

Islam and Democracy in Post-Suharto Indonesia

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Abstract—Indonesia is one of the largest Muslim democratic countries in the world. However, practically, there are many barriers making some scholars doubt that Islamic teachings support or relevant to the democratic system. The purposes of the article are (1) to examine the concept of democracy in Islamic view and (2) to analysis the phenomenon of Islamic politics in Post-Suharto, Indonesia. The result of the study addressed that (1) Islamic teachings are relevant to a democratic system; (2) there are many Islamic parties contested in the election in Post-Suharto Indonesia, however, only several of Islamic parties exist

Keywords—*Islam, Democracy, Party, Indonesia*

I. INTRODUCTION

Many scholars, especially those are from the West, doubt that Islam can go hand in hand with the Democratic System [8]. This condition is based on the fact that a country with a majority Muslim population is governed by an authoritarian regime, and in authoritarian government various democratic movements are relatively weak Muslim societies. The strong opposition often arises from Fundamental Islamic groups. Islamists have used Islam as an ideological tool and also as a weapon to obtain power when they are in opposition [7]. However, in the current global era the trend towards democracy is left to Islamic countries. There are some Muslim-majority countries adopted democratic political systems, such as Egypt, Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan, Indonesia and others. On the fact, those of countries have problem in implementing democracy coming from Islamic fundamentalist group. The question then, is it true that Islamic teachings do not support or are relevant to the democratic system?

Indeed, the difficult encounter between the Muslim world and the West at the level of security policy, diplomacy, and politics is complicated by cultural and ideological tension, and a degree of intellectual incomprehension. Western concerns about violence and political extremism in the Muslim world, and their impact on the security of the West, often rest on assumptions about the philosophical, cultural, and intellectual character of Islamic thought and Islamist political movements. Muslim concerns about Palestine, Western geostrategic and oil policy, and Western support to autocratic regimes are often accompanied by similar assumptions [2].

However, debates about the issue of democracy contained in the teachings of Islam among Muslim intellectuals have been going on for a long time in Muslim countries [4], including Indonesia. Various views on democracy in Islam can be grouped into two groups, the views of traditionalist

groups and the views of the Modernist group [3]. Traditionalist groups base their views on previous interpretations of Al Qur'an and Assunnah thinkers, while modernist groups argue that Islamic values must be relevant to the context of society. On the other hand Fundamentalist Islamic groups see Islam as a social order, which concerns all aspects of human life, while secular or liberal groups see Islam as a personal matter for the individual. However, in general, a Muslim believes under Islam its essence cannot be combined with secularism.

More over, the idea of democracy is very easy to find in a violent debate about modernist groups, and Muslim groups that support democracy are often labeled with "modernist groups". However, a variety of views on Islam may be wrong. For example, there are many different views between groups and individuals who have labeled "fundamentalists". Western analysts view that Fundamental Islamic groups adhere to non-political ideology, and therefore reject the existing ideological diversity. Whereas there are important variants to being able to distinguish between "militant" and "theocratic Islamic fundamentalists" - those who reject democratic principles and refuse to participate in elections (Hizbutahrir), and on the other hand "Moderate Islamic fundamentalists" - those who work for Islamization society through power tools.

Perhaps Samuel Huntington could be considered the most eminent thinker among contrasts and essentialist theorists. Huntington's views on the confrontation between Islam and the West and Western democracy are proposed under the heading of "The Clash of Civilizations". The conflict in the modern world is cultural-civilizational (rather than ideological-economic) built upon civilizational and cultural identity. This type of conflict is the last stage to the evolution of conflict in the modern world. Huntington alleges that cultural identity primarily emanates from religion, and considers both as the cornerstone of any civilization [11].

There are three different types of streams about how the relationship between Islam and Democracy relates. The first line of thought is that Islam and Democracy are in line. This is based on the existence of concepts in Islam such as *shura* (consultation), *ijtihad* (free thinking), and *ijma* (agreement). This existence is believed by many modernists. The reverse thinking, which is the second school of thought, rejects the idea that Islam and democracy are in line. Based on this view, people's sovereignty cannot be placed above God's sovereignty. Sharia is a complete teaching about the life of society and the state, there is nothing better than that. Furthermore, looking at the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims likewise men and women. The argument is an understanding of fundamentalists - but not all fundamentalists.

The third school of thought represented by the thoughts of Abdul A'la Mawdudi — contains thoughts from both parts of the previous school of view. As in the first line, Mawdudi argues that Islam exists or has a form of democracy, but as in the second line of view he also emphasizes the relationship between God's sovereignty and the People's Sovereignty. If democracy is understood as the people's sovereignty, then he concludes that Islam is the antithesis of Western democracy. However, democracy is understood as a limited sovereignty of the people, under the laws of God, so Islam and democracy have no problems at all. This line of view is reflected in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and is also used by fundamentalist groups in Tunisia.

In addition, the debate about the relationship between Islam and politics, especially the involvement of the Islamic movement and the Santri in the political world has never been completed and continues to every phase of national political development. The debate as coming from two different views, namely the view that sees the political world as a profane space that is open to public participation regardless of the quality of religion or santri on the one hand; and the view that sees the political world as an absolute realization of the truth of the teachings of religion (Islam) and is only controlled by a group of religious elites with various titles such as ulama, wilayatul faqih or ahlul halli wal aqdi on the other side.

The second view has implications for public participation in political decision making which is only through the religious elite who are known in this country as the class of clerics and scholars or leaders of the Islamic movement. This has made it difficult for the Santri party to communicate openly and dialogically with the constituents of the voting people, so that it has an impact on the difficulty of Santri political activists to accommodate the people's public interests which are classified as Abangan or Priyayi. As a result, the Santri party found it difficult to get the support of the majority of voters, the majority of whom embraced Islam.

Furthermore, These two of view on the one hand may be true, but in the political reality in the field Abangan's reluctance to support Islamic parties is not caused by the issue of mastery of truth by a group of religious elites, but the Santri and Abangan have already identified themselves with parties which according to them are in accordance with their culture which has been socialized for generations. Therefore, Santri political activists made efforts to gain support from the Abangan group. One things that might be done is changing the religious behavior of Abangans first, after that they can. But the problem, changing religious behavior is not an easy thing.

This view is generating research questions concerning Islam and democracy:

- (1). Does the Qur'an and Shari'a law preach "democratic behaviour"?
- (2). What are the penomenon of Islamic politics in post-Suharto Indonesia?

II. RESEARCH METHOD

Indonesia is one of the largest Muslim democratic in the world. However, there are many problems in implementing democracy, especially in post-Suharto regime, due to Islamic fundamentalism. The purposes of the article are (1) to examine the concept of democracy in Islamic vew, and (2) to analysis the political phenomenon in Post-Suharto, Indonesia. To fulfill data collection requirements, the

research used secondary data. The main databank was obtained from the books, documents and journals. Although this study will not provide a conclusive answer to the question of whether the Islamic teachings are relevant to a democratic system, the analysis will hopefully provide useful insights into how different features of Democracy in Islamic View affect the phenomenon of political Islam.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Democracy in Islamic View

The key to the debate in Islamic democracy is ijihad, freedom of thought to interpret Islamic law with the context of change and the needs of Muslim societies. The original sources of reference to Islam, the Qur'an and Assunnah, do not provide many legal texts. Islamic jurisprudence, jurisprudence, has developed through the process of ijihad [13]. For ten centuries according to prominent Islamic thinkers, all important questions in the law have been answered. Ijtihad contradicts taqlid, as an acceptance without rejection from the previous observation. And now there is a gap between those who hold fast to taqlid (generally Traditionalist groups), and those who demand the reopening of the door of ijihad.

The eighteenth century in Iran also witnessed a confrontation between two schools of thought dividing the Shi'i ulama—the Akhbari versus the Usuli. The former held a position more like that of Sunni Islam in arguing that there was no need for independent scholarly judgment and interpretation (*ijtihad*). The Qur'an plus the statements of the Prophet Muhammad and the imams (*akhbar*) were considered sufficient guidance to the faithful, thereby ruling out the use of human reason or of ijihad. The Usuli school, on the contrary, affirmed the need for human reasoning and ijihad in each generation. Ultimately the Usuli school won out. This meant that the faithful required the guidance of a reasoning religious specialist, in a word, an 'alim who was a mujtahid (one who engages in ijihad)" [10]. If ijihad is allowed for all citizens, Islam will be very much in line with democracy, but ijihad is actually still limited to some scholars, and this is very undemocratic. In Muslim technical terminology the pious Muslim must use ijihad and not taqlid [8].

More over, Muslims supporting democracy strongly emphasize the principle of culture (*equality*) in Islam, which is the principle of the first democracy in Islam [13]. The Prophet Muhammad stated that he received the revelation: "There really is no higher among the people except in matters of faith". While Rahman argues that "that the Qur'an does not discriminate between Mulim and non-Muslims, men and women, to equally participate in community life."

The second principle of Islam emphasized by supporters of democracy is shura (consultation) which has an important place in the democratic debate. This principle is interpreted as a demand for general elections, a kind of parliamentary formation. Rules must be consulted before being decided. The Prophet himself was commanded by Allah to consult with his shabat regarding various problems if this matter was not in the form of revelation. While others reject that shura is only a consultative and choice institution, and they see that shura is a basic principle in the Islamic political system for Muslim communities whenever and wherever. According to other Muslim scholars, shura does not mean that people have to ask

for advice, but advice and discuss each other in common steps. Thus executives cannot simply reject decisions that come from shura.

In the theoretical realm, some important principles such as Council, Ijam'e (consensus), and Ijtihad are some of the most important existing jurisprudential capacities in Islam that can be used to generate adaptability and compatibility between Islam and democracy. Making reference to the principle of tawhid (monotheism), Some Western theorists see an inherent conflict between Islam founded upon monotheistic and divine sovereignty, and democracy built upon human sovereignty and wisdom. With reliance upon monotheism, Mawdudi's as the leader of *amaat-e-Islami* (Islamic Nation) in Pakistan rejects human sovereignty. He underlines the fact that, in a political Islamic community, God is entitled to absolute sovereignty, yet God endowed man with Caliphate status to conduct the community within the framework of Islam Shari'a. He believes that the democracy must be organized into the category of monolithic worldview [3]. In this regard, democracy or pillar of the republican and democratic will proceeds alongside God's will. Thus, legislation and the content of decisions should not be in conflict with the text of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet [11].

More than once, the major states have announced that they will not interfere in internal affairs of any country, including governmental forms, especially if these forms are in accordance with the general principles of democracy. In this regard, the Lehigh International Convention in 1938 gained full respect for the Islamic idea. The Convention has declared that the Shari'ah is independent, has the capacity for development and progress and is in accordance with the most modern legal bases. The shari'ah also gained full respect again in the May 1945 Washington Convention. For the representative of that Egypt, Attorney General Hafiz Basha obtained a decision declaring Egypt's right to have a representative at the International Court of Justice, entitled Islamic shari'ah" [5].

Modern Muslim thinkers from relatively conservative Islamists to more liberal modernists to Shiite activists stress the importance of consultation. There would be little disagreement with the view of Ayatollah Baqir al - Sadr, the Iraqi Shiite leader who was martyred by Saddam Hussein in 1980, who said that people "have a general right to dispose of their affairs on the basis of the principle of consultation in the Islamic Political System [8].

Another view is that shura must be based on the principle of the majority. El-Awa argues that the authorities must be guided by the opinion of the majority. Many references to majority principles both in the form of past historical facts and legitimate writing. An example is the election of Umar as caliph. The Prophet Muhammad also advocated following the will of the majority of Muslims, with the statement "an obligation to act on the basis of the majority and the unity of society.

The third concept is *ijma* (consensus), which is a demand for everyone to take part in making decisions. The right to elect a leader is provided by one institution, namely bayah (contract of appointment of the caliph). Although there was no specific method in the appointment of the Caliph based on the Qur'an, and the various methods of appointment were based solely on the four methods of choosing the caliph (Abu Bakr, Umar, Ustman, and Ali). The appointment is always aligned

with the willingness of the majority of Mulim as in the *Bayah*. Bayah was a social contract about mutual obligations. This is a promise regarding the public's obligation to the authorities, when only (under conditions) the ruler runs justice and fulfills responsibility for his position.

It is noted by Muslim intellectuals that the Prophet's companions themselves had varying understandings of some verses of the Quran, and there is clear evidence that the Prophet, knowing this, did not seek to impose a unitary vision. Apart from a universal acceptance of the Quran, and an almost universal acceptance of the Sunnah (actions and behavior of the Prophet), different groups of Muslims follow different schools of shariah based on different authorities. A variety of exegetical tools may be used, including agreement or consensus of expert opinions (*ijma*), analogy (*qiyas*), and reasoning based on the public good (*istislah*), as well as *ijtihad* (commonly understood as "critical reasoning," more narrowly the use of all capacities to reach a legal conclusion)" [2].

The fourth concept is a panel (council, panel, or in a modern version of parliament) which has traditionally been used to seek or gather opinions in an informal manner through exchange of ideas and views on various social, economic and political issues. Based on this principle, many Muslim countries have formed a kind of National Council. The term is also widely used to form a parliament almost all Mulim in the world, including in Indonesia.

In addition, other concepts derived from the Qur'an, Tradition, or the practice of the first four caliphs, various facts that show that Islamic values are in line with democratic values such as *prinsip justice (adl)*, rights (*haqq*), virtue (*rahmah*), love one another (*tarahum*). We can conclude that many of the values and views relating to democracy are central to Islamic thought, therefore it is easy to find support for democracy in Islam. It can all be seen and obtained from various democratic divisions among Muslim intellectuals, but it must be understood and realized that thinking only develops in a small number of Muslim societies, which cannot represent the views of all Muslim societies.

The overall spirit and vision of the Quran provides guidance for unpacking the political import of jihad: whether it means warfare, political violence, militant nonviolent resistance, or simply striving for social justice through established institutions. The concepts that recur throughout, often as the attributes of Allah, are justice (*adl, qist, and hakama*), benevolence (*ihsan*), compassion (*rahmah*), and wisdom (*hikmah*). Even were jihad a source of violence, its use in the Quran on a mere 41 occasions may be compared to 194 instances of *ihsan* (benevolence), 101 of *hikmah* (wisdom), and 244 of the various terms for justice. The terms *rahman* and *rahim* (compassion and mercy) between them recur 335 times in the Quran. These are the attributes invoked in prayer every time a devout Muslim begins any work" [2].

B. The Phenomenon of Islamic Politics

There were 14 Islamic parties participating in the 1999 election, the first election in Post-Suharto [9]. The result, there were four Islamic parties that could meet the electoral threshold so that they could place their representatives in the Parliament, namely The United Development Party (Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP), The Moon Star Party (Partai Bulan Bintang, PBB), The National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional, PAN) and the National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, PKB). The small number of

Islamic parties was due to the inability of the party to win the sympathy of the masses. More over, Islamic voters are no longer automatically ideological determines their political affiliation without concrete party performance. On the other hand voters may no longer see Islamic parties on the basis of political parties, or in mass groups that use religious symbols, including Islam.

Most of the parties in post-Suharto Indonesia, in both the Nationalist and Islamic block, were a continuation of the 1955 election [9]. In the 1999 and 2004 elections several political parties targeted Islamic-based voters, directly or indirectly using Islamic attributes in party design, campaign patterns, recruitment patterns, and in conducting political transactions with their voters. However, the results obtained by Islamic parties were far from expectations, because in fact none of the Islamic parties had gained significant votes such as Masyumi and NU in the 1955 elections. Even in the 2004 and 2009 elections Islamic parties experienced a decline in votes.

The most moderate and pluralist party, the PKB, declined significantly, while the admittedly puritanical Islamist party, the PKS, achieved steady growth and survival during the same period to become the most prominent religious party. In addition, PKS has so far been able to relatively effectively adjust its radical outlook against a prediction among some scholars that their ideological adjustment would only hurt the party [6]. In 2004 and 2009, the vote of PKS increase significantly.

On the other hand, the National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, PKB), adopted a moderate religious nationalist was the largest religious party in 1999. However, in the 2004 and 2009 election, the vote of PKB decrease due to internal conflict. By contrast, the most puritanical and exclusivist Islamist party, the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS), has steadily expanded to form the fourth largest political party. It has done so by pledging a commitment to moderation and eventual transformation into a more open and centralist party in the years ahead despite widespread suspicion and some opposition. The diverging patterns of these two religious parties poses an intriguing puzzle: Why is the most moderate and pluralist PKB in significant decline, while the avowedly puritanical Islamist PKS faces a much different future?" [6].

The results of the 2004 Legislative Election, of the 24 parties that participated in the election, 17 political parties won seats in the Parliament. However, most of the new Islamic parties got their seat from the decreased incumbent Islamic parties. The incumbent Islamic decreased their vote such as PPP, PKB and PAN. Comparing to 1955 election, the power of Islamic parties have decrease significantly. The reason why the power of Islamic Parties decreased, one of the explanation is because of the de-legitimation of Islamic parties in the period of Suharto Regime. This was confirmed by the statement of R. William Liddle who stated that with the development of the cultural Islamic movement during the New Order, the power of political Islam would not emerge again. Furthermore, he stated that the scripturalism group (formalistic Islamic groups) would not develop, this is because there are three obstacles that will be faced, namely: (1) Abangan community, which, although fewer but still remains; (2) Traditionalist Santri who remained accommodate, and (3) Modernists themselves.

The aforementioned trends have led some scholars to conclude that the function of religion is not as significant as expected and the role of political Islam in electoral politics remains minimal. Mujani and Liddle, for example, predict that the declining influence of religious parties indicates popular disapproval of the enforcement of Syariah or other forms of Islam-ism in Indonesian political life. In a survey of voting behaviours, they also find that voters do not care as much about ideology as they do about other factors such as personality and leadership [1].

IV. CONCLUSION

Conceptually, Islam and democracy is relevant. On the practice of Indonesian political life, Islam is considered support to the principles of democracy. The teachings contained in Islamic sharia, many Islamic principles supported democratic political life. In Indonesia, many Islamic-based political parties compete in elections both in the 1955 and Post-Suharto elections. This shows that Muslims in Indonesia feel a similar concept between Islam and democracy. However, in the reality of the election results, it shows that Islamic parties always inferior compared to the Nationalist party.

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