

Islamism, the West and Our Concern: A Social Reflection

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Abstract

This article argues that a number of Western orientalist tried to impress that Islam and the West could not meet, imaged that all the Islamic ones seemed to be unable to meet all the nuances of the West, as all the western images imaged always contradict Islam. Such tensions continue to this day. Towards the end of the 20th century, Islamism or Islamic fundamentalism has retreated or failed in maintaining political power in the Islamic world. But the enforcement of Shari'ah in society, remains a central theme of the demands of these Islamic fundamentalists. Thus, their target as a group is no longer just a country, but also a society. The political experiments of Islam, however, as shown in Algeria, Sudan, Iran and Afghanistan have failed and are out of date, but anyway, by the beginning of the 21st century Islamism or Islamic fundamentalism has been revived, marked by the WTC bomb 9/11 and other terror attacks in Indonesia, Europe, the US etc.

Keywords

Islam, West, the US, terrorism, shari'ah, liberalism



I. Introduction

A West Islamologist, William Montgomery Watt, stated that he saw the prospect of Islamic fundamentalism especially among the Sunni is very bleak and hopeless, unless the movement crosses over to the side of Islamic liberalism, which is mainly reflected in the ideas of Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) and Mohammed Arkoun. Although the perception of Watt has also a strong Christian bias, but it reflects the "western way of looking and thinking" about Islamic fundamentalism, which they worry and fear it will be a source of violence and inconvenience of "the non-Islam" with the legitimacy of the concept of religion as a backrest concept and action.

By capturing the views of Watt, it is clearly implied that Islamic fundamentalism in the Western sense is a political phenomenon or Islamic political movements, which are considered "dangerous", against capitalism and secularism. This view is parallel with Karen Armstrong who stated that fundamentalism is a movement based on spirituality to deal with what is perceived as a threat, pressure and the dangers of secularism to religious life.

Since communism collapsed and was delegitimized, Islamic fundamentalism has become an issue and a very strong political commodity, especially in the Western World. In a general sense, fundamentalism is an attempt to overcome the rigidity of Islamic

thought. Ibn Taymiyyah stated fundamentalism as a mujaddid movement (reformer) trying to criticize, and erode any faith, beliefs and practices beyond Islam which try to infiltrate the Islamic teachings into the teachings of Islam.

Ibn Taymiyyah summoned the ummah to come back to the Quran and Sunnah, open the door of ijtihad and oppose taqlid, so he is often called the father of Islamic fundamentalism in the modern era. He criticized the ignorance of Muslims about Sharia, heretical practices and shirk as a situation of ignorance (jahiliyah) before the birth of Muhammad PBUH. His ideas gained their foot in Wahhabi movement in the Arab region until now.

Towards the end of the XX century, an articulator of liberal democracy, Francis Fukuyama saw that Islamic fundamentalism had emerged and become a danger to the West. Why? Fukuyama said, because the Muslim community feels very threatened by Western values that are imported into the Muslim world and there is a feeling of what the Muslim dignity is so deeply wounded by its failure to maintain the coherence of the traditional society and the success of Western values that have penetrated the Muslim world, making Muslims experience of alienation, anomie, insecure and discouraged.

That painful fact, compounded by the way and model of the Western media in the character assassination against Islam. Akbar S. Ahmed shows how the Western media has been successful in building a negative image of Islam, so that Western societies reject Islamic values such as tolerance, egalitarianism and a love of science, reject universalism of Islam.

In fact, according to Akbar Ahmed, Islam and humanism greatly appreciate the virtues of Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and Vaclav Havel. But, the West refuses to humanism of Islam. These facts have made ummah in various parts of the world community to take their own initiatives and ways according to their circumstances and social conditions against modernization, Westernization and secularization.

In the context of globalization in this third millennium, perhaps the definition that is the closest to the objective truth about Islamic fundamentalism is the Fazlur Rahman's. In general, Rahman said, fundamentalism is now interpreted as a movement against Westernization and secularization in the Muslim world. Islamic fundamentalism, according to Fazlur Rahman, is a movement that displays Islam as an alternative system, as the liberating force, which liberates the ummah ideas from any old traditions before and Western intellectual and spiritual domination. Because of a liberation movement, then fundamentalism is very close to a political struggle.

There is also awareness of the ummah that globalization is a new "political" imperialism of the West characterized by the spirit of Islamophobia. Borrowing Hannah Arendt words, all the "politics" is a struggle to seize power, in which the ultimate kind of power is violence. Here, the power and violence at the same time is a necessity. In the situation where global capitalism devastates the Muslim world, leaning on religion is the last option for the ummah to hold out, rebel and survive, regardless of the risks and consequences that will happen. Just to illustrate, in the case of the despotic and authoritarian Shah Reza Pahlevi regime, Islam emerged as an ideological revolution.

Therefore, the West and Islam are now either symbolically or characteristically standing face to face "for a fight". At this level, once the West worried about A Million Ummah Rally in Monas Jakarta which is regarded by the U.S. and the West as a symptom of Islamic fundamentalism, "imaginatively" they could justify even though they were difficult to understand. Moreover, we (Al Chai-dar), chairman of the rally, (openly, fairly and crazily) provoke the masses on the idea of Indonesian Islamic State (NII) to solve the horizontal and then vertical riots in Ambon, Moluccas, to end Christian-Islam conflict in the region.

Practically, facing the political language of Islam with the NII's symbol, the West was very suspicious. The reaction of the U.S. And Western officials in the Rally of a Million Ummah is a statement about the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in Indonesia. And it's not new. Since the era of the Crusades around 9-11 century, the West has always been anxious and excessively suspicious against Islam. Such attitudes is articulated by Samuel Huntington as "the clash of Civilization", although this view is mistaken and misleading. Huntington's views are parallel to the perception of Michael Walzer's in 1980s which depicted fundamentalism of Islam as "the Islamic Explosion," in which Islam plays an important role in the murders, wars and violent in structured conflicts.

Back in the context of Indonesia, under economic crisis at that time, Islam was able to be used to express the opposition if the ummah felt the political pipe clogged up and injustice was rampant and widespread. Here, borrowing James Piscatori discourse, Islam as an expression of opposition and political attitudes is relatively very striking, relevant and effective.

In this context, we can ask: Can the case of Matori Abdul Djalil gashing and NII (N-Eleven) KW9 ala Abu Toto be linked to Islamic fundamentalism? These two phenomena are more as a "crime" that have economy motives, a "crime" of relatively exclusive, extreme and having violent structure. If the phenomena are suspected as a "movement" politically motivated, it could be still a puzzle for it is not showing "resistance to authority".

If there is a presumption that the Matori gashing and diversion Abu Toto KW9 NII are considered by a party as Islamic fundamentalism, then borrowing Aswab Mahasin's discourse, it is clear there has been a fundamentalism decadence appearing as an emotional and violent exclusivism.

However, do not underestimate and misunderstood of Islamic fundamentalism, because the government of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) also "need" to use Islam as "political merchandise". By allowing the development of fundamentalism, he could build the country's economy based on West sympathy against the destructive Islamic dissident groups. On the grounds that there are fundamentalists who threaten the community of democracies, the world "democratic regime" like the U.S. and other Western countries will disburse funds to build a clean democracy, with no element of Islam that "pesters" it. In addition, the negative benefits of fundamentalism can be a positive function for the development of the nation: the fundamentalist with its utopia energy succeeds to control the state power practices that tend to discriminate the Muslims.

A concrete example of the use of fundamentalism is how the United States managed to take advantage of radical Shiite community in France to overthrow the Shah of Iran in the late 1970s. When the Shah of Iran intends to manufacture a weapon with the helps the "deceased" Soviet Union, the United States is very angry. Because of having non-interference politic against domestic political policies of Iran, the U.S. ran the defection program from outside. The defection program was done by supporting radical Shiite community in exile, France, headed by Ayatollah Khomeini. What the U.S. did is a kind of "political compress" by utilizing the fundamentalist groups far from their domestic solidarity in Iran. Then through a sophisticated intelligence organization, political lectures and speeches by Khomeini were recorded on magnetic tape Basf then it was dispersed throughout Iran. And in Iran, this political verbal was played with a verbal tape-recorder made by the U.S., JVC, which is consumed by a lay audience who were familiar with Khomeini's political idioms. And, when that political verbal had been disseminated and contaminated the Shah Reza Pahlavi political buildings, Khomeini returned home by the Pan-Am plane. Then, Iranian fundamentalism revolution broke out, which Michael Foucault called a post

modernism revolution—, so the purpose of US thwarting the development of the arms manufacturer was reached.

U.S. political objectives are only a short-term thinking that utilizes all the destructive resources to destroy its opponent. But it forgot the warning of John Maynard Keynes, in the long run we're all death. In the 1980s after the revolution, one by one political assassination occurred and claimed the future generations in the name of religion (Homicide in the name of religion).

That is why, in addressing the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalists, the last frontiers, the intellectuals and the elite society should not only be in an ivory tower and not see a religious fundamentalism with narrow spectrum and myopic, it needs not to be phobia. Because, a multi-dimensional perspective will open eyes, minds and hearts about what, how and why the issue of Islam fundamentalism is relatively easy to "go international and go public". The presence or absence of Islamic fundamentalism can not be separated from the West and our own interests, and partly depends on how we manage conflicts and collisions.

II. Review of Literatures

Muslim's Belief in a Reformer

Muslims believe in the advent of reform or renewal. Sunnis cited a hadith which conveyed to them by Abu Huraira: "Allah sent at the end of each century a man to his people to refresh His religion and set it back."

And we know, for about a thousand years in the past, that belief has crept into the brain and a conscience of Muslims thought that— at first among the Sunni, then Shia—that at the beginning of every century a reformer will arise.

In historical perspective, the dream of the coming of the reformers is often understood as millenarism or mehdism (messiah-nism), who dream of Imam Mahdi coming, who in the traditional context is often called as the King of Justice. However, the reformer in the 20th century proved up to the Iranian Revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini, in which Islam (Shia) became the ideology of the revolution, while in Indonesia a resistance/turbulence emerge provoked by Darul Islam in Aceh, Java and Sulawesi with the Islam ideology. So, the interpretation, understanding and perception of Islam undergo enlightenment and review, as well as deconstruction.

In terms of language, Islam means safe, secure, and peaceful. From the word salima then it is transformed into an aslama form which means surrender, enter into peace (Riauan, 2019). Saragih (2018) states that Islam means the spread of da'wah. Da'wah does not only mean lecturing as a traditional way, but can use a variety of modern facilities in other not out of date. The core of da'wah to bring people to Allah can be achieved. Islam is transcendental teachings and is always understood by the socio-cultural context surrounding them. Thus, the phenomenon of Islamic civilization and social reality in the life of man-kind are always subject to change. From time to time, Islam and its community change their interpretation and develop and become a dynamic source of reference for generations, not just a ritual value with dry and empty meaning. Prediction by Western intellectuals such as Harvey Cox and Donald E. Smith that the modernization/ westernization in Indonesia will have implications for bankruptcy and the exclusion of the religion in human life misses and is not proven. For the people of Indonesia, Islam rises when modernization heavily permeates people's lives with all its excesses and its impact.

Since the beginning, Islam in Indonesia is not Islam that disconnects from its historical roots in the Middle East. And in the eyes of Western society, in Indonesia, fundamentalism and revolutionary ideology also rise of among the radical Islam, which its international ties

are affected by the Iranian Revolution and Islamic movements in the Middle East. But, this perception needs to be studied and pondered again, because it misleads. Indeed, Islam in Indonesia does not have to hesitate, be anxious and afraid to "speak honestly", show its vision of humanism, its open discourse, sincerity and not anti-criticism.

In this context, the structure of the Medina State as the reference for the reinterpretation of the Islamic ummah needs to be asked again to see its value and substance relevance in today Indonesia.

The choice of form and structure of the Medina State, which becomes the locus and the icon of pluralistic Islamic society, should be openly debated and discussed by Indonesians with its diversity and full of conflict potentials. Indonesia ersatz capitalism, borrowing Yushihara Kunio's discourse, has failed to improve human dignity, even the economic crisis and disintegration stick to the surface, immobilizing the joints of nationality.

The modern secular intellectuals of the New Order, borrowing William Liddle's words, also failed to realize a just, emancipatory and humanist development characterized by business and hundreds of trillions rupiahs banking scandals in the chain of corruption, collusion and nepotism. Case of Ambon, Mataram, Moluccas, Aceh and so on has increasingly shown that the system of our country has too much load, even overload and not able to aggregate and solve crisis and socio-economic conflicts.

If we do not want to waste the social, economic and ecological cost that have been sacrificed and destroyed by the New Order, it is the time for us to begin the total reform for the resolution of all political and economic problems in this country. And, only by bringing forward a substantial Islamic reform alone we will be safe from the possibility of a series of further destruction and carnage.

Reform in Islam finds its synonymy in terms that we often hear *tajdid* (reform). Prophet Muhammad PBUH is a *mujaddid* (reformer) who turns ignorance people of Mecca into Islamic society filled with the treasures of civilization, culture and institutionalized human rights.

What has been done by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was a total reform against the social, economic, ideological, political, cultural and military system. Thus, as the Western world also acknowledges, the rule of Islam is a very brilliant symbol of progress in politics. In Islamic terms, this power becomes something inherent in the teachings acquired through a socialization of awareness using the Quran and the history of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH that led to the conquest of Mecca under the power management of Islamic order.

Power is not a pleasure to be inhaled and enjoyed, but a (trust-worthy) responsibility that must be endured and held accountable before God, in democracy it is held before the people openly and honestly. Having power does not mean to control the political power and enjoy the resources oppressively, but a heavy political accountability is contained in it. Therefore, politics, as one aspect of Islamic culture, grows in a discourse of devotion (subject to the sacred orders or authority, divine imperatives) and the practice of power structures.

According to A.H. Johns, for Islam, a stable political power is characterized by an initial belief that "Muslim community should be governed by the best Muslim." And we can see it in the era of the State of Medina. In the State of Madinah, the moral equation of all followers of Islam and the need of people governed by the laws of God is realized. And, this then becomes the ideal for all Islamic thinkers, no matter the difficulties to adapt it into the existing political realities.

The Qur'an is the first source of law in Islam, and Hadith is the second source of Islamic law. Both written in Arabic and Islam can only be known by understanding both. Islam is very concerned about the Qur'an and hadith, and Muslims must learn both to help them understand Islam. Arabic has spread throughout the world and has been taught

everywhere to become the second international language after English and now people need to interact with Arabic every day (Murdani, 2019).

Islam has done a deconstruction, in a general sense, against the premise of a lot of knowledge that developed over the years. To avoid misunderstanding and phobia against Islam, the characteristics of the community and the Islamic system which is then actualized by the Prophet in Medina, known as the Medina State, with its Medina Charter, is described as follows:

First, the Medina State is a State with belief in it, which from the point of its formation and its existence it is upright on a basis of complete philosophy, suitable for Indonesia with its plural society and as Muslim majority. Its foundations are belief, the conception of being, ethical philosophy that emanates from it the moral system, law and public relations. It is not as described by some people who refer to Western thought, which is the state of religion, which is limited to a religious belief that is unseen and ordinances of worship and rituals alone.

Second, people should not describe the State of Medina with its existence as a religion or civilian state through the Western sense (Europe). Medina is the state of law (nomocracy) which is much better than the state of religion (theocracy, like the Vatican). One can not—because of his/her religious position—interpret religious texts or law by himself/herself. The common problem should be solved through a conference and there is an obligation for the sons and daughters of Muslims to master a special branch of science. Every body has right to put forward arguments and evidences in the conference on a problem.

Third, the State of Medina (Islam) is a moral and humane country. The purpose of this country is not solely seeking power, wealth and foster military glory. The real goal is nothing but a man freed from all bondage, tied it with a more noble bond, which is submission to God alone and uphold justice among all mankind. Therefore, in the Islamic state the human moral precedes other purposes such as economy, politic and military power. Thus, it differs from the States whose sole purpose is to multiply the production or expand the influence (dominance) and power. In Islamic State all subjects must follow the moral criteria and values.

Fourth, the State of Medina is a civilized country that guarantees plurality in accordance with the Charter of Medina. This country does not only limit itself in its duties to maintain security and protect its territory from aggression, but more than that, it has positive goals and guidances the field of economy, science and all the tools that give benefit for people in general.

Fifth, the State of Medina has a sturdy base and development in its structure. Unlike secular authoritarian state, or *mulk tabi'i* in Ibn Khaldun's conception, which is not clearly enough its purpose, the State of Medina is actually quite adaptive to absorb political science and democracy, far beyond social democracy in Europe, the United States, UK and any other countries in this world. In the Medina State, a detail and certain rules is handed over *ijtihad* and the human mind and it could be changed when the situation warrants it. That way, the State of Medina (the Islamic system) accepts other forms of state, adaptive to different conditions and changes in successive levels of society.

For our society context which has been confined under the shadow of the modern Javanese power under Suharto and Sukarno's Guided Democracy, the substance of Medina State system should be taken as the only answer to survive in the world and also in the hereafter in a *Baldatun Toyyibatun wa Rabbun Ghafur* (a state of prosperous, safe, tranquil and full of God's forgiveness).

If in the past, to the West learnt from Islam for its civilization, why now not? The East actually learns from them now, and the West has yet to complete all the lessons that exist in Islam, why Muslims who have knowledge of Islam shut down and hide the lesson. Though, Allah SWT has proved it in Cordova (Spain), and God will not reject of His promises.

Was not Cordova imitating the system of Medina State proved to be very civilized, just and emancipatory? Our plurality should encourage communities to search system ala Medina State, which has repeatedly been articulated by Nurcholish Madjid and Abdur-rahman Wahid, the two santri scholars. This is important because we have to find the "Anthony Giddens third way" beyond capi-talism and socialism by ourselves. By guaranteeing and efficiently utilizing the plurality and freedom to search it, our nationality views will not be monolithic, obsolete, and ahistorical, but it will contextually adjust with the societal change now and the future.

III. Discussion

Islamic World and Palestine-Israel Issues

PT. Berkat Bima Sentana is a company engaged in the field of diesel power plants (PLTD In the eyes of Islamic World, one of the real problems in the case of Islam-West relations is the longer Israel-Palestine conflict triggering tension, violence and war in the Middle East. Israel is determined to spearhead its political policy on Palestine Hamas by focusing overwhelmingly on military and economics. Other interested parties have followed suit. Since the rise of Hamas we have witnessed maneuvering by Israel, as well as by Iran and the Arab League, to influence Palestinian affairs (PA) using economic levers.

Up to now Israel weighed in first with its decision to place in escrow the monthly transfer of approximately \$50 million in Palestinian taxes, until such time as Hamas meets the now well-rehearsed trio of political demands endorsed by the Quartet: recognition of Israel, re-affirmation of existing agreements and an end to terror.

Again, some key issues are still unsolved. Firstly, Israel is asking Hamas to recognise Tel Aviv before it start talking. Wrong again. By agreeing to talk, Hamas is implicitly recognising Israel. Besides, which is the Israel asking Hamas to recognise? Israel is a country with deformed demography and no borders. Refusal to talk will get Israel nowhere. Fearful people cannot move forward. Time has changed and power may change Hamas. Disengagement is not the way to go.

Secondly, Israel has been asking Hamas to lay down its arms before talks begin. This is odd. Israel have military power on its side and they have nothing except their resolve, and their rights. Have the Israel heard the story of the wolves and the sheep who sat at the negotiating table? The wolves asked the sheep to disarm. The sheep obliged, sending away the guard dogs. At which point, the wolves set upon them and devoured them all. The Palestinians are no sheep. They are capable of deterrence and retaliation. One should know one's adversaries, for this is what makes it possible to discuss mutual security arrangements.

Meanwhile, the United States and the European Union announced in early April (and the European Commission formally reiterated on April 18) that they would halt payments to the Palestinian affairs (PA), but that aid would flow to the Palestinians through UNRWA, other UN organizations and various NGOs.

The US has also emphasized that any ties with Hamas are prohibited by its Foreign Assistance Act, raising questions regarding the legality of the provision of banking or other financial services to the Palestinian Affairs. Actually, the new Palestinian government, no more than two weeks in power, has been bitterly struck and squeezed by Israel and the United States. People concerned with the Middle East situation are watching closely whether Hamas can withstand the severe test.

Israel and Hamas have always been sworn enemies. Hamas clings to resistance of occupation by force and refuses to recognize Israel, while Israel regards Hamas as a thorn in his flesh and labels it as a "terror organization". In Palestine, basically, the struggle against

the Israeli occupation cannot be abbreviated to Hamas and the Islamic Jihad; the blood-soaked earth testifies to a long legacy of resistance beneath the banners of Fatah and other left-wing movements that are still fighting today

When Hamas won legislative elections in last January, Israel announced "no negotiation" with it unless Hamas can renounce violence, recognize Israel and accept Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. When Hamas began to form the cabinet, Israel took all possible means to suffocate it by closing cargo stations in Gaza which led to surging prices and exhausted grain reserves in this area, and by halting the monthly transfer of \$50 million tax revenues which left Palestine struggling desperately to make ends meet. After the Palestinian government was born, Israel called it "hostile authorities" and refused to have any contact with it.

Formerly acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert once expressed the will of continuing peace talks with PNA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, but since the latter approved cabinet formation by Hamas alone, Israel kicked him out saying Abbas had lost "real power". The act, analysts say, is intended to leave Palestine no room for maneuver, choke the Hamas government to death as quick as possible and to make way for "unilateral" withdraw from the West Bank and one-sided drawing of permanent borderline with Palestine.

Militarily, Israel has obviously intensified bombings and "targeted liquidation" against Palestine in recent days. In the past, Israeli internal security workers arrested Palestinian minister who is in charge of Jerusalem affairs and also a Hamas member. Israeli army so often launched air strikes against Gaza which killed many Palestinians, including children. Palestine reacted strongly by calling the operations a "massacre".

The United States also came to Israel's help, together with EU, by pressuring Hamas into change. Both the US and EU have ever announced a halt of direct aid to the new government, dealing a fresh blow to the already battered Palestinian economy. Now the country is simply unable to pay its PNA workers and security troops, with a shortage of fund running as high as 150 million dollars.

The escalating economic blockade and military strikes and pressure from the US and EU might produce several possible results: first, Hamas yields to the pressure and accepts the three conditions raised by Israel and four related sides; second, Palestine collapses under financial burdens; Hamas cabinet is dismissed and re-election held; third, Hamas holds on and the two sides fall again into the vicious circle of "meeting violence with violence".

IV. Conclusion

Economically, although Hamas cannot get stable and relatively large aids from the US and EU as Fatah does, it will not be "starved to death" by Israel and the US since EU sanctions only touch a small part of its help to Palestine and its humanitarian aids will remain. Some Arabian countries, Islamic foundations and charities will also lend a helping hand.

By now, there has been no "compromise" in Hamas' political dictionary as the organization calls the Israeli decision to cut contacts with the Palestinian government as a "declaration of war" and its air strikes in Gaza a "collective punishment" on Palestinian people, saying Palestine will never yield to such provocations. In Palestine, actually, the struggle against the Israeli occupation cannot be abbreviated to Hamas and the Islamic Jihad; the blood-soaked earth testifies to a long legacy of resistance beneath the banners of Fatah and other left-wing movements that are still fighting today. Under such a "complicated" situation, many scholars said, the prospect of resuming Israel-Palestine peace talks and Islam-the West dialogues naturally looks darker and hopeless.

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