocabulary applicable across diverse political and cultural contexts for human development.

Keywords: *Khilafah;* State-Centric; Human Resource-Centric.

Abtrack

Konsep khilafah telah direduksi sebagai bentuk pemerintahan yang dimaksudkan untuk menggantikan Pancasila. Namun, sebagai bagian dari sejarah Islam, khilafah sejatinya memiliki signifikansi strategis bagi pembangunan umat Islam. Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana konsep khilafah diperdebatkan antara perspektif negara-sentris dan perspektif kontekstual yang berorientasi pada pengembangan sumber daya manusia, serta sejauh mana reinterpretasi khilafah yang berorientasi pada sumber daya manusia dapat ditawarkan sebagai alternatif yang melampaui kerangka negara-bangsa. Secara metodologis, penelitian ini menggunakan analisis wacana kritis–interpretatif yang didasarkan pada tinjauan sistematis terhadap literatur akademik dan data diskursif primer. Literatur diklasifikasikan ke dalam tiga kelompok: karya-karya yang mendukung khilafah sebagai sistem politik, karya-karya yang menolaknya melalui perspektif teori negara modern, serta karya-karya yang menawarkan reinterpretasi kontekstual. Data primer terdiri atas wawancara publik dan pernyataan Yudian Wahyudi yang dianalisis melalui kategorisasi tematik, interpretasi komparatif, dan analisis kontekstual. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sementara wacana HTI tetap terkungkung dalam paradigma negara-sentris yang kaku, kerangka pemikiran Yudian merekonseptualisasikan khilafah bukan sebagai sistem kekuasaan negara, melainkan sebagai tanggung jawab etis dan manajerial yang berorientasi pada pengembangan sumber daya manusia yang berkualitas, kompeten, dan bertanggung jawab secara moral, serta mampu mengelola keberagaman (ikhtilaf) dan amanah (amanah). Secara teoretis, reinterpretasi ini berkontribusi mengajukan model etika politik Islam

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melampaui negara-bangsa dengan memosisikan khilafah sebagai kosakata moral yang dapat diterapkan lintas konteks politik dan budaya untuk pembangunan manusia.

Kata Kunci: *Khilafah, Negara Sentris, Pembangunan Manusia Sentris.*

I. Introduction

The issue of *khilafah* has surfaced again in various parts of the world, including Indonesia. This aligns with the emergence of narratives that support the restoration of the *khilafah* system of government. There are groups, both in Indonesia and abroad, that see the *khilafah* as an ideal form of Islamic government that can bring Muslims to social justice and prosperity. They argue that the *khilafah* can address global injustices and provide solutions to political problems that occur in many countries, including Muslim-majority countries. One of the most striking forms of support for the idea of *khilafah* is the opposition to the dissolution of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). This organization openly advocates for the establishment of the *khilafah*. Some saw the dissolution of HTI by the Indonesian government in 2017 as a repressive measure against its struggle to establish a *khilafah* system. The existence of such traces can be observed in various publications that have deplored the dissolution of HTI (Abidin, 2019).

Some overconfidently conclude that the HTI *khilafah* is not contrary to Pancasila. They argue that the history of the emergence of the *khilafah* and Pancasila has prioritized the principle of deliberation as a source of fundamental law, emphasizing the spirit of morality, religious spirituality, as well as justice and the welfare of the people (Jiwandana, 2018). HTI supporters consider the concept of the HTI *khilafah* to remain relevant in Indonesia because, to date, the HTI has never carried out a physical seizure of power (Muhammadin, 2016).

This position has generated confusion regarding how the *khilafah* discourse should be addressed within Indonesia's pluralistic society. Some views try to question the dissolution of HTI with opinions that the *khilafah* should not be used as a phobic material because the majority of Indonesians are Muslims. They build a narrative whose orientation is to align with what HTI is doing because the enforcement of *khilafah* is part of the struggle and the right to carry out the teachings of Islam. According to them, Muslims must support the *khilafah* because HTI revives Muslims, frees them from the grip of secular law, and rebuilds the Daulah Islāmīyah in this world under the auspices of the Khilāfah Islāmīyah alā Minhāj al-Nubūwah, to practice Islamic laws and shari'a based on the revelation of Allah (Rafiuddin, 2015).

Supporters of the HTI *khilafah* consider the relevance of the *khilafah* state discourse in modern times. They consider that the *khilafah* discourse can be used to challenge the concept of a modern state that tends to favor Western civilization and colonize Islamic civilization (Setiawan & Risnandar, 2019). Support for the *khilafah* HTI uses a dogmatic approach by tending to sacralize the idea that the *khilafah* government system is in accordance with God's will and Muslims must implement it (Supriadi, 2021).

On the other hand, many views reject HTI's idea of *khilafah* and consider it an outdated system that is irrelevant to today's socio-political realities. Some are concerned that the implementation of *khilafah* has the potential to create social tensions, undermine the principles of pluralism, and threaten the stability of a democratic state. The HTI *khilafah* contradicts the principles of pluralism and Indonesian democracy

creates social tensions and undermines stability (Ma'ruf, 2024). The HTI *khilafah* rejects the concept of a globally recognized nation-state and has the potential to create political instability in pluralistic Indonesia. The implementation of a single, centralized *khilafah* contradicts the principles of democracy, pluralism, and human rights recognized in the Indonesian constitution. Such extreme interpretations of Islamic governance can incite extremism and threaten the stability of democratic states (Ganes Harpendya et al., 2023).

HTI's vision of the *khilafah* is also criticized for neglecting Indonesia's complex social, cultural, and religious plurality. Such a khilafah is a dream memory of the Islamic state civilization. The implementation of this dream can challenge pluralism and democratic stability (Naumkin & Kuznetsov, 2024). Therefore, although the *khilafah* can be seen as a religious ideal by some, its implementation is not in accordance with the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), which upholds justice, unity, and harmony between religious communities. The implementation of *khilafah* would threaten the stability of democracy by upholding a single interpretation of Islam and denying the rights of non-Muslims (Bar, 2016).

At the same time, the proliferation of counter-narratives opposing the *khilafah* raises concerns about the emergence of Islamophobia. When criticism of the *khilafah* becomes entangled with extremist imagery and securitization discourses, Islam itself is sometimes portrayed as inherently threatening. Negative stereotypes about Muslims, media influence, and the resulting anti-Islamic sentiments collectively contribute to the phenomenon of Islamophobia (Rashid et al., 2023). While criticism of the *khilafah* should focus on its political and social aspects, some may take it to the extreme and see Islam as a whole as a threat. Causes of Islamophobia include the materialization of terrorism, the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the perception of Wahhabism as radical (Rachman, 2018). Excessive fear of *khilafah* ideology may thus foster prejudice against Muslims more broadly, exacerbating social polarization and undermining interfaith relations.

Despite the growing volume of literature addressing the *khilafah* discourse in Indonesia, existing studies tend to be polarized between two dominant approaches. On the one hand, normative and ideological writings often sacralize the *khilafah* as an obligatory political system rooted in divine command. On the other hand, critical and policy-oriented studies predominantly frame the *khilafah* as a political threat associated with extremism, radicalism, and democratic destabilization. This polarization reveals a clear gap in the literature. There is a lack of systematic and constructive reinterpretations of the *khilafah* that move beyond political formalism and securitization, while remaining grounded in Islamic intellectual traditions and responsive to contemporary pluralistic contexts.

Debates on the *khilafah* often touch not only on religious aspects, but also involve political and social aspects. Without a clear and constructive explanation, these different views can lead to conflict or misunderstanding among existing groups. The *khilafah* can be understood constructively by examining its historical role in promoting morality and social justice, rather than viewing it solely as a political tool and a means of fighting for power (Adam et al., 2015).

Building upon this gap, this study offers a novel contribution by proposing a constructive reinterpretation of the *khilafah* that departs from dominant political and ideological readings. Drawing on an alternative perspective, the *khilafah* is

conceptualized not as a state-based political system, but as a framework of for abstract and ethical leadership (Djidin & Syamsuddin, 2019; Handoko & Farida, 2021; Khotimah & Sukron, 2023). This approach challenges the politicization of the khilafah promoted by Hizbut Tahrir while simultaneously avoiding Islamophobic reductionism that equates Islamic concepts with political extremism.

To answer this question, the study employs contextualist interpretation theory. Such an interpretation approach asserts that the meaning of any concept or text cannot be fully apprehended in isolation from the context in which it is articulated. Understanding this context is crucial for interpreters seeking to accurately convey intended meanings, particularly those that reflect the intricate fabric of contemporary realities (Kerwanto et al., 2024). Contextualism emerged as a critical response to interpretive models that treat textual meanings as fixed, universal entities, often detached from the socio-cultural or historical dynamics that shape them. Within this paradigm, meaning is inherently fluid, always contingent upon the cultural, political, and historical context from which it arises. Thus, interpretation must remain adaptive, sensitive to the evolving zeitgeist and contextual relevance. Several foundational thinkers have significantly shaped the development of contextualism, among whom Ferdinand de Saussure stands prominently. His structuralist theory of signs emphasized the relational nature of meaning within language systems. Saussure conceptualized the sign as a dyadic entity, comprising the signifier and the signified, each mutually dependent yet distinct in function (López García-Molins & Pruñonosa-Tomás, 2024).

Ludwig Wittgenstein similarly conceived of language as a form of social activity whose meaning is contingent upon its context of use. His notion of "language games" illustrates that the significance of words is rooted in their practical application within specific situational frameworks. This insight fundamentally challenges the notion of static linguistic meaning (Ye, 2024). In the realm of epistemology, David Lewis further advanced contextualism to account for how the standards for knowledge claims vary across differing conversational and situational contexts. He argued that the truth conditions of such claims are not fixed, but rather somewhat shaped by the context in which they are articulated, thereby highlighting the situational dependency of epistemic justification (Trinh, 2023).

Accordingly, this article addresses the following research question: How is the concept of the *khilafah* contested between state-centric and human resource–oriented, contextual views, and to what extent can a human resource–oriented reinterpretation of the *khilafah* be offered as an alternative beyond the nation-state framework? This question simultaneously structures the scholarly contributions of the study. In responding to it, the article makes four interrelated contributions. First, it explicates the *khilafah* as a state-centric political project by systematically analyzing Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia's ideological framework and its sacralization of political authority. Second, it reinterprets the concept of the *khilafah* beyond state power by employing Yudian Wahyudi's contextualist framework, which reframes the *khilafah* as an ethical and human resource–oriented principle rather than a model of governance. Third, it offers a comparative analytical synthesis between HTI's state-centric approach and Yudian's human resource–centric interpretation, highlighting their divergent implications for pluralism, democracy, and constitutional order. Fourth, it demonstrates the practical relevance of Yudian Wahyudi's framework by applying it to Indonesia's constitutional

and political context, showing how Islamic concepts can support democratic coexistence within a Pancasila-based state.

II. Method

This article employs a qualitative research design using Critical–Interpretive Discourse Analysis (CIDA) as its primary methodological framework. CIDA focuses on uncovering hidden meanings and the relationships among discourse, ideology, and power (Ghanizadeh et al., 2020; Terry, 2015). It is selected because it enables the study to examine how the meanings of the *khilafah* are discursively constructed, contested, and transformed within specific socio-political contexts, while simultaneously engaging with the normative and ethical dimensions of interpretation. Methodologically, this approach allows for a critical comparison between state-centric constructions of the *khilafah*, as promoted by Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), and human resource–centric reinterpretations, particularly those articulated by Yudian Wahyudi. Emphasis is placed on the contextual contingency of meaning and its ethical implications beyond the nation-state.

The data for this study consist of secondary and primary sources. Secondary data were obtained through a literature review of peer-reviewed national and international journal articles addressing the Khilafah, HTI, Islamic political thought, and contemporary critiques and reinterpretations of Islamic governance. The literature spans theological, political, legal, and socio-cultural perspectives, including works that explain and support the *khilafah*, those that critique it through the lens of the modern nation-state, and those offering contextualist and moderate reinterpretations.

This study adopts operational criteria to guide the selection and analysis of the literature. Based on these criteria, the reviewed literature is classified into three main groups. The first group consists of works that explain and support the *khilafah* as a comprehensive system of governance, often grounded in normative and ideological interpretations that emphasize its religious obligation and political centrality (Abidin, 2019; Amsori & Ernawati, 2020; An-Nabhani, 2001; Ats Tsaqofi et al., 2022; Bar, 2016; Fahrudin, 2021; Firdaus, 2021; Muhammadin, 2016; Naumkin & Kuznetsov, 2024; Rafiuddin, 2015; Sudarman, 2017; Supriadi, 2021). The second group comprises studies that critically examine and reject the *khilafah* by employing the conceptual framework of the modern nation-state (Adam et al., 2015; Alwanda Putra et al., 2024; Ganes Harpendya et al., 2023; Handoko & Farida, 2021; Heriansyah et al., 2022; Jiwandana, 2018; Rani Dewi Kurniawati et al., 2024; Setiawan & Risnandar, 2019). The third group represents a more moderate and contextualist strand of scholarship that seeks to reinterpret the *khilafah* in light of changing historical, social, and political contexts (Djidin & Syamsuddin, 2019; Noor, 2024; Silaban, 2023; Tobroni, 2022; Zainal, 2019). Positioned within this third strand, the present study moves beyond mere moderation through contextualization. It advances the argument that the *khilafah* should not only be reinterpreted to fit within the framework of the nation-state, but also reconceptualized beyond it. By shifting the analytical focus from state sovereignty to human development, this study proposes a human resource–oriented understanding of the *khilafah*.

The primary data consist of publicly available interview transcripts and televised discussions featuring Yudian Wahyudi, broadcast on Metro TV and TVRI in May 2017, which address the dissolution of HTI and the meaning of the *khilafah* in the

Indonesian context. Yudian Wahyudi is selected as a key informant for three main reasons. First, he is a prominent Muslim intellectual whose works explicitly engage with Islamic political concepts through a contextualist interpretive framework. In addition to his scholarly role, Yudian Wahyudi has served as Head of the Agency for the Development of Pancasila Ideology (BPIP) of the Republic of Indonesia (2020–2027), positioning him at the intersection of Islamic intellectual discourse and Constitutional Governance in Countering Ideological Challenges to Pancasila. Second, his arguments directly respond to HTI's ideological construction of the *khilafah*, making his discourse analytically relevant for comparative examination. Third, his reinterpretation moves beyond both ideological sacralization and political securitization by proposing a human resource–oriented understanding of the *khilafah*, which aligns with the study's analytical objective to explore applications beyond the nation-state.

Data analysis was conducted through several systematic stages, consistent with Critical Interpretive Discourse Analysis. First, data reduction was performed by identifying key texts and discursive segments relevant to constructions of the *khilafah*. Second, the data were subjected to thematic categorization, focusing on recurring discursive patterns, such as the *khilafah* as a political system, an ethical-moral framework, and an ideological symbol. Third, a comparative interpretive analysis was undertaken to examine contrasts between HTI's state-centric discourse and Yudian Wahyudi's human resource–centric reinterpretation. Fourth, the results of this analysis were mobilized to address the central research question by showing how the concept of the *khilafah* is contested between state-centric and contextual human resource–oriented paradigms, and by assessing the extent to which a human resource–oriented reinterpretation of the *khilafah* can function as a viable alternative beyond the nation-state framework.

To ensure analytical rigor and validity, this study applies several strategies. Source triangulation was employed by comparing arguments across multiple scholarly works and primary discursive materials. Interpretive transparency was maintained by explicitly linking analytical claims to identifiable textual evidence. The use of clearly defined operational criteria, thematic categories, and analytical stages enhances methodological clarity and replicability, allowing future researchers to apply the same framework to other contexts, actors, or Islamic political concepts. By combining critical analysis with contextual interpretation, the study maintains both normative sensitivity and analytical consistency.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

a. *Khilafah* as a State-Centric Political Project: HTI's Ideological Framework

Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) represents one of the most prominent Islamist movements advocating the re-establishment of the *khilafah* as a global system of governance. Within HTI's ideological vision, the *khilafah* is not merely a religious symbol or historical legacy. However, a comprehensive political project aimed at instituting an Islamic state that exercises centralized authority over society. HTI conceptualizes the *khilafah* as a single, unified system of government that would

implement Islamic law (sharia) in its entirety and replace existing political systems, including democracy and the modern nation-state. Although HTI did not participate in electoral politics and operated primarily as a pressure group prior to its dissolution, its political activities reflected a clear aspiration toward state power and regime transformation (Zainuddin & Suryaningsih, 2018).

At the core of HTI's ideological framework lies the belief that Islam is a total system governing all aspects of life, encompassing not only spiritual and moral dimensions but also political authority and state administration. From this perspective, the separation between religion and governance is regarded as Fundamentally incompatible with Islamic teachings. Consequently, the duty of the Caliph is defined as ensuring the comprehensive application of sharia across all domains of public and private life, including law, politics, economics, and social order (Amsori & Ernawati, 2020). This understanding positions the *khilafah* as an all-encompassing state apparatus, rather than a flexible or contextual form of leadership.

HTI's state-centric vision draws heavily on the ideas of Taqiyuddin An-Nabhani, the founder of Hizbut Tahrir, who articulated the *khilafah* as a universal form of government encompassing the entire Islamic world. For An-Nabhani, Islam is simultaneously a religion (din) and a state (dawlah), rendering political authority an intrinsic component of Islamic faith. The *khilafah*, in this formulation, is not confined by territorial boundaries or national sovereignty but is conceived as a transnational polity tasked with spreading Islamic governance globally as a continuation of the Prophet Muhammad's mission (An-Nabhani, 2001). This universalist claim fundamentally challenges the legitimacy of nation-states and situates HTI's ideology within a broader project of global political integration under a single Islamic authority.

In line with this perspective, HTI explicitly rejects the democratic system and the nation-state framework, particularly as implemented in Indonesia. Democracy is viewed as a political system rooted in human sovereignty that prioritizes popular will over divine authority, thereby contradicting what HTI considers the core principles of Islam. Moreover, democracy is often portrayed as serving capitalist interests and institutionalizing secularism by separating religion from governance. Similarly, the nation-state is regarded as a colonial construct that fragments the Muslim ummah and undermines Islamic unity. For HTI, these systems are not reformable but must be replaced entirely by the *khilafah* (Aswar & Faiz, 2024). This rejection underscores the movement's rigid state-centric orientation and its antagonistic stance toward pluralistic political arrangements.

The establishment of the *khilafah* is thus framed by HTI as a religious obligation derived from the Qur'an and the Hadith. Proponents argue that political authority must be centralized under a single Caliph who serves as the supreme leader of the Muslim community. This model of governance is presented not merely as an ideological aspiration but as a historical necessity grounded in the experience of classical Islamic empires. HTI frequently cites the periods of the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman Caliphates as evidence that centralized Islamic rule facilitated political stability, social order, and cultural advancement across various fields, including science, culture, and technology. The *khilafah*, in this narrative, is portrayed as a proven political institution rather than an abstract theoretical construct (Zainal, 2019).

Beyond historical justification, HTI advances the *khilafah* as a practical solution to contemporary challenges facing Muslims. The absence of a single governing

institution is believed to result in fragmentation, internal conflict, and moral decline within the Islamic world. From this standpoint, diversity and pluralism are often framed not as social realities to be managed, but as symptoms of political disunity that must be resolved through centralized authority. Accordingly, the struggle for the *khilafah* is presented as both an ideological commitment and a strategic necessity to preserve the continuity of Islamic teachings and ensure the holistic implementation of sharia.

Within HTI's governance model, the Caliph occupies a central position as the ultimate authority responsible for enforcing Islamic law in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. Governance is formally guided by the principle of shura (consultation), which is intended to prevent tyranny and arbitrary rule. The selection of the Caliph is based on deliberation and moral qualification rather than heredity or personal ambition. Ideal candidates are expected to possess extensive knowledge of Islamic law, strong leadership capabilities, and a commitment to public welfare. Nevertheless, despite these normative claims, political power remains highly centralized, as the Caliph retains decisive authority over state functions and legal enforcement (Sudarman, 2017).

HTI further conceptualizes the *khilafah* as a comprehensive system of governance that integrates religious principles into all aspects of state decision-making and administration. Political, legal, social, and economic policies are expected to derive directly from Islamic norms, leaving little room for secular legal frameworks or alternative sources of legitimacy. Within this framework, the *khilafah* is portrayed as the ultimate solution to the social, political, and moral problems confronting Muslim societies worldwide, including Indonesia. Welfare and social justice are believed to be achievable only through the consistent and comprehensive application of Islamic law under centralized authority (Heriansyah et al., 2022).

Two core teachings underpin HTI's khilafah project. First, the movement emphasizes the necessity of global Muslim unity under a single leader who governs both religious and worldly affairs. This unity is framed as a religious imperative aimed at restoring the purity of Islamic teachings and consolidating Muslim political power. In this vision, the Caliph functions as the supreme authority, exercising comprehensive control over state institutions and public life (Firdaus, 2021). Second, HTI promotes the *khilafah* as a political system that is inherently more just and morally superior to democratic and secular alternatives. By grounding authority exclusively in divine sovereignty, HTI argues that the *khilafah* can ensure social justice, welfare, and harmony more effectively than systems based on popular sovereignty (Alwanda Putra et al., 2024).

Taken together, HTI's ideological framework reveals a distinctly state-centric conception of the khilafah. The movement reduces the meaning of *khilafah* to a singular model of centralized governance, prioritizing political authority, legal uniformity, and territorial control. This rigid interpretation not only delegitimizes alternative forms of political organization but also leaves limited space for contextual adaptation within pluralistic societies. As will be discussed in the following section, such a state-centric understanding of the *khilafah* stands in sharp contrast to contextualist reinterpretations that decouple the concept from institutional statehood and reorient it toward ethical and human resource–based frameworks.

b. Reinterpreting *Khilafah* beyond State Power: Yudian Wahyudi's Contextualist Framework

Criticism of HTI's state-centric conception of the *khilafah* has emerged from various Muslim intellectual circles, particularly among scholars who view HTI's interpretation as incompatible with the socio-political realities of modern, plural societies. Many Muslim intellectuals argue that the rigid identification of *khilafah* with a centralized political state reflects a failure to contextualize Islamic governance in light of historical transformation and contemporary diversity. One of the most systematic and distinctive counter-narratives is articulated by Yudian Wahyudi, an Indonesian Muslim intellectual who employs a contextualist interpretive framework to reinterpret the concept of *khilafah* beyond formal state power.

Yudian's reinterpretation is grounded in the argument that contemporary Muslims often misunderstand the *khilafah* by treating it as a timeless and universally applicable political institution. According to him, the dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 marked a fundamental rupture in Islamic political history, ushering the Muslim world into the era of the nation-state. Prior to the First World War, political authority was organized mainly around religious empires. After the dissolution of the *khilafah*, however, Islam ceased to function as a state system and instead became embedded within national political structures as a subculture rather than a sovereign authority. This historical shift necessitates a re-evaluation of Islamic political concepts, including the *khilafah*, in light of changing political contexts (Wahyudi, 2017b).

While acknowledging the historical grandeur of the *khilafah* as a political institution, Yudian challenges the claim that the dissolution of the *khilafah* constitutes the primary cause of contemporary crises in the Muslim world. Yudian argues that such a claim may hold explanatory value in specific contexts, particularly Palestine, but cannot be generalized to all Muslim societies, including Indonesia. For Yudian, the political tragedy of Palestine is historically linked to the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate and subsequent colonial domination. In contrast, Indonesia's historical trajectory demonstrates a fundamentally different relationship between Islam, political authority, and nationhood (Wahyudi, 2017b).

To substantiate this position, Yudian employs a comparative historical analysis. Palestine became part of the Ottoman Caliphate in 637 AD and remained under Ottoman rule until British forces defeated the Ottomans in 1917 AD. Following the formal dissolution of the *khilafah* in 1924 AD, the establishment of Israel in 1948 AD occurred within territories previously controlled by Britain, resulting in the dispossession of Palestinian land. From this sequence, Yudian concludes that the absence of a *khilafah* directly contributed to Palestine's political vulnerability (Wahyudi, 2017b). In this sense, the *khilafah* may be contextually relevant to Palestine's historical experience.

In contrast, Yudian demonstrates that Indonesia's historical experience does not support the *khilafah* as a viable political solution. During the height of Ottoman power, particularly between 1453 AD and 1511 AD, the Nusantara region experienced political decline rather than liberation. In this time, the Ottomans emerged as a global superpower after conquering Constantinople and consolidating Islamic dynasties. However, key Islamic polities in Southeast Asia, such as Malacca and Ternate, fell to European colonial powers during this period. Moreover, between 1453 AD nd 1917

AD, despite the continued existence of the Ottoman Caliphate, the Islamic world did not intervene to free the Nusantara from colonial domination (Wahyudi, 2017a).

Paradoxically, Indonesia achieved independence and national unity only after the dissolution of the *Ottoman Empire, not the khilafah*. The unification of the Nusantara and the emergence of Indonesian sovereignty were driven not by aspirations to restore a caliphal state, but by nationalist movements rooted in local historical consciousness and anti-colonial struggle. This historical reality leads Yudian to conclude that the application of *khilafah* as a political system in Indonesia is fundamentally ahistorical. The concept fails to meet the historical prerequisites necessary to function as a form of political ijtihad for Indonesian statehood (Wahyudi, 2017b).

Indonesia's constitutional history further reinforces this conclusion. Prior to the proclamation of independence in 1945, intense debates took place among the founding fathers regarding the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state. Although proposals emerged to establish a state informed by Islamic values, none advocated the *khilafah* as the basis of governance. The absence of the *khilafah* in these foundational debates indicates an early awareness that the concept was no longer suitable as a political framework for Indonesia. Instead, the founders sought to reconcile religious values with national unity through Pancasila, reflecting a contextual political ijtihad responsive to Indonesia's plural society.

Yudian's contextualist approach is further articulated through his linguistic and theological analysis of the term *khilafah*. He argues that the word *khilafah* has no explicit Qur'anic formulation as a political system. Rather, it is a human-constructed term denoting leadership. Islamic leadership has historically taken various forms, namely: ri'ayah, imarah, sulthanah, imamah, and zu'amah. This demonstrates that no single model is divinely mandated. *Khilafah* is neither a pillar of Islam nor a pillar of faith; its form is ijtihadiyah, meaning it is open to contextual interpretation and human choice. Consequently, state restrictions on *khilafah* movements in Indonesia do not constitute limitations on religious freedom, as no religious obligation exists to establish a caliphal system (Wahyudi, 2017b).

The most innovative dimension of Yudian's reinterpretation lies in his redefinition of *khilafah* as a human resource management framework rather than a system of state governance. Drawing on Qur'anic exegesis of Al-Baqarah (2:30), Yudian notes that the verse refers to the concept of *khalifah* without specifying political authority or religious prerequisites. He interprets a *khalifah* as an individual capable of managing *khilāf* (errors) and *ikhtilāf* (differences). Those unable to manage diversity and complexity, he argues, belong not at the forefront (*khalifah*) but at the rear (*khalaf*). Thus, the essence of *khilafah* lies in competence, ethical responsibility, and the ability to govern diversity, rather than in centralized political power (Wahyudi, 2017a)

Through this contextualist framework, Yudian fundamentally decouples the *khilafah* from state sovereignty and reorients it toward ethical leadership and professional capacity within society. This reinterpretation offers a constructive counter-narrative to HTI's state-centric ideology by reframing *khilafah* as a moral and functional principle that is adaptable to pluralistic, democratic contexts, such as Indonesia. In doing so, Yudian's approach not only challenges ideological sacralization of political authority but also offers a conceptual foundation for integrating Islamic values within modern nation-states without resorting to political absolutism.

2. Discussion

a. HTI (State-Centric *Khilafah*) vs. Yudian (HR-Centric *Khilafah*)

The divergent interpretations of *khilafah* advanced by Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and Yudian Wahyudi reveal a fundamental epistemological and conceptual cleavage in contemporary Islamic political thought. While HTI conceptualizes the *khilafah* as a state-centric, transnational political project aimed at restoring centralized Islamic sovereignty, Yudian reinterprets the *khilafah* as an ethical and managerial framework centered on human capacity, leadership competence, and contextual responsibility. This section provides a comparative analytical synthesis of these two positions, highlighting their contrasting assumptions, methodological orientations, and implications for the Indonesian socio-political context.

At the level of ontological assumption, HTI treats the *khilafah* as an essential and obligatory political institution whose absence is regarded as the primary cause of Muslim decline. Drawing on Taqiyuddin An-Nabhani, (2001) ideological framework, HTI sacralizes the *khilafah* as a singular, divinely sanctioned model of governance that transcends historical contingency and territorial boundaries. Within this framework, political authority is centralized, uniform, and hierarchical, with the state serving as the principal vehicle for implementing Islamic law in its entirety. As demonstrated in the above subsection, this interpretation reduces the *khilafah* to a rigid institutional form, marginalizing alternative expressions of Islamic governance and ethical leadership.

By contrast, Yudian Wahyudi's approach is grounded in a contextualist ontology that rejects the essentialization of any single political model. For Yudian, the *khilafah* is not a fixed political institution mandated by scripture, but an ijtihādī concept whose meaning and function are shaped by historical circumstances and social needs. Rather than locating the essence of the *khilafah* in state sovereignty, Yudian relocates it in human agency, specifically, the capacity to manage khilāf (error) and ikhtilāf (difference). This human resource–centric (HR-centric) reinterpretation decouples the *khilafah* from formal state power. It reframes it as an ethical principle of leadership and governance applicable across diverse political systems (Wahyudi, 2017b, 2017a).

Methodologically, the two frameworks also diverge sharply. HTI employs a doctrinal and ideological methodology that privileges textual literalism and normative deduction over historical and sociological analysis. Its discourse constructs an idealized image of the classical *khilafah* while neglecting the plurality of political forms that characterized Islamic history. This methodological reductionism leads HTI to universalize a particular historical configuration and project it onto contemporary societies regardless of contextual differences. Consequently, when situated within Indonesia's pluralistic and constitutional framework, HTI's *khilafah* project generates significant conceptual and contextual contradictions (Rani Dewi Kurniawati et al., 2024).

Yudian, in contrast, adopts a historical-comparative and contextualist methodology. His analysis of Palestine and Indonesia illustrates how the political relevance of the *khilafah* varies across contexts. While the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate may plausibly explain certain aspects of Palestine's political vulnerability, Yudian demonstrates that Indonesia's independence, unity, and constitutional development occurred independently of the *khilafah* and, in fact, after its dissolution.

This historical evidence undermines HTI's universal causal claim. It supports Yudian's argument that the *khilafah* cannot be uncritically imposed as a political solution in Indonesia without violating historical logic and social reality (Wahyudi, 2017b).

The implications of these competing frameworks become particularly evident when examined in light of Indonesia's foundational principles. HTI's state-centric *khilafah* stands in tension with Pancasila, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), and the constitutional commitment to pluralism and democratic participation. By promoting a centralized and transnational authority, HTI's model risks marginalizing non-Muslim citizens and undermining social cohesion in a religiously and culturally diverse society (Ats Tsaqofi et al., 2022; Silaban, 2023). In this sense, HTI's *khilafah* discourse is not only politically contentious but also sociologically and constitutionally incompatible with Indonesia's nation-state framework.

Conversely, Yudian's HR-centric reinterpretation offers a more constructive and integrative alternative. By redefining *khilafah* as a form of ethical leadership and professional competence rather than a blueprint for state formation, Yudian aligns Islamic values with democratic coexistence and constitutional order. His framework allows Islamic moral principles to inform public life without demanding the dismantling of existing political institutions. As such, it avoids both the ideological sacralization of political authority characteristic of HTI and the political securitization of Islamic symbols that often accompanies state responses to transnational Islamist movements.

In a comparative perspective, HTI and Yudian represent two contrasting trajectories of contemporary Islamic political reasoning. HTI embodies a state-centric paradigm that seeks certainty through institutional uniformity and ideological closure, whereas Yudian advances a contextualist paradigm that embraces plurality, historical awareness, and ethical functionality. This vis-à-vis analysis demonstrates that the debate over the *khilafah* is not merely about political form, but about competing epistemologies of Islam's role in modern society. By foregrounding the HR-centric reinterpretation, this study contributes a constructive counter-narrative that transcends binary oppositions between secularism and Islamism, offering a pathway for reconciling Islamic moral traditions with the realities of pluralistic nation-states such as Indonesia.

b. Human Resource–Centric *Khilafah*: Contextualist Applications beyond the Nation-State

Yudian Wahyudi's reinterpretation of the *khilafah* represents a decisive shift from a state-centric paradigm toward a human resource–centric understanding of Islamic leadership, one that is particularly relevant to Indonesia's constitutional and pluralistic political order. Rather than conceptualizing the *khilafah* as a formal system of state governance, Yudian reframes it as a framework for managing human capacity, competence, and ethical responsibility within society. This reinterpretation allows Islamic values to be meaningfully integrated into public life without demanding the establishment of an alternative political system that would contradict Indonesia's constitutional foundations.

Central to Yudian's argument is the claim that the Qur'an does not mandate a specific political institution known as the *khilafah*. He notes that Al-Baqarah verse 30 does not explicitly mention the term *khilafah* as a system of governance, but rather refers to the concept of the khalifah as a human role. Importantly, this verse does not

establish religion as a formal prerequisite for becoming a *khalifah*. Yudian interprets the khalifah as an individual capable of managing *khilāf* (error) and *ikhtilāf* (difference or diversity). Those who lack this capacity are, metaphorically, positioned as *khalaf* (those who fall behind). Thus, leadership is defined not by political sovereignty but by competence, responsibility, and the ability to navigate pluralism (Wahyudi, 2017a).

This conceptual move has significant implications for how *khilafah* can be operationalized within Indonesia's political system. Yudian expands the meaning of khalifah to encompass professional human resources across various sectors. Drawing again on the Qur'anic narrative of Adam, he emphasizes the importance of al-asma' (names), which he interprets as knowledge, expertise, and professional qualifications. These "names" constitute the foundational capital for building civilization and are directly linked to what Yudian terms *menang tanding*—a competitive selection process based on merit and capability (Wahyudi, 2017a).

When translated into the Indonesian constitutional context, *menang tanding* corresponds to existing mechanisms of recruitment and leadership selection within the state. Indonesia employs multiple systems to fill public offices and professional positions, including general elections for the President and legislative bodies (DPR, DPD, DPRD), direct presidential appointments for ministers, institutional nominations for Constitutional Court justices, and merit-based examinations such as Computer-Assisted Tests (CAT) and open selection processes for civil service and bureaucratic leadership positions. Rather than being incompatible with Islamic principles, these mechanisms can be understood as contemporary expressions of the Qur'anic logic of qualification-based leadership selection (Wahyudi, 2017b).

Within this framework, eligibility to participate in the *menang tanding* process is determined by professional qualifications rather than religious identity. To become a judge, one must possess legal expertise; to serve as a medical professional, one must meet medical standards; to manage public administration, one must demonstrate technical and ethical competence. Yudian argues that this professionalized understanding of *khilafah* aligns more closely with both Islamic teachings and Indonesia's constitutional requirements than does the state-centric model proposed by HTI. Consequently, the discourse on *khilafah* in Indonesia should be understood as a discourse on human resource development rather than state formation (Wahyudi, 2017a).

This interpretation also resolves a key tension between Islamic commitment and loyalty to the Pancasila-based state. From Yudian's perspective, Indonesia does not require a *khilafah* as a system of governance; instead, it requires a multiplicity of *khalifahs*—professionals who fulfill their responsibilities with competence and integrity across all sectors of national life. The Republic of Indonesia urgently needs doctors, legal scholars, engineers, educators, public administrators, security personnel, and other professionals who embody ethical leadership within their respective fields. In this sense, devotion to Islam is expressed through excellence in professional service and contribution to public welfare within the framework of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Wahyudi, 2017a).

By prioritizing human resource empowerment over political formalism, Yudian's framework offers a constructive and contextually grounded alternative to state-centric Islamist narratives. It reorients Islamic political responsibility toward cultivating intelligent, ethical, and globally competitive citizens who can advance

social justice and national prosperity. This emphasis resonates strongly with Indonesia's ongoing developmental challenges, particularly in education, skills enhancement, and ethical governance. As Tobroni, (2022) observes, such an approach enables Islamic teachings to function not merely as doctrinal symbols but as practical moral resources for societal advancement.

More broadly, this reinterpretation allows the *khilafah* to operate beyond the nation-state as a portable moral vocabulary rather than a territorial project of sovereignty. Detached from claims to exclusive political authority, the concept can travel across different constitutional, cultural, and political settings as an ethical framework emphasizing responsibility, competence, and moral accountability. In this sense, the study advances a post-nation-state understanding of Islamic political ethics, demonstrating how Islamic concepts can support democratic coexistence across diverse political and cultural contexts while remaining faithful to their moral and intellectual foundations.

The shift from a state-centric to a human resource–centric understanding of *khilafah* allows Islamic values to be embedded within Indonesia's constitutional democracy without generating ideological conflict or political exclusion. Yudian Wahyudi's contextualist reinterpretation thus provides a viable pathway for reconciling Islamic moral traditions with democratic governance, pluralism, and the practical demands of modern statehood.

IV. CONCLUSION

The debate over the concept of the *khilafah* unfolds along two fundamentally different conceptual lines: a state-centric political view, as articulated by Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), and a contextual human resource–oriented view, as developed by Yudian Wahyudi. These competing interpretations not only diverge in their understanding of political authority and governance but also lead to markedly different implications for how Islamic political concepts may function in contemporary and post-nation-state contexts. Within HTI's ideological framework, the *khilafah* is constructed as a comprehensive state-centric political project aimed at restoring a unified Islamic sovereignty under a single caliph. This view regards the *khilafah* as an institutional necessity for the comprehensive implementation of Islamic law, positioning state power as the primary vehicle for maintaining religious and legal order.

In contrast, Yudian Wahyudi advances a contextualist reinterpretation that deliberately disengages the *khilafah* from state sovereignty and institutional domination. Drawing on historical analysis and Qur'anic interpretation, Yudian argues that the *khilafah* is not a divinely mandated form of state governance but an ijtihādī concept whose meaning is contingent upon socio-historical contexts. Rather than conceptualizing the *khilafah* as a political system, he redefines it as a framework for human resource development, emphasizing ethical competence, professional qualification, and the capacity to manage diversity (*ikhtilāf*) and error (*khilāf*). This reinterpretation reframes leadership as a functional and moral responsibility for human development rather than a claim to sovereign power.

A comparative synthesis of these two views highlights a crucial analytical shift. While HTI's state-centric approach sacralizes political authority and collapses Islamic ethics into institutional control, Yudian's human resource–centric framework

decentralizes power. It relocates Islamic political meaning within the domain of ethical agency and professional responsibility. The contrast reveals that the dispute over the *khilafah* is not merely about institutional preference but about fundamentally different epistemologies of Islam, governance, and social order. Yudian's approach challenges the assumption that Islamic political authenticity requires a singular state form, offering a plural and adaptive ethical vocabulary in its place.

Yudian's human resource–centric reinterpretation enables the *khilafah* to operate beyond the nation-state as a portable moral and ethical framework rather than a territorial project of sovereignty. In this sense, the *khilafah* becomes applicable across diverse political systems, supporting democratic coexistence, constitutional governance, and pluralistic societies without demanding institutional homogenization. By focusing on the cultivation of qualified, ethical, and socially responsible individuals, Yudian's framework enables Islamic political ethics to make constructive contributions to global discourses on governance, leadership, and social justice. The *khilafah*, thus reimagined, functions not as an alternative state but as a post-nation-state ethical resource capable of engaging contemporary political realities while remaining faithful to its moral and intellectual foundations.

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