

THOMAS JEFFERSON AND GUS DUR ON DEMOCRACY, WHY NOT?

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Abstract

This paper discusses some important issues concerning how to give the meanings of democracy in line with the changing of era and models of democracy. It explores some characteristics of two figures: Thomas Jefferson and Gus Dur of Indonesia, characteristics of democracy, and comparison of their ideas about democracy. Thus, it focuses on some ideas of democracy between Thomas Jefferson and Gus Dur whose position as two figures of democracy. It also examines how far the impact of their great ideas in the development of democracy in their own countries, Indonesia and America. The historical, philosophical, political, sociological, and cultural aspects of Jefferson and Gus Dur on democracy will be systematically discussed. In addition to that, it also discusses the description of democracy, the background of American and Indonesian democracy, Jefferson's and Gus Dur's concepts of democracy and some other related issues to democracy.

Key words : Thomas Jefferson, Gus Dur, democracy, interdisciplinary approach, liberalism

A. INTRODUCTION

Everyone is commonly familiar with the word democracy. However the writer sees the term democracy often, the writer is not always certain about its definition. Most people define it as "rule of" or "by the people", from the Greek root, *demos*, which it means a township and by extension, refers to the people of a town or a nation, and *kratia* which means rule. In more recent times, definitions and practices of democracy vary widely. The United States is one of countries that practice it in the political life. America itself is well known as a super power country; meanwhile democracy and capitalism are both important values in America's life.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, many nations overthrew monarchs or established their independences from colonial power (Croddy 9). How have some nations made the transition from monarchy, colonial government, or dictatorship to a democratic form of government? It is an interesting issue to be explored. The writer will trace it from historical background mainly some elites who had given

great contributions to their countries. Among them, the writer will only focus on two figures who gave their ideas in the developing democracy in their own nations. They are Thomas Jefferson and Abdurrahman Wahid.

Thomas Jefferson was well known as one of the American Founding Fathers because of his contribution in history of America. He was one of the members of a committee appointed by Congress to frame a suitable justification of Independence. He put his forward idea about democracy and it was well accepted by the whole Congress and officially the notion of democracy was expressed in the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776 since then democracy had become the ideology of the country (Aggraini, 2002:19). Jefferson's ideas are mostly embodied in scattered writings, particularly in his superb letters. As Padover (1939) said that throughout his life Jefferson wrote about twenty – five thousand letters. Through his letters Jefferson spoke to the nation and by means of letters he stimulated his followers (1).

The most essential thing in American democracy is the actualization of Jefferson's thoughts that still exist nowadays. The typical problems for Jefferson are his efforts how to make good government reflecting the majority of people. What, then, is the meaning of democracy? To Jefferson the core of democracy was the idea of liberty. It should be remembered that he was a product of his age. In line with the changing era, the meaning of democracy itself has broadened meaning. But principally democracy is institutionalized freedom, that is human rights and egalitarianism before the law are stressed (Ibid, 2).

Meanwhile one of the prominent figures of democracy in Indonesia that will be explored here is Abdurrahman Wahid. He is also familiar to be called *Gus Dur*. Wahid's efforts to maintain democracy in Indonesia is never ending. Since in 1991, Wahid was also the leader of Forum Democracy (Barton 156). Yet Wahid's voice in Indonesia is also prominent because of other, more personal factors. Most importantly, *Gus Dur* deserves particular attention because his ideas have had major influence on recent political debate. Importantly, what *Gus Dur* says has had the effect of prompting reactions, sometimes defensive from other political actors (Ramage 23).

The study focuses on discussing some important problems in this paper; they are: (1) How to give the meanings of democracy in line with the changing of era and to reveal some models of democracy?; (2) How to reveal some characteristics both two figures? Due to the above explanation, the writer attempts to reveal some points such as: (1) To identify the main characteristics of democracy in America and in Indonesia; (2). To make comparison of the ideas both Thomas Jefferson and Abdurrahman Wahid.

This paper highlights on the synthesis of knowledge and employs the interdisciplinary analysis of Henry Nash Smith; Tremain McDowell's past, present, future and region, nation, world. The interdisciplinary approach is used to analyze American experiences from multidisciplinary perspectives, namely historical, philosophical, sociological, political, and cultural disciplines. This approach is to

depict the cultural identity in America and Indonesia in case of democracy. Democracy as one of important American and Indonesian values that is still held until now. The growth and the development of democracy as an American mind and Indonesian mind in the society can not be separated from phenomenon living in the society at a particular time.

Democracy as a living concept has its connection with history, politics, economics, sociology, and culture of the society where it is nurtured. To get the best understanding of the issue is through interconnection among those disciplines. In his *Studies in American Culture*, Henry Nash Smith (1980:14) suggests that the best thing we can do is to conceive American Studies as collaboration among men working from within existing academic disciplines but attempting to widen boundaries impasse by conventional methods of inquiry. This implied a sustained effort of the student of literature to take into account sociological, historical and anthropological data and methods.

Meanwhile, Tremain McDowell not only suggests interdisciplinary study, but also recommends that American Studies scholars reconcile the past, present and future. He points out that American Studies are designed to modify a persistent characteristics of mankind and to advance a contemporary movement in education. The characteristic is tendency of men to live predominantly in one of three tenses, past, present, or future (McDowell, 1948:v). He assumes that if one applies the interdisciplinary approach, he can bridge past, present, and future. Democracy itself can not be separated from the concept of tenses. Since it was rooted in Greek some time in the past, and it still exists in the present time and has been developed into its various variations but limited by some characteristics. By looking at the progress of democracy and its spread, it can be assumed that democracy might exist in the future. As simple, those tenses are interrelated.

McDowell also stressed on three concepts; region, nation, and world. He argues that the study of national culture may therefore very properly be supported on the one hand by regionalism and on the other by internationalism. Thus American Studies move toward the reconciliation of the tenses, the reconciliation of the academic disciplines, and a third long-range goal, namely, a reconciliation of region, nation, and world (Ibid, 82).

This approach is to reveal the big picture of America and Indonesia in case of democracy. In line with that, this book attempts to reveal the roots of democracy and the thought of Founding Fathers in making a discourse of democracy. There are many other famous figures of democracy in Indonesia and Gus Dur showed his uniqueness. His ideas, however, are apparently paradox. Besides, he is feudal and moderate as well. His speech is greatly influenced by the concept of *Kiai-President*. Meanwhile Thomas Jefferson showed his uniqueness in his great writings. Even though he lacks in speech not like Gus Dur but his writings are very monumental. His ideas always relevant with the crises and great stories happened in America. He is also still honored by many Americans as one of the Founding Fathers.

Therefore the effort to reveal the different ideas on democracy between Thomas Jefferson and Gus Dur is very interesting to be deeply examined because they have distinctive characters and styles as presidents, thinkers and ordinary people. It will bring the different form of democracy between America and Indonesia. Furthermore, this paper is also intended to find out the pictures of democracy between two countries, Indonesia and America.

B. REVIEW ON DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA AND INDONESIA

Most people often said about democracy issue but they sometimes found difficulty in giving the definition. The definition of democracy can be traced from etymologies and terminologies. The etymology of democracy (literally “the power” or “the rule of the people”) is the core definition of democracy. It derived from the ancient Greek *demo-kratia*, which was composed from the word for the people (*demos*) and the word for power (*kratos*) (Maddox 25).

What is about the terminology of democracy. Not all political theorists entirely agree on the terminology of democracy. They find difficulty because definitions of the term have often depended on local conditions and special circumstances (Payne and Nassar 30). For examples, a brief speech of Abraham Lincoln in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, popularly known as Gettysburg Address, saying that “government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth” (Basler 536). Meanwhile, Affan Gaffar (2000) gives the meaning of democracy into two styles: normative democracy and empiric democracy (27).

According to Hegel, a democratic political system is a historical necessity. Sooner or later it comes to all societies. Human history shows that political systems changed from monarchy (in which one person rules) to oligarchy (a group rules) and lastly to democracy (all the people rule). A democratic political system, according to Hegel and later on picked up by Francis Fukuyama, is the end of history (Budiman 41).

I do not mean that I agree with his conclusion that we are arriving at ‘the end of history’ by having a democratic political system. Democracy is something desirable, but is it also a project of capitalism to secure free market competition. Therefore, rather than arriving at ‘the end of history’, societies continue to struggle for a just society (Fukuyama 19).

It is to emphasize that democracy needs for continuous and progressive improvement with a view to perfecting democratic institutions in all their aspects and practical applications. Though, these will of course differ from country to country and from continent to continent, based on the lessons of experience.

Hegel’s thesis has been confirmed by history. Samuel Huntington stated there have been three big waves of democracy in human history. The first wave was between 1828 and 1926, the second wave was 1943 to 1962. Starting in 1974, Portugal carried out a successful democratic transition from the dictatorship under Marcello Caetano to democracies, he argued, the world was entering the third wave

of democratization in which many more countries had become democratic. However, the democratization wave always came back, and more countries became democratized (Huntington 20).

It is difficult to deny this Hegelian thesis, supported by historical data. Democracy, in spite of backlashes, is inevitable for all countries. See the development of democratic nations in this table.

Table 1. Democratic Nations

Year	Total of Nations	Total of Democratic Nations	Percentage (%)
1974	145	39	26.9
1990	165	76	46.1
1991	183	91	49.7
1992	186	99	53.2
1993	190	108	56.8
1994	191	114	59.7
1995	191	117	61.3
1996	191	118	61.8
1997	191	117	61.3

Source: Freedom House, Freedom in the World: Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1990-1991, 1991-1992, 1992-1993, 1993-1994, 1994-1995, 1995-1996, 1996-1997 (Diamond 34).

Nowadays, some countries such as German, Chile, Japan, China, Malaysia, Thailand, and India claim their nations have adopted democracy principles. But it must be remembered that each country has different background of sociology and culture. Therefore it has distinctive characteristic of democracy embodying on cultural values, for example, Indonesia has *Pancasila* democracy. Here, *Pancasila* is as philosophical basis of the state. China tends to equality-oriented democracy that adopted communism as the philosophical basis of the state. Meanwhile a term of liberal democracy is associated with western democracy.

As mentioned above, there is no single definition of democracy, much less in a liberal democracy. It means that democracy is always followed by local values. Democracy has no end. On the other hand, democracy cannot be taken for granted as something established once and for all, nor can it be viewed as a single static model applicable work. On the contrary, democracy is an evolving system that is gradually enriched and fine-tuned in each country that adopts it in response to the socioeconomic, technological, and cultural changes to which today's open and dynamic societies are exposed.

For these reasons, no single definition of democracy is entirely satisfactory since this term is the paradigm case of the essentially contested concept, or one about which there is no agreed meaning. Each of the elements within this and most other definitions will require further specification. In the course of such elaboration most theories go beyond description and definition to some statement of democratic ideals.

Basically, there are two models of democracy. First, direct democracy referring to political systems in which the citizens make the laws themselves rather than choose representatives to make the laws on their behalf. According to Sartori (1965),

The difference between direct and indirect democracy is radical. In direct democracy there is a continuous participation of all the people in the direct exercise of power, whereas indirect democracy amounts to a system of limitation and control of power (252).

Criticisms of direct democracy have, however, persisted since ancient times. First, not everyone lived up to the ideals of participation. Although all 30.000 citizens could in principle attend and vote in the Assembly, the quorum was 6.000. Second, direct democracy was in reality mob rule. The decisions were rash and inconsistent (Parry 1284).

Direct democracy becomes more and more difficult, and necessarily more closely approximates representative democracy, as the number of citizens grows. As a substitute, there is an indirect democracy (Parry 1290). Here, many forms of democracy based on indirect will be explored, and some have been used in government systems (Eko 2). The most common system found in today's democratic states is the representative democracy. The people elect government officials who then make decisions on their behalf (Held 87). Modern liberal democracies are important examples of representative democracy. There are two common types of representative democracies: parliamentary democracy, as in the United Kingdom; and non-parliamentary democracy or systems that have independently elected legislative and executive branches, as in the United States (Holden 80).

Another form of indirect democracy is delegation democracy. In delegation democracy, delegates are selected and expected to act on the wishes of the constituency (O'Donnell 60). Based on the above definition, it is likely closed to Authoritarian. What Linz (1995) said as "a political system in which a leader or a small group exercises power without formal limits." Linz (1995) also has pointed out that many twentieth-century authoritarian regimes have been headed by military officers: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey (1923 – 1938), Francisco Franco in Spain (1936 – 1975), Juan Domingo Peron in Argentina (1946 – 1955), Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt (1956 – 1970), Augusto Pinochet in Chile (1973 – 1990) (103).

Still borrowing the thought of Sutoro Eko (18) in Annual Report 2001-2002: "Revitalizing the Communitarian Democracy", deliberative democracy is founded on our belief that citizens care enough and are smart enough to participate meaningfully in the deliberative process of making public policy. Meanwhile, participatory democracy is a term applied to theories of democracy that seek to involve the ordinary citizen more fully in the decision-making processes than is normal within representative democracy (Hiariej 12).

One critique of indirect democracy is that it centralizes power into the hands of a few or oligarchy democracy, thereby increasing the likelihood of corruption in

and abuse of power by the government. Citizens cannot participate in government, except by asking their elected officials to listen to their views (Dye 73).

C. AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Democracy in America can be traced from the beginning of immigrants came to the New World. They were Puritans. This session will be discussed more in the next chapter. Here, the writer focuses on two prominent factors influencing the American nationalism. They are Enlightenment era and American Revolution era. Definitely, Jefferson's thought are mostly influenced by these eras. The Enlightenment is the name given to an intellectual and philosophical movement that developed in the eighteenth century in Europe and is characterized by its belief that reason, and not superstition or the authority of unexamined tradition, can solve all of the problems of humanity. It is used interchangeably with the phrase "Age of Reason" (Kohl 60).

Some thinkers usually associated with the Enlightenment era are John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Jefferson. Many Enlightenment ideas were discredited by the action of so-called rational people during the purges and inquisitions that followed the French Revolution. They were also called into question by the existence of slavery in the newly formed United States. Reason has not proved to be the sole source to ideas of human wisdom, though many Enlightenment ideas are still central ideas of democracy and human rights (Ibid, 61)

Meanwhile, the revolution originated in a constitutional dispute between Great Britain and the American colonies concerning the rights of the colonists and the reach of Parliament's authority, especially the authority to tax. Faced with enormous debt from the Seven Years' War with France, and expecting the colonies to pay for protecting their Western frontier, the British in 1764 set a high duty on molasses under the Sugar Act. Soon after the Sugar Act, Parliament passed another law forbidden the colonies to issue paper money. (Todd and Curti, 1972: 99)

While colonial tempers were still running high, Parliament passed another unpopular law, the Quartering Act of 1765. This law required the colonial authorities to provide barracks and supplies for British troops stationed in America. In midst of growing colonial agitation, Parliament adopted the Stamp Act. The following other Acts as follow: the Declaratory Act of 1766, the Townshend Act in 1767, and The Tea Act of 1773. Exorbitant taxes and tariffs were placed on essential items like tea and stamps, leading radical colonists like Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry to cry out that taxation without representation was tyranny. As reaction for these acts, in Boston, late in 1773, colonist disguised as Indian boarded ships and heaved the cargo into the water. In one wild night they destroyed 3242 chests of tea valued at thousands of dollars. Then the incident was familiar called as Boston tea Party (Ibid, 112)

Discourse American democracy can also be seen from the former democracy. They are Athenian democracy, classical democracy, and liberal democracy. The

Athenian democracy and in the middle ages, ideas such as representation crucial to modern Western democracy were developed. It can be seen that many centuries after the Athenian democracy had disintegrated and given way to various forms of monarchy (rule by one) or oligarchy (rule by a powerful few). The importance of the Athenian instance of direct democracy is that it defined the meaning of the term democracy for more than 2.000 years. Until the advent of ideas of representative democracy about the time of the American Revolution, the term referred to the direct democracy on the Athenian (Maddox 43).

Discussing about classical liberal, the writer is interested with a well known philosopher in Enlightenment era. He was John Locke. Locke, the seventeenth-century English philosopher had given great contributions to American Politic. John Locke argued that even in a “state of nature” that is a world of no governments, an individual possesses inalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. Locke meant that these rights are independent of government, governments do not give them to individuals, and no government may legitimately take them away (Locke, 1952:516-517).

Locke believed that a government’s purpose is to [protect individual liberty. People form a “social contract” with each other in establishing a government to help protect their rights; they tacitly agree to accept government activity to better protect life, liberty, and property. Implicit in the social contract and the democratic notion of freedom is the individual must be minimal (Ibid, 520). Such spirit is reflected as much as in Adam Smith’s economy philosophy. Striving for and seeking for personal advantage while demanding the protection are the main element for capitalism. History has shown that capitalism liberty was initiated by the liberalism ideology through Locke.

The other characteristics of classical democracy are a multiplicity of parties representing competing policy agendas and clear political alternatives, limitations on governmental authority and guaranteed rights for free expression and association. Easily recognizable to Americans are the central tenets of classical liberalism, which are embedded in the American political culture such as (1) Individuals have natural rights, which are inherent and precede the framing of any government; (2) government is a social contract; (3) the public good includes maximizing the liberty of individuals (4) no individual is inherently superior to any other, and therefore all people should have equality under the law; (5) Any individual should be free to conduct one’s life as one sees fit so long as one does not encroach on the liberty of any other individual.

The other is liberal democracy. According to its history, liberal democracy for the first time came up in amidst the attacks of opposition movements against political institutions of the Middle Age, which was considerably very hierarchical, under the authority of despotic kings (Hiariej 23). Nowadays, regardless of the section of the country, state, or community in which a person lives, Americans widely share values coming out of the collective national experience. These values, many articulated

during the colonial era and having their roots in Western liberal political thought, continue to contour the way Americans look at government, think about their relationship to it, and define public problems. It can be said that liberal democracy traditionally emphasizes liberalism initially and next the representation or even the democracy itself. Most basic American liberal values are such as: 1). Popular Sovereignty; 2). Limited government; 3). The Rule of Law. 4). Individual Liberty. 5). Equality (Payne and Nassar 19 – 20).

D. INDONESIAN DEMOCRACY

In order to get better understanding in Indonesian democracy, it would better back to some experiences mainly national consciousness during the tumultuous Japanese occupation in the early 1940s, which shattered Dutch colonial authority. The writer starts from The Ethical Policy. The Ethical Policy which was given based on the overwhelming of VOC and Netherlands Indies commercial. In 1899 a liberal lawyer named Conrad Théodoor van Deventer published a polemical essay, A Debt of Honor, the Dutch journal *De Gids*. Van Deventer, who had long experience in the Indies, argued that the Netherlands had a moral responsibility to return to the colony all the profits that had been made from the sale of cash crops which should be invested in welfare and educational facilities (Fischer 23).

Early political movements appeared when Centuries of Dutch cooptation made the highest ranking *priyayi* on Java and their counterparts on other islands politically conservative. In 1908 students of the School for Training Native Doctors in Batavia established an association, *Budi Utomo* (Noble Endeavor), which is considered by many historians to be the first modern political organization in Indonesia (Fischer 30).

The late 1920s witnessed the rise of Soekarno to a position of prominence among political leaders. He became the country's first truly national figure and served as president from independence until his forced retirement from political life in 1966. He along with members of the General Study Club (*Algemene Studieclub*) established the Indonesian Nationalist Union (*PNI*) the following year (Zainuddin 45).

Unlike most earlier nationalist leaders, Soekarno had a talent for bringing together Javanese tradition (especially the lore of *wayang* theater with its depictions of the battle between good and evil), Islam, and his own version of Marxism to gain a huge mass following. An important theme was what he called *Marhaenism*. *Marhaen* (meaning farmer in *Sundanese*) was the name given by Sukarno to a man he claimed to have met in 1930 while cycling through the countryside near Bandung (Zainuddin 47).

Discourse of Indonesian Democracy can be traced firstly from parliamentary democracy. Upon independence from Dutch, Indonesia immediately introduced a form of liberal parliamentary democracy. In this system, political parties were the major actors and a free and fair general election was conducted in 1955. But the 1955 election yielded fragmented bodies without clear majorities. Despite repeated votes,

the constituent assembly could not agree on the principles of a new constitution. There were seven rotations of cabinet in this era such as Natsir, Sukiman, Wilopo, Ali Sastroamidjojo I, Burhanuddin, Ali Sastroamidjojo II, and Juanda (Soebiantoro 55).

The second democracy was Guided democracy. It later termed the Old Order, was in theory a tripod with Soekarno at the top. The legs were nationalist, religious, and communist, each with its own main political party: respectively, the Indonesian National Party (PNI), the Islamic Scholars' Revival, and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). At the Apex, Soekarno played one group off against another while insisting on national unity, as if by manipulation and exhortation he could bridge the country's pluralism with a single state (Suryadinata 76).

Pancasila democracy was the third discourse. This term was well known as New Order or Soeharto's regime. In his autobiography, President Soeharto says :

The democracy we need practice is *Pancasila*. Briefly its major characteristics are its rejection of poverty, backwardness, conflicts, exploitation, capitalism, feudalism, dictatorship, colonialism, and imperialism. This is the policy I have chosen with confidence (193-194).

After the Soeharto's regime, Indonesia has committed itself to make a transition to democracy. Political reform is now accepted by governments that once strongly opposed any effort to allow the people to govern themselves. Several factors contributed to this shift. As countries achieved higher levels of economic development, the traditional foundations on which leaders based their power were weakened. International changes, especially the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of its control over eastern Europe, also speeded up the transition to democracy around the world.

E. THOMAS JEFFERSON

To get best illustration, a movie entitled Thomas Jefferson: A Documentary Movie (1996) presents an illustration of a young Thomas Jefferson from the Virginia wilderness is transformed by the fire of the Enlightenment into his country's most articulate voice for human liberty. Torn between serene family life at Monticello and his passion for politics, Jefferson suffers heartrending personal loss, even as he gives voice to a new era of democratic government.

He then journeys to Paris as U.S. minister to France for George Washington and supports the rising French revolution. Returning from France, Jefferson strives to preserve the new, fragile American government and help create the first political party through his bitter struggles with the federalists. As third President of the United States, he doubles the size of the country with the Louisiana purchase, but forces controversy and scandal, finally retiring to his beloved Monticello.

His last years are spent funding the University of Virginia and reestablishing his friendship with John Adams. By end of his remarkable life, he had advanced the

cause of religions, political, and intellectual freedom everywhere and had changed the course of human events. Before his death, Jefferson wrote his last and strongest formula for liberty. He said “The mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few, booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the Grace of God” (Sullivan 63).

The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson

Jefferson’s political theories derived from diverse sources including the liberalism of John Locke, the Enlightenment, and Christian ethics. John Locke had given great influences to Jefferson’s political theories of natural rights, as evidenced in the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson here followed Locke in his Second Treatise of Government, who wrote: “Though I have said that all men by nature are equal, I cannot be supposed to understand all sorts of equality” (54).

Jefferson applied Locke’s principles by identifying the political units, or legislatures, within the British Empire as “free, equal, and independent,” like the individuals in Locke’s state of nature, and by representing the Crown as Locke’s government, an impartial arbiter among autonomous states (Todd and Curti 111).

Thomas Jefferson was a child of the Enlightenment, and considered three English philosophers of the 17th century, Isaac Newton, John Locke, and Francis Bacon. He took the ideas of equality and liberty ideas that had merely been abstractions in aristocratic times and put them into practice, enshrining them in Declaration of Independence (Gabriel 41).

Tocqueville as quoted by Francis Fukuyama (14) wrote that the spread of Enlightenment and the growing importance of what is now called human capital in affairs of the state aided the spread of democracy. In forming government, Jefferson also was influenced by the Enlightenment spirit. Among the types of government, Jefferson claimed that the democratic government system was the best.

“Jefferson emphasized the individual as against the government. He insisted that the government is best that governs least and that democracy is most effectively practiced in local as opposed to centralized national government”. (Gabriel 69).

Alexis de Tocqueville also pointed out that the thought of the United States as a country created and populated by “Anglo-Americans.” They had come from England, Scotland, and Ireland, but had created something new a society built a social equality and a polity built on democratic self-government (Glazer 95). This ethnic is also well known as WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant).

Jefferson himself the third and the fourth president of the United States could be described as a Christian deist. He was a deist but at various times he also referred to himself as a theist or a rational Christian. As a deist and as a creature of the

Enlightenment, he placed great emphasis on the use of reason in order to improve the lot of humanity (Reichley 94).

Thomas Jefferson's Ideas to the Discourse of Democracy in America

In the eighteenth century, American democracy is fundamentally the outcome of the experiences of the American people in dealing with the West. These free lands promoted individualism, economic equality, freedom to rise, democracy (Hess 22). Here, the writer is interested in one American trait. One of the most quintessential of American traits is the tendency toward Individualism. The stereotypic images associated with American individuality are not only abundant but abundantly well known the world over. The American cowboy counts among the most powerful and proliferated of these images. In the classical Western film Open Range (1986) celebrates and laments the settling of the frontier west of the Mississippi, the Wild West. In the genre excessive individualism and brute force are honored, provided the cause is just. In reality the frontier towns often struggled with the anarchy and lawlessness of too many rugged individualists.

The writer also tries to find Jefferson's monumental writings such as Bill of Rights and Constitution. The Bill of Rights consists of the first ten amendments to the constitution. The traditionalists that gave shape and substance to the Bill of Rights had English roots, but a unique American experience colored that shape and substance. Jefferson wrote to Madison:

“Let me add that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, and what no been against should refuse, or rest on inference.” (Peterson 1632).

For over 200 hundred years, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights have guided America. They embody the spirit of America. In that same period, more than 10.000 amendments have been proposed in Congress, but only twenty seven have became part of the Constitution. The Bill of Rights limited the power of that endowed Americans with an unprecedented level of personal and political freedom (Hatch 11).

F. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID

Abdurrahman Wahid or *Gus Dur* to use his proper name, was born on September 7, 1940 into a deeply religious family in Denanyar, near the city of Jombang, East Java. Wahid comes from a family of prominent Islamic intellectuals and national heroes. Known as *Gus Dur*, he is the grandson of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) founder, the late Hasyim Ashari, and the son of the late Wahid Hasyim, a

national figure who was the chairman of NU and minister for religious affairs under Soekarno (Madjid 222). *Gus* is nickname to *Kiai* and his heredity as an honor and a conqueror of *santri* (Malay 12).

His “royal family blood” of NU gave him wider opportunity to get a good education. In 1962 Wahid went on a scholarship from the Egyptian government to study Islamic law and philosophy in the Department of Higher Islamic and Arabic Studies at al Azhar university in Cairo, one of the most prestigious Islamic schools in the world. (Bhaskara 7). Shortly after coming home in the early 1970s, Wahid began to develop his political career and influence. First, he established a reputation as a promising intellectual and man of culture. He could talk on various subjects, from religion, philosophy, music, movies, sports, history, literature to popular jokes (Pudjomartono 6).

The inclusive platform of his National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*), formed in July, 1998, made Wahid one of the most powerful voices for inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance in Indonesia and the most acceptable figure for Indonesian people in the 1990s. His charisma as the most acceptable figure brought him to the presidency in 1999. One of the interesting issue to be explored here is *Gus Dur* is also well known as a paradoxical president. It is easy to enumerate the many paradoxes that make up Abdurrahman Wahid. Firstly, he is a figure greatly underestimated, but also extremely well respected and enormously popular. (Barton, 2002: 19-20).

Philosophy of Gus Dur’s Political Thoughts

The political thought of Gus Dur can be traced form his background, mainly his environment and his schools. Three of them are Soekarno, reform era, and liberal Islamic thought. Even though there are many Foundings and figures who have influenced *Gus Dur*’s thought such as Mohammad Hatta, Sutan Syahrir, Tan Malaka, but apparently only Soekarno is closed to *Gus Dur*’s thought. In this sense, we can see that *Gus Dur* is not only an Islamic moderate thinker but also a nationalist. Soekarno himself was a nationalist.

He explains that in 1945 Sukarno sought the advice of NU leadership, including his father who helped Sukarno devise the five principles of *Pancasila*. Furthermore, Wahid argues that “there is no contradiction between Islam and nationalism and that Islam can thrive spiritually in a nationalist state that is not formally based on Islam” (Ramage 31). And Wahid added that:

“NU adheres to a conception of nationalism that is in accordance with the *Pancasila* and the Constitution of 1945. NU has become the pioneer in ideological affairs. This is the case even though throughout the entire Islamic world there is still a problem between nationalism and Islam .” (34).

The second factor is reform era. Shortly, *Gus Dur* was elected as the fourth President in free election in October 1999. In making a start on reform, one of *Wahid's* first presidential concerns was to build a team of people whom he trusted to oversee the process of reform and the management of government. A first official act was to abolish two government departments. He closed down the Ministry for Information, arguing that it did more harm than good, both because of its Stalinist approach to the control of information and because of its entrenched practice of extorting money from media outlets (Barton 360).

His second, and perhaps more surprising, act was to close down the Department of Welfare, arguing that the scale of corruption and entrenched practices of extortion were such that the department was beyond reform and its activities should be carried out by other departments. These closures were controversial, the second much more than the first, and made him unpopular in certain circles. Nevertheless, many analysts welcomed the changes and argued that it was difficult to see what else he could have done. Although constrained by the need to work with his coalition partners where he could, he downsized departments and set in process reforms to gradually bring them into line. He moved quickly to try to reduce the powers of the State Secretariat, infamous during the *Soeharto* period for acting as the government public service within a public service and controlling aspects of governance far outside its ostensible brief (Barton 361).

The Journey to liberalism of *Gus Dur's* thought can be started when he left his home town, *Jombang*, to study abroad, he was a youth wrestling with the question of how Islam could make a difference in the world. On the threshold of adulthood, he flirted with radical Islamism. Seven years later he returned home from his studies a man deeply committed to a liberal understanding of Islam. The influences that shaped his liberalism are not difficult to identify. The First influence was his family, where both nature and nurture shaped in him as open-minded and questioning intelligence. Secondly, he grew up immersed in the tolerant *Sufistic* world of Indonesia's traditional Islam. Thirdly, he was influenced by the cultural orientation of modern Indonesian society towards pluralism and egalitarianism (Barton 119).

Gus Dur's Ideas to the Discourse of Democracy in Indonesia

To get better understanding *Aburrahman Wahid*, he should be seen as Islamic thinker and a moderate thinker in Indonesia. As an Islamic thinker, *Greg Barton* argues that the thought of *Wahid* is sufficiently coherent and complete to be called a school of thought in its own right. The educational background of *Abdurrahman* is greatly influenced by Islam. He had spent much time in *Pesatren* when he was young (52).

Gus Dur is also well known as a controversy president. Some cases that make controversy and critiques are such as: traveling to Israel; the ban of communism; and the changing of Islamic statement (*Assalamu 'alakikum*). Besides his controversies, *Gus Dur* had also given great contributions in the development of

democracy in Indonesia. One of them is Human Rights. In Indonesia, how to effectively implement and protect higher standards of human rights had become an important issue in *Gus Dur*'s era. In *Gus Dur*'s era, there are at least two important issues dealing with the human rights. They are the bloodshed in Aceh and the Maluku.

Another effort of Abdurrahman Wahid in struggling human rights is the appointment of new Ministries, including the State Ministry for Human Rights Affairs, in the National Unity Cabinet, reflecting the seriousness of President Wahid's division and program to uphold the law and human rights in Indonesia.

G. THOMAS JEFFERSON AND ABDURRAHMAN WAHID: COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Here, the writer tries to analyze the former chapters and to compare those two figures. Absolutely, the writer finds the differences and the similarities between them. Let me explain them one by one.

(1) THE DIFFERENCES

The writer finds that Thomas Jefferson's ideas about democracy are closed to the concept of liberty, meanwhile *Gus Dur*'s concepts are closed to toleration if they are related to some own *Gus Dur*'s cases. As Padover said that "To Jefferson the core of democracy was the idea of liberty"(2). As simple, Jefferson's concept brings America to be liberal democracy.

Meanwhile *Gus Dur*'s concept brings Indonesia to be *Pancasila* democracy. As what *Gus Dur* said "Without it – *Pancasila* – we will cease to be a state" (Ramage 45). It can be noted that there are some prominent factors influencing them in giving their ideas about democracy.

Background

Thomas Jefferson is from rich family with some large plantations. Thomas Jefferson gave some ideas about democracy like limited government. He did not want a strong government that it can control over the citizen. So government must be limited. Limited government held that government should be limited in what it can do, and in how it can affect the lives of its citizenry. Limited government aims to prevent government authority and discretion from being exercised arbitrarily or tyrannically. As a rich family and an aristocrat, surely he wanted government protect his rights (Segers and Lejen 19).

As simple, *Gus Dur* is also from rich family but bureaucrat because his father, Wahid Hasyim, became a nationalist figure and Minister of Religion under Soekarno. *Gus Dur* has greatly influenced by Soekarno. Soekarno had given great contribution to Indonesia by creating a state of ideology, *Pancasila*. *Pancasila* is

always used by *Gus Dur* in run his government. *Pancasila* appeals constructively to Indonesian citizens to build a nation based on humane values such as ethnic, religious, and regional tolerance, and social justice.

Zeitgeist

Geist is a German word that can be loosely translated as spirit. The German idealists gave the *geist* a history. They claimed that each historical time period (the *zeit*) had its own spirit which they called the *zeitgeist*. Here, the writer also agrees with the definitions by some people that *zeitgeist* is closed to the word of “*semangat jaman*” in Indonesian.

Thomas Jefferson grew up in the Enlightenment era. In forming government, Jefferson also was influenced by the Enlightenment spirit. Thomas Jefferson’s ideas also influenced by revolution era. During the Revolutionary War, the colonists set about establishing a new country. Fearful of creating too powerful a central government along the British model, they decided on confederation of states. (Croddy, et al. 10).

Gus Dur’s presidency era was in reform era. Besides, *Gus Dur*’s ideas influenced by his background, he is also influenced by reform era. In reform era, the penetrating of liberal democracy in Indonesia was opened. In *Gus Dur* era, the concept of liberal democracy was easily found like voting. Voting is one kind of individual liberty.

Experiences

For more three centuries most of the area now comprising Indonesia was ruled by the Netherlands under a system designed to serve the economic needs of the metropolitan power. Unlike the British in the United States, the Dutch no need to bring significant numbers of Indonesians into government or to start preparing them to manage their own affairs. There are at least two important factors from Dutch’s inheritance that to be noted here. First, it is education. Another important factor that is inheritance of Dutch is feudal.

The British in the United States is likely blessing in disguise for America itself. Colonies in the United States are mostly from England. America is very lucky. At the beginning, most immigrants in the New World are Englishmen. Basically, they went to the New World to seek freedom. Among the immigrants of Puritan, John Winthrop as Puritan prominent leader and Roger Williams as preacher had contributed in shaping American culture and politics.

(2) THE SIMILARITIES

To get better understanding those two figures, the study is also intended on their ideas. Even though their ideas are very different like the above explanation,

there is one value that is similar. It is liberty conception. Here, the writer focuses on religious liberty.

Thomas Jefferson represents the argument for religious liberty from the tradition of rational Enlightenment. Jefferson was opposed to any government-sponsored religion and favored disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Virginia. Jefferson's use of the "wall of separation" metaphor addressed the matter primarily from the government's side of the wall. Jefferson was perhaps more concerned with the harmful influences of religion upon civil government.

Meanwhile *Gus Dur* was educated both in traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and in modern universities in Cairo and Bagdad. By all accounts he read widely in politics, philosophy, and religion in numerous foreign languages as a youth. He is equally comfortable discussing liberalism and the philosophical origins of the American Revolution or nuanced points of Islamic theology.

Another similarity that can be found in those two figures is a natural decision. It means both *Gus Dur* and Jefferson have own decisions qualified right according to their personal backgrounds and their environments. In this sense, *Gus Dur* is *Kiai* and Thomas Jefferson is an owner of slaves. Thomas Jefferson can not be blamed as an owner of slaves because Blacks in America at the time were not qualified 100% as human beings. Meanwhile *Gus Dur*'s decision on certain time was deeply influenced by his *pesantren* background. Their decisions are like natural right according to them, even though they sometimes show controversial issues.

H. CONCLUSION

Even though Indonesia has some significant figures of democracy such as Soekarno, Mohammad Hatta, Soeharto, Amien Rais and the others, *Gus Dur* had showed as one of Indonesian figures on democracy by his uniqueness. *Gus Dur*'s ideas on democracy are influenced by two prominent factors that are mostly paradox. One side, *Gus Dur*'s vision is moderate and another is feudal. In short, it can be said that in giving some ideas, *Gus Dur* has the concept of a *Kiai* – President.

Meanwhile, in contrast, Thomas Jefferson had showed his great accomplishments among other American Founding Fathers such as George Washington and John Adams. He looks monumental and unique. Although his speech is lower than others, he has great power in writing. His pen is like a sharp sword that is ready to cut down any problem shortly. In short, Thomas Jefferson is very different from *Gus Dur* due to the styles in giving ideas. Thomas Jefferson's strength in writing can be called as a great statement man, meanwhile *Gus Dur* stresses on his speech called as an unique orator because of his controversial ideas.

Some similarities also can be found here, both Thomas Jefferson and *Gus Dur* as heroes of democracy. Jefferson's great contribution to America is a liberal democracy, *Gus Dur*'s contributions to Indonesia is liberal thinking of Islam.

Basically, both of them are together fight liberal values in their countries, even though it is different in content because of the differences of background and other related factors.

Because of the differences and the similarities, America and Indonesia have different form of democracy. America is tend to liberal democracy because of its root of liberalism. Meanwhile Indonesia is eager to *Pancasila* democracy as ideology state. Even though in some cases, Indonesia also adopted liberal democracy. Therefore democracy is inevitable for all countries

In short, it proved that the definition of a concept as complex as democracy will inevitably by culturally based and historically conditioned. Therefore, Indonesia that emerged from colonialism after 1945 will have different perceptions of democracy than will America of long-established country. And a person's definition of democracy will be influenced by any number of other factors as well.

In fact, democracy is government "by the people" but the survival of democracy rests on the shoulders of elites. It also happened in Indonesia. The irony of democracy in Indonesia is that elites, not masses, are most committed to democratic values. Despite a superficial commitment to the symbol of democracy, the Indonesian people have a surprisingly weak commitment to individual liberty, toleration of diversity and freedom of expression for those who would challenge the existing order. In addition, based on its cultural background, Indonesia is in multicultural democracy so that it is very fragile by existing of the fundamentalist democracy. In order to get good understanding, people need to understand why change needs to happen. Moreover, "rule of law" in Indonesia is still questionable. Some big cases are still in "grey" area. Indonesia needs to be transparent in decision-making and implementation. Another obstacle is most Indonesian still believe that "morale" can be fixed rather than "rule of law."

Furthermore, democracy needs prosperity to bring about it. Indonesia is still processing in pursuing it. Politics and economics are big factors in shaping democracy. Indonesia not only has no distinct vision and mission, but also finds difficulty which one is to be priority first. We can learn from America which is to be a superpower country because of its history. The North can be rich because of the South's plantation. Economics is to be priority first then democracy.

For Indonesia, although the gate for democracy is open, it is not opened very wide. Indonesia has to face some facts, two of them are feudalism and patron-client relationships. They remain strong factors governing the political behavior of the public, and hampering the rise of independent political institutions. The prospects for democracy in Indonesia depends very much on the initiatives of the governing elites. Efforts are needed to spread political education, to allow more political participation, to get rid of *KKN* (*Korupsi, kolusi, and Nepotisme*), and to continuously establish political institutions needed for democracy to work.

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