



COUNTERING ISLAMIC STATE IDEOLOGY:
VOICES OF SINGAPORE RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS

"Countering Islamic State Ideology: Voices of Singapore Religious Scholars edited by Muhammad Haniff Hassan and Rohan Gunaratna is an important work proving that the Islamic State (IS) is a master at propagating "fake news". Reading Hassan and Gunaratna's timely book will explain how the IS manipulates passages from the Qur'an and other theological texts out of context to fit its own quest for followers and power. The authors also advance the notion that countering IS is best done by Muslims whose interpretations of Islam's theological works are predicated on forgiveness, hope, prosperity and peace. A must read for seekers of truth."

Brigadier General (Ret) Russel Howard
Distinguished Senior Fellow, Joint Special Operations University,
and, Founder Director, Combating Terrorism Center
United States Military Academy, West Point

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WITH A FOREWORD BY
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Al-Wala' (Loyalty) To Government In The Context Of Muslim Minority In Singapore¹

— Muhammad Haniff Hassan

Introduction

Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara' (WB) known as “Loyalty and Disavowal” is a popular concept professed by activists of *da`wah* and Islamic movement.

The WB concept of loyalty and disavowal comes with the tide of Islamic revivalism that arrived in Southeast Asia and the Malay region in the late 1970s. It had tremendous influence on Islamic revivalist (popularly known also as *da`wah*) movements, regardless of whether they operated as a social or political movement.

WB could be regarded as an ideological pillar to these movements. However, WB is not unique to the region's *da`wah* movements because the same features could be found in similar movements internationally such as the Muslim Brothers, Hizb Al-Tahrir and Salafiyah.

The concept of WB is generally understood as an important pillar of Islamic faith (*`aqidah*) that must be embraced by all Muslims, failing which, a person's faith is seriously defected to the extent that he may not be regarded as Muslim anymore. This incorrect aspect of WB is unfortunately widely understood among *da`wah* activists and propagated by *da`wah* movements to Muslim youths and society at large.

This article seeks to address and clarify this misunderstanding. It argues that WB concept is not among the fundamental matters in the Islamic faith. It is a concept that is formulated and based on *ijtihad* (human effort to deduce meanings from Islamic scriptures). As such, WB concept should not be regarded as an absolute truth that cannot be critically reviewed, reconsidered or closed to disagreements.

This article will cover three broad areas. Firstly, it gives a broad introduction of WB concept and a short history of its emergence in the last century. Secondly, it highlights the negative effects arising from WB concept through the experiences of various global *da`wah* movements since early last century to date. Finally, the article ends by highlighting the primary reason of these negative effects in order to support the argument that the permissibility of reviewing and reformulating Islamic ruling pertaining to al-wala', specifically towards non-Muslim government for minority Muslims living in non-Muslim countries, such as Singapore.

WB concept

WB is a concept that seeks to protect the purity of the Islamic faith. The concept determines to whom Muslims should (known as *al-wala'*) and shouldn't (known as *al-bara'*) give their loyalty, obedience and love.

Within the WB concept, three important elements of *al-wala'* must be upheld by Muslims:

1. *Al-Wala'* to the one and only God through absolute obedience and submission to His shari`ah (Islamic law) and, as a consequence, to manifest complete *al-bara'* from all man-made laws that are not in line with the shari`ah.
2. *Al-Wala'* to the Prophet by adhering to his authentic Sunnah (traditions) and, as a consequence, to manifest *al-bara'* from any man-made laws that are not in line with the shari`ah.
3. *Al-Wala'* to fellow Muslims in general and to specifically a Muslim ruler and, as a consequence, to manifest *al-bara'* from all non-Muslims, non-Muslim ruler and non-Islamic authorities.

Both *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* are constituted as inseparable; the former cannot be fully upheld without the latter. *Al-Wala'* is often framed as having positive sentiment (love, fraternity, etc.) and *al-bara'* is the opposite (hate, enmity, etc.).

While the WB concept pertains primarily to the domain of Islamic faith, its consequences extend to the day-to-day social life of a Muslim. It also expounds on how Muslims should relate with non-Muslims and non-Islamic institutions.¹

For the purposes of this article, the focus will be on the Islamic ruling of giving loyalty and allegiance to a non-Muslim ruler or non-Islamic authorities or appointing a non-Muslim as a state leader.

Influence of WB concept

Emergence of WB as a concept came from the early writings by Al-Qahtani, published as a book in 1982 titled *Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara' Fi Al-Islam*. This particular book is arguably the most famous reference on the WB.²

Many subsequent volumes were published on the same topic after Al-Qahtani's book. However, one volume that had an important contribution in popularising WB concept after Al-Qahtani's is *Al-Islam* published in 1988 by Sa'id Hawwa, a leader of Syrian Muslim Brothers who lived in exile in Saudi Arabia as a professor.³

WB concept were discussed by Muslim scholars during classical period and can be found in many works of that period. Unfortunately, they were scattered under various topics, not under one coherent WB concept. Combining these scattered discussions under the WB concept in a single volume is a recent trend that began in the last few decades of the past century and the influence could be traced from the works of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, whose ideological lineage could be traced to Sheikh Muhammad bin Taimiyah, a 14th century scholar who has tremendous influence on contemporary *da'wah* movements.

The **history** of WB concept is similar to the emergence of *Al-Tasawwur Al-Islami* (aka Tasawwur Islam, Islamic Worldview) as a subject within Islamic studies. The latter exists as a coherent topic in Islamic studies like *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Tawhid* (Islamic Creed), *Usul Al-Fiqh* (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence) and *Tasawuf* (Sufism) only until the last decades of the 20th century as a result of the Islamic revivalism and became popular in the 1980s.

In the Malay region, *Al-Tasawwur Al-Islami* and WB concept are rarely taught as a subject by students in traditional *pondoks* (Islamic traditional boarding schools). They are taught in modern religious schools and as a module in institutes of higher learning.

Although the **emergence** of WB as a concept occurred in recent times, it has its basis in the Qur'an and hadith (the Prophet's tradition). In fact, the words *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* and their derivatives are plentiful in the Qur'an.

It is the discussion on the verses that contain *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* as a standalone theme that is a fairly recent trend. Furthermore, the treatment of these verses is closely linked to the author's perception of the realities that they are facing.

The **influence** of WB concept could be seen from its spread and acceptance by society. Today, it can be found in *Al-Tasawwur Al-Islami* which is taught as a subject at religious schools at a secondary school level in majority Muslim countries in the region. In Malaysia, *Tasawwur Islam* which contains elements of WB is offered as a subject at national schools. The issues under WB concept are regarded as a mainstream understanding of Islam. Books related to the concept are sold abundantly in mainstream bookstores. Articles propagating WB could be read in mainstream newspapers and issues related to it are frequent topics for public religious talks at public mosques.

Negative effects of WB concept, criticism and root problem

The focus on negative effects of WB provides a primer for the need to have a contextual understanding of Islam with regards to Muslims' relationships with non-Muslim authorities faced by a significant segment of Muslims living as minorities in non-Muslim countries.

The following highlights several negative influences of WB concept:

- ❖ The justification for *takfir* against fellow Muslims due to differences of opinion in issues under WB concept.
- ❖ The justification for armed rebellion against Muslim authorities.
- ❖ The justification for shedding blood of fellow Muslims.
- ❖ The social exclusivism i.e. tendency to live separately or far away from other non-Muslim communities.
- ❖ The self-righteousness (holier-than-thou attitude) towards those who have different views on issues under WB concept.⁴

Root problem

It has been mentioned in the preceding paragraphs that WB concept has its basis in Islamic scriptures. The methodology used in its formulation is part of the accepted methodology within the field of Islamic studies. Many of the WB concept's propositions fall within the domain where disagreements are acceptable in Islam. This is similar to the disagreements in jurisprudential issues within or among the four accepted schools (*mazhab*) of Islamic jurisprudence.

It can be observed that many proponents and subscribers of WB concept do not manifest the negative effects. They are able to keep an open mind and accept differing views with an open heart. However, the real problem lies in the absolutist attitude towards WB concept held by some of its proponents and subscribers. The absolutist attitude here refers to the belief that WB concept and the issues under it are absolute or the divine truth that cannot be challenged. To them, there cannot be an alternative interpretation. Often, this is simply framed as the issues of the fundamentals of faith or pillars of religion or divider between Islam and *kufr* (disbelief); where any disagreement or contestation constitutes a serious challenge or a rejection of faith leading to apostasy. In this regard, there cannot be any compromise in WB related issues because it is tantamount to nullification of the *shahadah* (Muslim's testimony of faith), or at the very least, to major heresy.

In addition, the absolutist attitude in upholding WB concept has resulted in:

- ❖ treating what are not definitive scriptural evidences (*qat'iyyat / muhkamat*) as definitive,
- ❖ framing issues that are not religious fundamentals incorrectly as fundamentals,
- ❖ denying space for permissible disagreements,
- ❖ suppressing criticism in the name of preservation of faith,
- ❖ self-righteousness because of the belief that there cannot be disagreements,
- ❖ generalisation that all non-Muslims are anti-Islam and cannot be appointed as ruler,
- ❖ binary thinking i.e. either you are with us or against us.

However in stark contrast to the preceding paragraph, WB concept is a product of human *ijtihad* and not from a definitive divine source. This statement of *ijtihad* stems from the following examples below.

First example pertains to the meaning of the words *al-wala'* and *al-bara'*. The etymology of both words can carry several meanings in Arabic. For example, love, loyalty, friendship, rulership in reference to *al-wala'* are just a few possibilities. There is no definitive scriptural evidence that supports a definitive meaning for *al-wala'* or *al-bara'*.

This can be compared with the discussion on the meaning of the word “*mawla*”, which shares the same root word with *al-wala'*. There is a famous hadith known as the *Ghadir Qum* between Sunni and Shi'ite scholars. In the hadith, the Prophet reportedly said, “Of whomsoever I had been *mawla*, Ali here is to be his *mawla*. O Allah, be a supporter of whoever supports him (Ali) and an enemy of whoever opposes him and diverts the truth to Ali...” (Narrated by Ahmad)

According to Sunni scholars, the Prophet's statement is not a definitive scriptural evidence for Shi'ite's claim that Ali (the Prophet's son-in-law) and subsequently his descendants is the rightful caliph after the death of the Prophet because the word “*mawla*” does not necessarily mean imam or leader in Arabic.⁵

Second example lies in the notion of *al-wala'* towards God, the Prophet and fellow believers. Hypothetically, do the three entities carry the same notion and status?

A careful look at the three entities highlight that they neither carry the same notion nor status. *Al-Wala'* to God is absolute. Consequently, absolute *al-bara'* from other Gods than Allah is necessary.

However, *al-wala'* to the Prophet is not as absolute as to God. Muslims are not commanded to uphold absolute *al-bara'* from other Prophets. In fact, Muslims are required to believe in Prophets other than Muhammad.

In the same vein, must *al-wala'* to fellow believers be understood as total *al-bara'* from all non-believers/non-Muslims?

Third example relates to the verse, "...for they who do not judge in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high are, indeed, deniers of the truth [*kafirun*]!" (The Qur'an, 5:44). This verse mentions God's *hakimiyah* (absolute power to legislate laws and rules for mankind). This is an important sub topic within the WB concept.

The verse is often used to denounce all modern and secular governments (regardless of whether the rulers are Muslims or non-Muslims) and democratic practices and call on Muslims to stay away (*al-bara'*) from them. The common claim stemming from this verse is that this understanding is the divine truth that must not be compromised.

However, a deeper look at this verse reveals that there are many points open to various interpretations that would challenge such a rigid claim. For example:

- ❖ The word "judge" could possibly mean "to rule", "to legislate", or "to adjudicate" and each carries different connotations and implications.
- ❖ The word "*kafirun*" may relate to major *kufr*, which makes a person out of the religion, or minor, which makes a person sinful but not out of religion.
- ❖ The verse must be understood concurrently in relation with two other similar verses; "...and they who do not judge in accordance with what God has revealed - they, they are the evil doers [*zalimun*]!" (The Qur'an, 5:45) and "...for they who do not judge in the light of what God has bestowed from on high - it is they, they who are truly iniquitous [*fasiqun*]!" (The Qur'an, 5:47). When these three verses are viewed concurrently, it then raises a question as to when a person falls under "*kafirun*", "*zalimun*" or "*fasiqun*". Nevertheless, it is clear from the three verses that the mere act of "do not judge in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high" does not make a person automatically out of the religion.

There are also additional issues within WB concept that are open to various interpretations and further contemplation. For example;

- ❖ Must *al-wala'* and *al-bara'* be inseparable in all circumstances?
- ❖ Are negative feelings/attitudes supposed to be directed to all non-Muslims or only to non-Muslims who are hostile?
- ❖ Must the negative feeling/attitude be directed to *kafr* (person) or *kufr* (value)?
- ❖ Must *al-wala'* be given to fellow Muslims even if he is an evil person?
- ❖ Must *al-bara'* be upheld against non-Muslim even if he is a good person?
- ❖ How does WB concept relate to the issue of integration and nation building in a multi-cultural society where Muslims are a part of?
- ❖ How does one practice WB concept in the context of minority Muslims living in a non-Muslim country?

WB and minority Muslims

WB concept could pose a problem to Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim countries on a wide range of issues. One of them concerns the Islamic ruling of Muslims under the authority of a non-Muslim government.

Minority Muslims exposed to WB concept are often in a dilemma of their relationship with a non-Muslim government and state that is not based on Islamic systems. For example;

- ❖ How do minority Muslims protect their rights as citizens?
- ❖ Should they actively participate in the social and political arena or live in seclusion among themselves as enclaves and separate from the larger community?
- ❖ Should they remain in their current non-Muslim country as minority Muslims or migrate to a Muslim majority country?
- ❖ Should they practice the rule of *`azimah* (original ruling in theological matter) or the rule of *rukhsah* (concessionary ruling applied to exceptional or special situations)?
- ❖ What constitutes the rules of *`azimah* and *rukhsah* in the context of minority Muslims vis-a-vis WB issues?

Contextualising

One of the approaches to address the dilemma is by contextualisation; through a process of reformulating, reviewing or reinterpreting the original and popular WB concept to suit a minority Muslim context. This process is done in accordance with the relevant scriptural evidences and in line with the methodology of Islamic studies that has been developed and used by Muslim scholars throughout history.

Contextualising WB as a concept comes hand in hand with an understanding and recognition that WB is a product of *ijtihad*. Therefore, WB is open to diverse interpretations and reinterpretations. As a result, Muslims have the inherent flexibility to formulate their Islamic rulings pertaining to their lives in different contexts which may include living as a minority in non-Muslim countries.

This understanding and recognition of *ijtihad* is crucial as it helps to minimise potential negative effects as a result of absolutism that could potentially lead to extremist viewpoints.

Singapore context

The contextual approach in addressing the issues minority Muslims face has been realised by local Muslim scholars. The Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association (Pergas) is the only body that represents the religious elites. In 2003, Pergas organised an Ulama Convention to discuss the contemporary issues related to the minority Muslim community in Singapore. Alongside the overarching contemporary theme, the event also discussed the threat of terrorism and extremist ideology that promotes strict adherence to WB concept from the likes of groups such as Al-Qaeda⁶ and its affiliates in the regions such as Jemaah Islamiyah⁷ and, more recently, Da'esh⁸ (IS).

This Ulama Convention produced seminal papers and resolutions which led to the book publication titled *Moderation in Islam in the Context of Malay Community in Singapore* in 2004.⁹

The book offered different perspectives on issues related to WB concept for minority Muslims by local religious elites on a variety of contemporary issues. The following is a summary of some of the main points published.

The basis of relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. The book asserts that the basis is peace, not war. Furthermore it stressed that it is permissible to have positive feelings towards non-Muslims and not hating them.¹⁰

The position towards nationalism. The book asserts that nationalism does not contradict with Islam as long it is not used to cause injustices on others.¹¹

The position towards democracy. The book views democracy as compatible with Islam.¹²

The position towards secularism. The book views that Muslims should not necessarily be anti-secularism if it is not anti-religion.¹³

The position towards Qur'anic verse, "...for they who do not judge in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high are, indeed, deniers of the truth [kafirun]!" (The Qur'an, 5:44). The book asserts that recognising non-Muslim rule does not necessarily contradict Islam and does not automatically lead to *kufr*.¹⁴

The same understanding is upheld and reiterated by the Singapore Islamic Religious Council (Muis) through its 'Singapore Muslim Identity' project which formulated 10 excellent attributes for Singaporean Muslims in a monograph titled *Risalah for Building a Singapore Muslim Community Excellence*.¹⁵

Obedience to non-Muslim authority for minority Muslims in Singapore

There is agreement that appointing a non-Muslim as a state leader is permissible for minority Muslims in Singapore and it is in line with the fundamentals of faith in Islam as long as the leader is capable, just, does not have a hostile attitude towards Islam, and as long as the policies implemented are compatible with Islamic principles. The above represents a united viewpoint among elite Muslim scholars in Singapore, whether from Pergas as a civil society, or Muis as a government-linked statutory body.

In other words, it is permissible to appoint or vote for a person to be a state leader that will rule over Muslims if the person fulfils all the required criteria of a Muslim ruler, with exception of his personal faith.

The above viewpoint by the Muslim scholars in Singapore is based on the following arguments:

- ❖ Not all non-Muslims are alike i.e. hostile towards Islam or having anti-Islam attitude as stipulated in the Qur'an itself (3:113).
- ❖ The above argument is supported by many historical examples such as Abu Talib (the Prophet's uncle who protected him from the persecution of Meccan people), Negus (a Christian king who ruled Abyssinia where the Prophet's companions migrated to seek protection from the persecution of the Meccan people) and an Egyptian king whom Prophet Joseph served as treasurer.

- ❖ The principle of justice in Islam necessitates a different kind of non-Muslim be given different ruling or be treated differently, not with one general rule only.
- ❖ Islam has laid down peace as the basis of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, not war or hostility. War or hostility is not directed to all non-Muslims, but to those who are hostile, even if they are Muslims.
- ❖ Thus, *al-wala'* is forbidden only towards hostile non-Muslim (*kafir harbi*), not towards all of them.
- ❖ The right and effective verses on this issue is the Qur'an, 60:8-9 that differentiate between friendly and hostile non-Muslims:

“As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of [your] faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid [others] in driving you forth: and as for those [from among you] who turn towards them in friendship; it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!”

All the above are further supported by the following facts in history;

- ❖ The Prophet's command of his companions to migrate to Abyssinia despite being a non-Muslim land.
- ❖ The companions who migrated to Abyssinia were not called to join the Prophet in Medina until after six years of his migration to Medina from Mecca.
- ❖ Even after Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia had converted to Islam, the land that he ruled remained an unIslamic kingdom. However, the Prophet did not denounce him and his companions for remaining there.
- ❖ The Prophet himself sought security protection from persecution from Meccan people.
- ❖ God permitted Prophet Joseph to serve under an unIslamic kingdom in Egypt.¹⁶

It cannot be argued that the early Muslims' stay in Abyssinia under a non-Muslim ruler was permissible as the Muslims were weak and persecuted and, thus, it is no more applicable after they gained power in Medina and the revelation of verses that prohibits *al-wala'* to non-Muslims. This was because Muslims remained

in Abyssinia even after the Prophet established his political power in Medina. Muslims who were in Abyssinia only joined the Prophet in Medina almost 7 years after the *hijrah* (migration). The Prophet would have recalled them as soon as possible if their stay in Abyssinia was no more permissible after *hijrah*. Also, there was no evidence that the verses on WB abrogated the permissibility of such practice. In fact, 60:8-9¹⁷ from the Quran was revealed during the Medinan period that differentiated hostile and non-hostile non-Muslims in manner of treatment.

It cannot also be argued that Prophet Joseph's service under a non-Muslim ruler in Egypt as a past *shari`ah* that does not apply to *shari`ah* brought by Prophet Muhammad because such practices can be validated by the Muslims' migration to Abyssinia and 60:8-9.

Case study

The incident of an Indian-born *imam* (one who leads prayer at the mosque) who prayed for the victory of Muslims over infidels, Christians and Jews during one Friday prayer session in a local mosque in March 2017 highlights the significant response of Muslim scholars on issues of WB.

The *imam* was employed because the mosque serves primarily Muslims from the Singapore Indian ethnic community. In the incident, the *imam* was recorded in a video by a congregant at the end of his Friday's sermon uttering an Arabic supplication, "*fansurna `ala al-qawm al-kafirin, fansurna `ala yahudiyyin, fansurna `ala al-nasraniyyin*" that could be simply understood as "O Lord! Grant us victory over infidels, grant us victory over Christians and grant us victory over Jews". The video recording was made viral by the congregant who viewed such a prayer as theologically and socially inappropriate and wrong. A police report was also made against the *imam*.

The incident received a robust negative response from Muslim and non-Muslim political leaders made up of cabinet ministers, members of parliaments and community leaders. Such a supplication is regarded as offensive and hurtful to non-Muslim Singaporeans and, thus, could jeopardise the social harmony in a multi-racial and multi-religious Singapore. Many community leaders from Malay and Muslim communities were shocked and expressed disagreement with the *imam's* act.

As a result of strong negative responses from various parties, the *imam* made a public announcement of his mistake and offered his apology. He was charged in court and found guilty for committing an act that may cause disharmony among people of different faiths. He pleaded guilty and was fined SG\$ 4,000. His work permit was revoked and, as a result, was required to leave Singapore. Subsequently, he returned back to his hometown in India.¹⁸

Both Pergas and Muis responded, individually, to the incident by issuing a public statement clarifying the meaning of the supplication, “*fansurna `ala al-qawm al-kafirin* (grant us victory over infidels)” which could be found in the Qur’an, 2:286. Both organisations assert that the verse does not refer to all non-Muslims, but to those who are hostile to Islam and Muslims. This verse was revealed in relation to the conflict between the Prophet and his followers with the hostile Meccan Arabs. This is the context to which that particular verse should be understood. Both organisations also reaffirm that the principle that should guide Muslim and non-Muslim relations should be based on the Qur’an, 60: 8-9, as mentioned in the above preceding paragraphs.¹⁹ In essence, this case study of the incident highlights a contemporary usage of WB contextualisation for minority Muslims living in a non-Muslim country.

Unfortunately, Muis and Pergas statements do not provide detailed theological arguments to aid the understanding of the theological underpinnings of the stand and thus enable others to scrutinise its validity. This may be due to the nature of the statement – a press statement which was meant as a quick response to a situation and for press consumption, not as a treatise that seeks to provide a detailed theological explanation of the issue.

Here, it is argued that the points offered in the above section of this article could be regarded as the supporting theological evidences for the stand. Also, Pergas and Muis’ stand can be validated in detail by a paper published by the Mufti of the Federal Territory of Malaysia which addressed a similar issue – whether it is permissible for Muslims in Malaysia to vote for non-Muslim candidates during a General Election. In the paper, the Mufti of the Federal Territory held the view that it is permissible to vote for non-Muslims as members of a consultative body, be it at state or federal level. He cited views held by classical and contemporary scholars in support of his stand, while also mentioning those opposed to the choice of non-Muslim candidates and their argument. Like Pergas and Muis, he argued that Qur’anic verses that imply the prohibition of appointing non-Muslims as political leaders should be understood as referring to those who are “enemies” of Islam like pagan Arabs who fought the Prophet during the period of revelation. He also seeks to boost his stand by arguing that;

- ❖ the contemporary concept of citizenship of a nation state that have been accepted as a norm and a valid social contract between Muslims and non-Muslims entails equal rights of everybody to either choose (vote) or be chosen to political posts
- ❖ not respecting the prevailing norm will not serve the *maslahah* (interest) of the Muslims and risk serious *dharar* (harm) for Malaysian’s multicultural society where the percentage of Muslims compared to non-Muslims is only minimally more.

- ❖ the ruling must be based on the holistic view of a contemporary political system where a person does not hold absolute power to rule, legislate law and make policies and, thus, the choice of having non-Muslim as political representatives or ministers itself would cause harm (*dharar*) to Islam and Muslims' interest.²⁰

Closing remarks

The unanimous statements made by both Muis and Pergas has clarified Islam's stand towards non-Muslim and the guiding principle of Muslim and non-Muslim relations.

The act of appointing or voting for a non-Muslim as a state leader or political party or representative is permissible as long the person is assessed to be fair, just, competent and does not harbour any hostility towards Islam and Muslims. The formation of a non-Muslim government and its public policies requires a level of loyalty to these non-Muslim and non-Islamic systems. As a result, obeying a leader who have been appointed to the position in accordance to law and democratic principles does not contradict the fundamentals of a citizen's Islamic faith.

However, this does not mean that the Muslim community cannot have disagreements or criticise the legitimate leader. It has been recognised in any democratic country that disagreement and criticism on matters of policies and public interests does not equate to disobedience or disloyalty. Even a good government under the steer of a good and righteous leader could still err and has no monopoly of wisdom. Thus, good counsel and different viewpoints is necessary and a hallmark of a democratic society.

¹See Muhammad Sa'id Al-Qahtani (1413H), *Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara' Fi Al-Islam*, Makkah: Dar Tayyibah, available at <https://archive.org/stream/wwwbfi#page/n0/mode/2up> (28 September 2017); Mohamed bin Ali (2015), *Roots of Religious Extremism: Understanding the Salafi Doctrine of Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara'*, London: Imperial College Press.

²See Ibid.

³Sa'id Hawwa (2001), *Al-Islam*, Qahirah: Dar Al-Salam, available at <https://archive.org/stream/saidhawa/islam#page/n0/mode/2up> (28 September 2017).

⁴See Abd Al-Rahman bin Mu'alla Al-Luwayhiq (1992), *Al-Ghuluw Fi Al-Din Fi Hayat Al-Muslimin Al-Mu'asirah*. Bayrut: Mu'assasat Al-Risalah, available at https://www.4shared.com/file/109878278/8fd4d89/_-1_.html (28 September 2017); Abdul Rahman b. Mualaa Al-Luwayhiq Al-Mutairi (transl. by Jamal Al-Din M. Zarabozo) (2001), *Religious Extremism in the Life of Contemporary Muslims*, Denver: Al-Basheer Publications, available at <https://archive.org/details/ReligiousExtremism> (28 September 2017).

⁵See for example "The status of the hadeeth, "If I am someone's mawla then 'Ali is his mawla too" and its meaning" (2002), *islamqa.info*, fatwa no. 26794, 4 May, available at <https://islamqa.info/en/26794> (28 September 2017).

⁶See *Inspire*, no. 1, p. 17; *Inspire*, no. 8, p. 26; *Al-Risalah*, no. 1, p. 18; *Al-Risalah*, no. 3, p. 24.

⁷See General Guidelines on the Struggle of Jama'ah Islamiyah in Bilveer Singh (2007), *Talibanization of Southeast Asia: Losing the War on Terror to Islamist Extremist*, Westport: Praeger Security International, pp. 159-80.

⁸See *Dabiq*, no. 1, pp. 35-42; *Dabiq*, no. p. 40; *Dabiq*, no. 7, p. 70; *Dabiq*, no. 7-8, 22; *Dabiq*, no. 10, pp. 38-9; *Dabiq*, no. 11, paxim; *Dabiq*, no. 12, paxim; *Dabiq*, no. 14, pp. 8-17; *Rumiyah*, no. 1, pp. 6-7, 29; *Rumiyah*, no. 2, p. 5; *Rumiyah*, no. 3, p. 18; *Rumiyah*, no. 4, p. 6; *Rumiyah*, no. 5, pp. 2-4; *Rumiyah*, no. 6, pp. 22-4; *Rumiyah*, no. 7, pp. 26-9; *Rumiyah*, no. 9, pp. 28-35; *Rumiyah*, no. 10, pp. 13, 37; Al-Dawlah Al-Islamiyah (n.d.), *Hazih 'Aqidatuna Wa Haza Manhajuna*, n.p.: Maktabat Al-Himmah; Al-Dawlah Al-Islamiyah Hai'ah Al-Buhuth Wa Al-Ifta' (1436H), *Muqarrar Fi Al-Tawhid Li Al-Mu'askarat*, n.p.: n. pub..

⁹See Pergas (2004), *Moderation in Islam in the Context of Malay Community in Singapore*, Singapore: Pergas.

¹⁰Ibid, pp. 213-44.

¹¹Ibid, pp. 201-7.

¹²Ibid, pp. 135-44.

¹³Ibid, pp. 120-33.

¹⁴Ibid, pp. 300-36.

¹⁵Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (2006), *Risalah for Building a Singapore Muslim Community of Excellence*, Singapore: Muis, available at <http://www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/documents/Risalah-eng-lr.pdf> (28 September 2017).

¹⁶See Pergas (2004), *Moderation in Islam*, chapter 5.

¹⁷See, "As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably." (The Qur'an, 60:8)

"God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of [your] faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid [others] in driving you forth: and as for those [from among you] who turn towards them in friendship; it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!" (The Qur'an, 60:9).

¹⁸Charissa Wong (2017), "Clerics or not, the law treats all equally: Shanmugam", *The Straits Times*, 9 April, available at <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/cleric-or-not-the-law-treats-all-equally-shanmugam> (28 September 2017); Mohamad Alami Musa (2017), "No doctrinal basis for enmity towards non-Muslims", *The Straits Times*, 12 April, available at <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/no-doctrinal-basis-for-enmity-towards-non-muslims> (28 September 2017); Toh Yong Chuan (2017), "No room for religious extremism in Singapore, say Muslim leaders", *The Straits Times*, 5 March, available at <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/no-room-for-religious-extremism-in-singapore-say-muslim-leaders> (28 September 2017).

¹⁹Pergas (2017), Pernyataan Media: Panduan Agama Dalam Mendoakan Terhadap Penganut Agama Lain (Media Statement; Religious Guidance on Making Prayers Towards People of Other Faiths), 3 April, available at http://www.pergas.org.sg/media/MediaStatement/mediarelease_PanduanAgamaDoaTerhadapPenganutAgamaLain_3April.pdf (28 September 2017); Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (2017), *Media Statement on the Case of Mr. Nalla Mohamed Abdul Jameel*, 3 April, available at <http://www.muis.gov.sg/documents/Media%20Statement%20on%20the%20case%20of%20Mr%20Nalla%20Mohamed%20Abdul%20Jameel.pdf> (28 September 2017).

²⁰Zulkifli bin Mohamad al-Bakri (2018), "Mengundi Calon Bukan Muslim Dalam Pilihanraya (Voting Non-Muslim Candidate in General Election)", *Bayan Linnas*, no. 129, 11 April, available at <http://muftiwp.gov.my/ms/artikel/bayan-linnas/2367-bayan-linnas-siri-ke-129-mengundi-calon-bukan-muslim-dalam-pilihanraya> (22 March 2019).