Islam and Society in Contemporary Indonesia

Edited by:
Dr. Yusuf Rahman, MA

With Introduction from:
Prof. Bruce B. Lawrence

Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies Program
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta
FOREWORD

This book is a collection of articles written by some students of Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies (IIS) program in the Faculty of Graduate Studies Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta.

The IIS Program opened in 2003 as the result of cooperation between McGill University in Montreal Canada and State Islamic University in Jakarta Indonesia, under the auspices from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) of Republic Indonesia. The Program started with 13 students, and since then has admitted 45 students.

The purpose of this publication is to introduce the research findings to a wider audience, and also to socialize and promote the Program.

We would like to thank CIDA and MORA, the Rector of UIN Jakarta and the Director of the Faculty of Graduate Studies for their support to the IIS Program.

Head of IIS Program/Editor

Dr. Yusuf Rahman, MA
# ISLAM AND SOCIETY IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

## Table of Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreword</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### I. Radical Islam and Progressive Islam


### II. Pesantren and Globalization


### III. Women, Polygamy, and Education


Contributors ............................................................................. 247
INTRODUCTION

This is a robust collection of essays originally submitted as MA theses at the new Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies (IIS) program, in the Faculty of Graduate Studies at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta, Indonesia. The seven essays are divided into three thematic foci: (1) radical Islam and its antithesis, (2) pesantren, or religious schools, and the process of globalization; and (3) women, polygamy, and education.

It is impossible to underestimate the importance of these essays, both in understanding the significance of the pesantren in contemporary Indonesia, Indonesia's role in the process of rethinking Islamic studies, and the interrelation of 21st century Muslim politics. Its educational efforts are understood through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and since the 1950s, the Indonesian government has funded and managed state institutes of Islamic Studies. More recently, six of these state institutes – in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Malang, Makassar, Pekanbaru, and Bandung – have been accorded university status. It is from the postgraduate program of Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta that this collection of essays is being published.

The traits of diversity and plurality are prizeworthy throughout Syarif Hidayatullah, but they are brought to the fore with special intensity in the Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies program. This singular mission of this program to train students who will become future educational leaders in traditional, Islamic studies. These students are familiarized with approaches to the topic of Islamic education that go beyond the core of classical teaching, as pursued in pesantren. From the social sciences, i.e., anthropology, sociology, and psychology, and the humanities, critical theory, literature, and history. It is especially the vantage point of religious phenomena in social contexts, that informs the essays now being published in this volume.
Indonesia is Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the initial essay by Abdullah Faqih examines how NU functions in civil society, or more specifically, how progressive cadres of NU - those who do not represent the whole body of NU but rather its most activist members - have engaged in civil society during the post-Suharto period (after 1998). It is not so much the formal structures of NU but its informal activities through NGOs that are helping to redefine civil society in Indonesia. This essay does not claim to address the whole of Indonesia nor even the whole of Java but rather the patterns of institutional development and political engagement around central Java, specifically the town of Jepara, as reflected in ‘nine stars’. The ‘nine stars’ are nine local NU activists miming the nine walisongo or saints who are alleged to have popularized Islam in Indonesia during the premodern period.

The second essay by Agus Salim looks at the radical organization Hizbut Tahrir, charting its rise to prominence through campus activities in the closing decades of the 20th century. Asking why and how this movement emerged, Agus Salim concludes that while Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) represents a typical manifestation of political Islam, it is best understood as a social movement comparable to labor union, civil rights or anti-nuclear protest movements. He examines how both resource mobilization and collective action were framed within two opposite political opportunities. The first was provided by the repressive tools of the Soeharto regime, limiting HTI to the campuses. The second was provided by the relaxation of political control after Soeharto’s resignation in 1998: HTI was able to emerge from the campuses and to project its vision of a future Indonesia onto the streets.

The final paper in Section One moves from consideration of civil society and social movement theory to analysis of the media. Syamsul Rijal, like his predecessors, focuses on the major transition from Soeharto’s repressive New Order to post-Soeharto liberalization. One of the beneficiaries of an expanded public sphere was the media, including Islamist or fundamentalist magazines which opposed Soeharto but also modernization and westernization (often taken to be the same). Sabili is arguably the most influential, and certainly the most widely circulated, of the post-Soeharto Islamist publications. Rijal surveys its major themes. They range from extolling “literal Shari’a”, or text-based orthodoxy, to critiques of American foreign policy but also Christians, Jews and liberal Muslims.

Section Two consists of two essays. Each focuses on the economic dimension of major Islamic movements. The first essay examines a religious organization and a spiritual leader. The organization is the Sufi Tarekat Siddiqiya of Jombang district in East Java. The Siddiqiya, as the article’s author Sudirman explains, is actually a subset of the Khalwatiyya, but it has emerged as an independent tarekat since the late 20th century, chiefly due to the extraordinary power of its reclusive leader or murshid, Kyai Mukhtar Mu’ti. With over three million adherents, most of them in East Java, Central Java and Jakarta, its main center remains a huge complex in Plosos, about 12 kilometers from Jombang, the district capital, and about 100 kilometers from Surabaya, the provincial capital of East Java. It is an aggressively self-help tarekat, with a Qur’antically based formula for daily, commercially-directed discipline. The members’ energy and labor are channeled through a myriad of organizations, including a bottled water company, a cigarette production partnership, and several small handicraft outlets. The political implications of this tarekat are left explored, awaiting future research.

The second essay in Section Two also focuses on a self-help religious organization and a charismatic spiritual leader. The religious organization is the famous Pesantren Daarut Tawhid (DT), and its spiritual leader is Abdullah Gymnastiar, aka Aa Gym, the internationally acclaimed preacher who is at the same time a sophisticated businessman. Aa Gym is perhaps the best known new Muslim leader in post-Soeharto Indonesia. What this essay does that no other analysis, to date, of Aa Gym has done is to show how Aa Gym uses media technology to enhance the scope and the impact of his Bandung based pesantren. Indeed, the subtitle of the essay “Virtual Pesantren in the Global Era” aptly suggests the thesis of its author, Zaky Nur’anin. Manajemen Qalbu Corporation is at once the holding company for some 27 business divisions, ranging from media to travel to fashion goods, and a vehicle for propagating spiritual self-improvement as an unbounded, global network that can attract diverse groups. Its culture of knowledge exceeds the range of other pesantrens, just as Aa Gym shifts his own image as a preacher or kyai from a local or regional to a national, and now international, audience. If both DT and Aa
yn have become the first Indonesian superstars of the Information Age, it is
not in small part because they have adapted traditional religious messages to
digital requirements and opportunities.

The third and final section has two essays that focus on women in two
divergent, local contexts. One is Madura in East Java, the other is Jambi
province in Central Sumatra. What both essays underscore is the difficulty of
making any generalized obiter dicta about Muslim women, or even about
Muslim women in Indonesia. Jamilah, the author of the essay on Madurese
women, looks at their engagement with polygamy. She traces the history of
polygamy as a Madurese practice back to the older, pre-Muslim era of the
archipelago. Interestingly, hers is the sole trans-national as well as cross-cul-
tural study in the volume: she compares Madurese notions of polygamy
with those of Mormons in 19th century Utah, in the far west of the United
States of America. That comparison allows her to expand on the mixed
perception of polygamy among Madurese women, some of whom actually
favor it for social reasons: they understand equality between men and women
in different terms than the universal Western norm announces. Even those
Muslim women who discount and dislike polygamy, often accept the social
atratification of Madurese society, fearing men as it does, because it is also
seen to be beneficial for women.

The final paper looks at the correlation between educational
opportunities and women’s career patterns in the Jambi province of central
Sumatra. One of the major benefits of this paper is to demonstrate how
difficult it is for women, even modern, educated women, to move beyond the
traditional structures reinforced by the religious leaders or kyai. If Aa Gym
from Bandung provides the model for a progressive, New Age kyai, those who
are the subject of Siti Khazinah’s study from Seberang Kota Jambi are notable
for a literalist interpretation of the Qur’anic dictum: “Men are the leaders of
women” (Q 4:34). Yet even this translation is very misleading, since the
Arabic term qiwama can also be translated as ‘maintainers’. As the Saudi
feminist Dr. Fatima Umar Naseef has argued, the Qur’anic dictum means that
men have the contingent, not the absolute, role of providing for women. Will
women’s continued access to formal education lead them to have greater
public roles in Seberang Kota Jambi, despite religiously conservative

opposition to their expanded roles? The outcome is not clear, and the merit of
this essay is to underscore just how great are the obstacles that urban, educated
women continue to face in the 21st century.

It is to be hoped that this will be but the first of still more collections of
essays to be published from the graduates of the new Interdisciplinary Islamic
Studies (IIS) program in the Faculty of Graduate Studies at Syarif
Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta. Not only is Indonesia the
most populous Muslim nation-state but its young people also provide evidence
to support Richard W. Bulliet’s bold prediction: “the voices that will
enunciate the pivotal ideas for the next great phase of Islamic history have
probably not been heard yet”. [The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization
(New York: Columbia University Press, 2004: 135)]

Professor Bruce B. Lawrence
Visiting Fulbright Scholar Spring 2006
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Syarif Hidayatullah
State Islamic University Jakarta
&
Director, Duke Islamic Studies Center
(Durham, North Carolina USA)
SABILI AND ISLAMISM
IN POST-NEW ORDER INDONESIA

• Syamsul Rijal •

Background

This paper attempts to discuss and analyze Islamist issues presented by Sabili magazine in post-New Order Indonesia from 1998 to 2004. This study is mainly inspired by the resurgence of Islamism as a consequence of political liberalization gained after the fall of Soeharto in May 1998. The freedom of press granted by president Habibie has given an opportunity to the Islamic media such as Sabili magazine to re-emerge after being stifled in the New Order era. Sabili magazine, as the object of this study, constitutes an Islamist media which has been popular among Muslim readers in Indonesia. The survey of AC Nielsen in 2001-2002 reveals that Sabili had the highest percentage of the growth of readership among leading magazines in Indonesia. A study of the resurgence of Islamism in Post Soeharto Indonesia would not be comprehensive without considering the existence of Sabili. I therefore will study and analyze the content of this magazine and the current Islamist issues it presents in dealing with contemporary Indonesian and international situations.

There are two reasons why I choose Sabili magazine as the object of study. First of all, this magazine represents one of the important Islamist media after the Soeharto era with strong tendency to voice Islamic propagation (da’wah) and shari’a issues as well as strong reaction and criticism against Christians, Jews, America, and Liberal Muslim intellectuals. Secondly, this magazine has been one of the popular Islamist media read by many Indonesian Muslims especially Muslim activists. In terms of the time frame, I study the editions of Sabili magazine from 1998 to 2004 since the issues raised during such years were varied in dealing with the political and social dynamics of Indonesia and affords a comprehensive forum to observe their Islamist characteristics. This study aims to comprehend and discern the characteristics of Islamism of the post-New Order as represented in this magazine.
The Concept of Islamism

There are various terms used by scholars to identify and explain the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence in the Muslim world such as fundamentalism, revivalism, radicalism, militancy, Islamism, political Islam, and extremism. Among such terms, fundamentalism seems to be commonly used in the press and among academics. However, not all scholars are in favor of this term since it might be pejorative for Islam.

Esposito for example elaborates that “fundamentalism” is associated with three things as follows: first, all those who call for a return to foundational beliefs or the fundamentals of a religion may be called fundamentalist; second, understanding and perceptions of fundamentalism are heavily influenced by American Protestantism which is “a movement in 20th century Protestantism emphasizing the literal interpretation of the Bible as fundamental to Christian life and teaching”; third, “fundamentalism” is often equated with political activism, extremism, terrorism, and anti-Americanism. Therefore, he regards “fundamentalism” too laden with Christian presuppositions and Western stereotypes, as well as implying a monolithic threat that does not exist. Instead, he prefers the terms “Islamic revivalism” or “Islamic activism” which for him, are less value-laden and have roots within the Islamic tradition. Moreover, as he argues, “Islam possesses a long tradition of revival (tajdid) and reform (islah) which includes notions of political and social activism dating from the early Islamic centuries to the present day.”

Similarly, al-Asmawy also finds problematic the use of the term fundamentalism to describe religious extremism in Islam. He declares himself as fundamentalist in the sense that he and every Muslim scholar or practitioner accept and respect the fundamentals of the faith, the five pillars, the Qur’an and Hadith. In this sense, it appears that the meaning of “fundamentalist” is not equal with extremist, radical or militant but a person who holds the fundamentals of Islamic religion. Therefore, al-Asmawy prefers the term “religious extremism” rather than fundamentalism.

Another problem that might crop up is when the term “fundamentalism” is translated into Arabic which means ʿusūliyyah, a word that refers to the study of the sources of the various rules and principles of Islamic law. In this respect it would be apparent that equating English and Arabic terms, can be misleading and confusing. Therefore, Sidahmed and Ehteshami clearly state that “the word ‘fundamentalism’ with its original Christian implication, should not be brought into Islamic context for reasons associated both with the particularity of Islam itself and with the discourse of contemporary Islamic movements.”

In spite of the complexity of the term, the scholars still find it useful as a “comparative construct encompassing movements within (various) religious traditions.” According to Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, this word is appropriate to be regarded as “family resemblances”. At the outset of their monumental six-volume fundamentalist project, they argue that the fundamentalists all follow a certain pattern which can be described in the word “fight”. The fundamentalists fight back, struggling reactively against the present in the name of the past; they fight for their religious conception of the world against secularism and relativism; they fight with weapons of every kind, sometimes borrowed from the enemy, carefully chosen to secure their identity; they fight against others who are agents of corruption; and they fight under God.

William Liddle uses “scripturalist Islam” when studying the view of Media Dukun, one of the leading Islamist magazines in Indonesia. For Liddle, scripturalist Muslims are “those who do not see themselves as engaged primarily in the intellectual activity of adapting the message of Muhammad and the meaning of Islam to the social conditions of the late twentieth century.”

---

2 Esposito, The Islamic Threat, pp. 8-9.
5 Abdel Salam Sidahmed et al., Islamic Fundamentalism, p. 4.
7 See Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, Fundamentalisms Observed, p. ix-x.
groups in Indonesia are appropriate to be regarded as radical for several reasons: first, they tend to see Islam as a total system (kātbāh) and therefore Islam should become the basic foundation of the state as well as shari'ah as the national law. Second, they orient their religious understanding and practice to the past (salāti). Third, they reject ideas imported from the West such as secularization and modernization. Fourth, they oppose and condemn ideas developed by Muslim liberals. These components of Islamic radicalism are also shared by Jamhari and Jahnri. They add that radical Muslim groups in achieving their goal are not reluctant to oppose the existing government who are seen as status quo and ignorant to social illness (ma'siat). Moreover, the Muslim groups tend to be intolerant and even hostile to non-Muslims notably Jews and Christians, who are seen as enemies conspiring to ruin Islam.

After delineating the various terms used by scholars, it seems to me that the terms they used in fact, to borrow Marty and Appleby’s word, “family resemblances” in meaning and characteristics. In this study, I instead use the term “Islamism” which is used and developed by Olivier Roy and Greg Barton. Roy uses the term “Islamism” to refer to contemporary movements that conceive of Islam as a political ideology. In the words of Barton, it is “the vision and project of transforming society, politically, legislatively, legally and constitutionally to make it ‘more Islamic’-not simply in the broad diffuse sense of values and ideals but in the narrow, concrete, practical sense of legislation and law.” Islamists call for application of shari’ah and constitutional recognition of the supremacy of Islam in the life of the nation.

---


14 According to Horace M. Kallen, radicalism is conceived as a complex sentiment with three major components as follow: First of all, radicalism is a conspicuously stressed attitude or frame of mind toward one particular institution of society or toward the social order in a whole. Second, major component of radicalism is a distinct philosophy and program of social change looking toward systematic destruction of what is hated, and its replacement by an art, a faith, a science or a society logically demonstrated as true and good and beautiful and just, or at least more so than the condemned establishment of society. The last, radicalism tends to define its aims and methods in democratic and humanitarian terms. Its indignation directed against the classes in behalf of the unprivileged, against owners in behalf of the property less. See Horace M. Kallen, “radicalism,” *Encyclopedia of the social sciences*, vol. XIII-XIV (New York: The McMillian Company, 1963), P. 51-54.


They argue that society will overcome the problems of modern life only when it becomes truly Islamic.  

According to Roy, the origin of today's Islamist thought and organizations can be traced back to the society of the Muslim Brotherhood, created by the school teacher Hasan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928, and Jamaat Islami of Pakistan, established by Abul A'la Maududi in 1941. Theologically, Islamists adopt salafi theology: they preach a return to the Qur'an, the Sunna, and shari'ah and reject the commentaries that have been part of the tradition (the gloss, the philosophy, but also the four major legal schools, the madhahib). Furthermore, they regard Islam as a complete and universal system.

What is interesting from Roy's view is that he tries to show the complexity of Islamic radicals in distinguishing between fundamentalism and Islamism. What he calls 'Islamism' is the brand of modern political Islamic fundamentalism that claims to re-create a true Islamic society, not simply by imposing shari'ah, but by establishing first an Islamic state through political action. Islamists see Islam not as a mere religion, but as a political ideology that should reshape all aspects of society (politics, law, economy, social justice, foreign policy, and so on). They acknowledge the modernity of the society in terms of education, technology, economy, changes in family structure, and so forth.  

By contrast, fundamentalists believe that an Islamic state should result from the re-Islamisation of the ummah and not be a tool for this re-Islamisation. They condemn the very concepts of democracy, human rights and freedom, whereas Islamists try to show how Islam represents the best form of democracy (through the concept of shura, or consultation) and the best protection for human rights (including women's rights). Moreover, fundamentalists refuse to express their views in modern terms borrowed from the West since they consider that indulging in politics, even for a good cause, will by definition lead to bid`ah and shirk (the giving of priority to worldly considerations over religious values).

The aforementioned components of Islamism seem to fit with Islamic discourses and coverage presented in Sabili magazine for several reasons. First, Sabili in its worldview believes that Islam as a complete system and solution for all matters in this world. To reach that goal, an Islamic state and the implementation of Islamic shari'ah through legislation are fundamentally required to replace the existing secular system. Second, it relies much on salafi theology as the standard of the true religious interpretation. Third, it tends to counter Western concepts such as democracy, human rights, pluralism, and gender equity and offers Islamic concepts as more complete ones. In expressing the completeness of Islam, the Sabili writers often use modern terms borrowed from the West. Fourth, although Sabili often covers the condition of Muslims abroad, its struggle and focus are mainly national. Fifth, it often criticizes the Indonesian government for social illness, corruption and discrimination of Islam and USA for invading Muslim countries, IMF, allegations of Muslims as terrorists, and so on. Sixth, it harshly criticizes and condemns “liberal Islamic ideas” brought by certain Muslim intellectuals as evil thinking, works of Zionist Jews and Christians, who want to destroy Islam from within. Finally, it often criticizes Christians and Jews. The last two components i.e. negative reaction to USA, Non-Muslims and criticism to Liberal Muslims are not mentioned by Roy, yet those are distinctive characteristics of Islamism in Indonesia. Based on the aforementioned characteristics, Sabili could be categorized as an Islamist media.

Islamic Views in Sabili

The views and their arguments are derived from various rubrics in the magazine such as Sekitar Kita (around us), Ibnoh (lesson), Telaah Utama (main coverage), Telaah Khusus (special coverage), Indonesia Kita (Our Indonesia), Kolom (column), Tarjuyyah (religious advice), Alam Islami (Islamic world), interview and Bimbingan Taubih (Taubih guidance). It is worth noting that the coverage in this magazine is dominated by political news both of Indonesia and abroad from an Islamic perspective. As

---

19 Greg Barton, Indonesian Islam.


an Islamic magazine, one therefore often finds Islamic arguments within the political coverage. The following views and arguments that will be presented and analyzed in this section are those which are frequently used and repeated in this magazine from either one rubric or from one edition to other edition.

Using the concept of Islamism, the writer has found three characteristics of Sabili views, namely literal shari’a oriented views, criticism against Christians and Jews, and criticism against America. These views have colored the articles and the coverage of Sabili since 1998. The first characteristic will be given more attention than the others since many issues in Sabili are related to the perspective of shari’a. The related issues will be described to illustrate their shari’a orientation.

A. Literal Shari’a Oriented Views

In various articles and reports, the writers and the editors of Sabili are of opinion that Islam is the solution for humans in this world since God has provided a comprehensive guide as found in the Qur’an and the Hadith. They generally insist that the shari’a should be followed and implemented as commanded in the religious texts since God’s law abrogates human law. Due to its idealization of shari’a, Sabili calls its readers to carry out shari’a comprehensively. Furthermore, by relying on the Qur’an and the Hadith as the standard of truth, Sabili has a tendency to criticize Muslim ideas and practices which appear to contradict with the shari’a. In line with the general view of Islamist groups, Sabili identifies shari’a as Islamic legal law which is literally presented in the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Thus, in this respect, Sabili is apparent to be literal due to its strong reliance on the text as religious rationale. There are several viewpoints which show its shari’a orientation:

1. Islamic Law as the Solution

In Sabili, it is often emphasized that Islam as represented by shari’a should play a significant role in contemporary Muslim life. Daud Rasyid, one of the prolific writers in Sabili magazine, believes that shari’a is the most just law in treating humans since it was revealed from God. It is precisely in contrast to the law enacted by humans, which may be subject to injustice, collusion and corruption. He contrasted with the experience of Indonesia with its secular legal system which has led to such negative effects as brutality, the loss of humanity, worshipping material and desires, and the lack of justice. All of this, he says, makes Muslims expect that the shari’a law can be implemented soon in regions of Indonesia. This opinion is shared by Agung Pribadi, who suggests that the failure of communism and capitalism in the world should pave the way for Islam to be experienced in Indonesia. This for him is fair because Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia. He suggested that Non-Muslims do not need to worry because shari’a law will be implemented in accordance with the Islamic local culture.

In supporting the utility of shari’a, the writers sometimes refer to scientific research and surveys. Topo Santoso for example argues that the implementation of Islamic criminal law in Saudi Arabia minimized the frequency of crime. He refers to Freda Adler, a professor of criminology in the USA, who includes Saudi Arabia as one of the top ten countries with “the lowest criminality rate countries in the world”. This is also shared by Sam Suryal who stated that during the past ten years, the criminality rate in Saudi Arabia is lower than Muslim countries which do not apply Islamic criminal legal system. Similar arguments were maintained by Habibullah in the rubric ibrah. He speculated that the increase of criminality in Indonesia is mainly due to the using of secular law which is not based on shari’a. Therefore, he insists that the only solution to overcome this problem is by turning back to the implementation of shari’a since history has proven that it was the law of God that saved humans from destruction. As the product of God who creates humans and the universe, qishas and hudud have created safety. He supported his argument by referring to the International criminology census in 1986 stating that the criminality rate of a day in Canada equals 12 years in Saudi Arabia. The research and survey the writers refer to still need to be cross-referenced to ascertain validity, and the writer has not yet found their original sources.

It is interesting to note that the writers in showing the effectiveness of the shari’a law in minimizing criminality only took Saudi Arabia as the model while overlooking other Islamic countries which also apply shari’a law such as Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan and Malaysia. What is more, there is a strong tendency to view the urgency of shari’a law in criminal law rather than in the public good. It should be noted that according to Freedom House, Saudi Arabia is ranked in a low position in terms of the protection of civil rights, literacy, and participation of women in the public sphere. This fact should be answered by Muslims who refer to Saudi Arabia as an ideal type of the implementation of shari’a law.

In attempting to implement shari’a in Indonesia, there were two discourses raised in Sabili. First, to establish an Islamic state (Daulah Islamiyyah) in order to pave a formal way for Indonesian Muslims to implement shari’a. Second, to return to the Jakarta Charter (Piagam Jakarta) by the insertion of seven words (with the obligation of the adherents of Islam to carry out shari’a) in the constitution. However, as can be observed in the articles, the latter is more dominant than the former. Only a few articles stress the idea of the creation of an Islamic state in Indonesia. Despite the variety of discourse, this media has a goal to voice the application of Islamic law in Indonesia through the state.

The writers who favor the idea of an Islamic state argue that there is no alternative way to fulfill Muslim aspirations in Indonesia except by changing Indonesian state system into an Islamic state (Daulah Islamiyyah). By the establishment of an Islamic state, they assert, not only can old national problems be solved, but also the challenges of future can be anticipated, and it would mark the beginning of a new state and nation (ummah) in the world as well as the second Islamic power (Khilafah ala Minhaj an-Nubuwah).

According to Salman, there has not been serious and systematical effort by Muslims to create an Islamic state in Indonesia for two reasons. First, the lack of understanding of Islam within society. Second, there is a residual fear of an Islamic rebellion as initiated in the past by Muslim figures like Kartosuwiryo and Daud Beureuh. The impression that emerges now is that if Muslim seizes power to establish an Islamic state, discrimination and oppression towards non-Muslim minority will occur. For Salman, this is a wrong perception. In Islamic history, the society of Medina which becomes a reference of Islamic state lived under the law of God. At that time, the society of Medina not only consisted of Muslim groups but also Jews and Christians who lived peacefully under the government of the Prophet. In other words, plurality and diversity colored the social life of Medina. There were no barriers to implement the Law of God in such state since every one whatever his religion and tribe is treated equal before the law which is derived from God.

This viewpoint indicates that Sabili reconstructs the Medina society of the Prophet’s era in the present as the ideal type of Islamic state.

The struggle of the implementation of shari’a through constitution and legislation are predominantly prevail in Sabili. As an example, issues on the insertion of Jakarta Charter were raised in 1999, 2000 and 2002 in which the discourse of the amendment of the constitution became the agenda of discussion in the House of Representatives. Similar to previous arguments for an Islamic state, the writers contend that the revitalization of Jakarta charter is a possible avenue to uphold Islamic law in Indonesia. The writer Salman views that the notion of inserting seven words in 1945 constitution should be seen as the solution to solve the problem of this country. He stresses that many solutions in terms of the economy, politics, and social which have been offered by many experts to solve Indonesia’s problem have no contribution to its overall development. Therefore, he says “Why don’t we try an Islamic solution?,” “as Muslim we absolutely believe that Islam is the solution.”

In a main report, Sabili refers to figures in favor of the Jakarta Charter i.e. KH. Firdaus. He says that after the taking away of Jakarta Charter,

disasters have befallen this country. In other words, if only Islamic Law was implemented at least for Muslims, the situation of this country would be peaceful and prosperous. It would be possible he claims that the rule of God and His Prophet would not be broken while the law of man does not produce any fear if one breaks it.32

Similarly, Zainal Muttaqin, the former editor in chief, believes that the inclusion of seven words would promote justice because one of the Islamic shari‘a points is the obligatory to bring justice. He claims that such an idea will lead to positive impacts on society. First, shari‘a will become a moral guide for Muslims and particularly the government. Second, the shari‘a will force Muslim officials to uphold justice. If not, it means they break the law and the constitution. He states that the main problem of this country today is the degradation of morality of the politic elites.33

The arguments built by Sabil writers to implement the Jakarta charter not only refer to Muslim activists and intellectuals but also to the experts of politics and law as well as political observers who favor the reformation of the 1945 constitution. As quoted, Harun al-Rasyid and Moch. Machfudz give five reasons why 1945 constitution should be changed. First, due to the fact it was only a temporary constitution, it should be changed as Soekarno once declared it. Second, based on the historical experience of Indonesia under the regime of Soekarno and Soeharto, the 1945 constitution never created democratic government system but rather a form of authoritarianism. Third, the 1945 constitution contains rules which depend on power. Four, the constitutions give too much authority to the president making him vulnerable to corrupt. Mahfudz says “Soeharto made so many rules for his business because he received the authorities.” Finally, the 1945 constitution is too honest to the character of man. Ideally, Mahfudz remarks that the constitution should distrust man. In this sense, he means that the constitution should limit power and authority of the government.34 It is apparent that Rasyid and Mahfudz in showing the weaknesses of the 1945 constitution do not relate their arguments with an Islamic perspective. However, their critical arguments are imbued with an Islamist perspective by Sabil to direct the readers to the idea of an Islamic constitution (Jakarta charter) as an alternative one to the constitution.

Using historical approach, the Sabil writers also argue that Islamic law is plausible to be implemented in Indonesia since it was the first law widely applied by Islamic kingdoms in this country. This fact is proven by the historical heritage which is colored with Islamic nuances. The historical inscriptions reveal that the society ruled by Islamic kingdom lived peacefully and prosperously. However, since the coming of the Dutch colonialists with their Christian missionary, the role of Islamic law was eliminated from the society. The Dutch began to apply secular law which separation religion and the state. As a result, the Dutch laws contained many points which contradicted Islam. Therefore, the writer argues that Islamic law as the alternative of colonialist law has a strong basis: first, as historical experience Islamic law in Indonesia and the second, Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia.35

Apart from historical experience of Indonesia, some writers refer to the Medina charter as the model of constitution in Indonesia. There are two reasons of why the reformation of constitution should refer to the Medina charter. First, Islam is the majority in Indonesia and this situation resembles to that in Medina society. Second, Islamic values were able to bring justice to the various components in the Society without discrimination in terms of religion, blood, or tribe. It was successfully implemented by the Prophet and the Caliphates when ruling Medina.36 It is noteworthy that the reference to Medina society as the model is not only held by Islamist but also by the progressive Muslims. Nur clochish Madjid for example regards Medina society as masyarakat madani, a term which for him equals with civil society in Western concept. He emphasizes that in Medina society social contracts between the citizens of different tribes and religions are honored and this is a typical of the


modern society. Considering the Medina charter as modern, he equates Pancasila with the Medina charter due to its accommodation of religions in Indonesia. These viewpoints indicate that there is a different perspective between Islamist and progressive Muslims in viewing the Medina society.

From the description above, it is obvious that the various arguments built by Sabili for the implementation of shari’ah in Indonesia are mainly based on four factors namely theological, demographic, history, and socio-political. The first factor emphasizes the fact that Islam is regarded as a religion which offers guidance and solutions to all aspects of life (economic, socio-cultural, political, and so forth). In this respect, shari’ah is seen as obligatory for Muslims to practice. The second factor points to the fact that the majority of Indonesians are Muslims. Adherents of Islam constitute 87 percent of the country’s population. In Sabili, this fact alone should become socio-cultural and political legitimacy for the formal implementation of shari’ah. The third factor refers to the experience of shari’ah law as implemented in the Medina in the era of the Prophet and that in the Islamic kingdoms in Indonesian history. It is believed that the implementation of shari’ah in the past was effective in ruling the society. The last factor refers to the fact that secular-positive law has not brought about economic, social-cultural, and political improvements for Muslims in Indonesia. Based on this, Sabili views shari’ah law as the solution for multidimensional crisis.

2. Women are Prohibited (haram) to be a President

The issue of a woman president was presented by Sabili in three moments. First, in the late 1998 before the special session (sidang istimewa). It was due to the fact that Megawati would be nominated as the candidate of the president as the result of 1999 general election. Second, at the moment the president Abdurrahman Wahid would be impeached in 2001. Finally, the issue emerged again in some editions at the time before the direct election of the president in 2004. In this context, Sabili utilized religious texts as the main argument for rejecting a woman (Megawati) to be a president. Besides, it criticized the track records of Megawati for calling Muslim not to choose her as the president.

According to the author Firdaus, Megawati is not eligible to become president because Islamic shari’ah stipulates that president should be a man and a true believer (beriman and bertakwa). The prohibition of women to be the president is mainly based on the Qur’an and Hadith. God says “man is the leader for woman” (ai-Baqarah: 34). He maintained that this verse is jarih and qur’i (clear) and cannot be debated or changed. The Hadith also reveals “never will be lucky a country which renders its leadership to women” (Hadith transmitted by Bukhari, Tirmidzi, and Nasai). Another Hadith states “no great disaster (fitnah) comes after me except woman” (Hadith from Usamah bin Zaid by transmission of Muttafaqun alaith). Indeed, he added that the forbiddance of woman to be a leader also was a consensus (ijma) of the great ulama such as Abu Hanifah, Malik, Syafi’i, Ahmad bin Hanbal, and Ibn Taimiyyah.

Another argument he uses is the historical experience of the Prophets and the Caliphas. He regards that God never delegated a woman as a Prophet and leader in this world since the Prophet Adam till the Prophet Muhammad. In Islamic history either in the era of the Prophet, the Caliphe, Daulah Bani Umayyah, Bani Abbas, Islamic kingdom in Spain, till Ottoman Turk, he argues there was never a woman became a leader or Caliphate.

Similar to Firdaus, other writers in Sabili also base their main argument on the Qur’an and Hadith. Habib Rizieq in his article derides the Islamic parties which colluded with the secular parties to enable Megawati to be president. In this context, he claims that the Muslim representatives of Islamic parties in the house of representative have betrayed Islamic values. As a Muslim for him, he or she should obey shari’ah rather than the constitution. Rizieq also regrets why some Muslim politicians see such situation as darurat (exceptional circumstances). He reminds that exceptional circumstances for women to be president should fulfilled the requirements, limits and rules. This for him is not khilafiah (debatable) matter because previous ulama (salaf) and

37 Nurcolish Madjid, “Potential Islamic Doctrinal Resources for the Establishment and Appreciation of the Modern Concept of Civil Society” in Nakamura et.al. (ed), Islam and Civil Society in Southeast Asia (Singapore, ISEAS, 2001), p. 156.

SABILI AND ISLAMISM IN POST-NEW ORDER INDONESIA
contemporary ulama (khalaaf) have agreed that a woman is not allowed to be a Caliphate (al-Iman al-A’zan).

According to Rizieq and Salman, the prohibition against woman as president is not gender discrimination as the feminist often state. Islam does not acknowledge the discrimination while does not deny the differences. The division of roles and jobs between man and woman is shari’a rule that should be sincerely accepted. Each sex has its own feature and this is a hadith from God. Hence, the reaction of Muslims in rejecting a woman presidency is not discriminatory to marginalize women but obedience to shari’a brought by the Prophet.

More clearly, Salman states that women by nature have limits that results into their prohibition to be a leader. The limits here are related to fitrah, nature, and their psychology in that women menstruate, bear children, raise children and so forth. Theses limits are not faced by men. However, argues Salman, except for the leadership, right and obligation between man and woman are generally the same.

The executive chair of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) Irfan S. Awwas has similar arguments. The verse an-Nisā: 34 for him clearly indicates that the right to lead or rule the state is only for a man. He regarded that it is not discrimination that makes women as the second citizens, yet it is sunnah tabi’iyyah based on the Qur’an. Islam precisely acknowledges that the right of man and woman are equal. However, he argues, the different sexes have different rights and obligations.

For the Indonesian context, Salman contends that it would be difficult for a woman to be a president since the law stipulates that the president is the high commander and this position renders many responsibilities to the president in determining the situation of peace or emergency of the state. Therefore, such a position is very difficult for a woman to handle. It is why the ulama by reference to the Qur’an and Hadith prohibit woman to be the leader of the state.

Furthermore, Salman asserts that the state under a woman presidency will result in disasters and problems within such a country. The fact shows that during the leadership of Megawati many disasters including importing diseases beset Indonesia. In this respect, he connected Hadith text with the experience of Megawati’s failed government in Indonesia.

Having presented the arguments of Sabili, it is evident that this media relies very much on the religious authorities (Qur’an, Hadits, and ulama) and historical experience in prohibiting women to be the leader. This basic argument is justified by the nature of women who is physically weak and having such biological barriers as menstruation, and giving birth. From this standpoint, it is understood that this Islamist media tend to perceive women as the second class. In many articles of Sabili, Muslim women are encouraged to be religious wife who focus on caring family and educating children in house.

3. Polygamy as a part of Shari’a.

Polygamy has been a debatable issue among Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia. Liberal Muslim particularly Muslim feminist tends to see polygamy as a cultural phenomenon rather than shari’a. For them polygamy as practiced by the Prophet should be seen as social transformation towards justice in the Arabic milieu. Accordingly, the essence of polygamy which is limited to four wives is actually aimed to minimize its practices since it dehumanizes women. Therefore, they claim polygamy is a form of discrimination. On the contrary, Sabili, which is a media of Islamists, tends to defend polygamy as a part of shari’a as it is clearly stated in the Qur’an (an-Nisā: 3). However, the Sabili writers stress that justice should be the major perquisite of polygamy. The meaning of justice here is fulfilling the rights of women both materially and biologically. Daud Rasyid comments that justice here means material because it is impossible to a husband to fairly share his feelings with all his wives. He refers to Islamic history in which the Prophet was inclined to love Khadijah more than his other wives.

---

Moreover, they refer to the Prophet’s model of polygamy which is based on 
*akhilah karmah*. His polygamy is not to follow his desire but to overcome social problems at that time. The Prophet’s polygamy benefited his 
wives, their families as well as their clan through marriage relation. Therefore, 
the Prophet’s polygamy did not discriminate against women. They harshly 
criticize Western Orientalists who see the Prophet’s polygamy as for physical 
satisfaction. The orientalists for them did not see the benefits and justice in 
polygamy performed by the Prophet. In this respect, *Sabili* claims that 
orientalists just try to discredit the Prophet by criticizing his polygamy. 47

Using a historical perspective, they argue that polygamy is not odd. 
Since in the past, most of the Prophets and the Caliphates engaged in 
polygamy. In Indonesia, many kings in Java, Minang, and Betawi also were 
polygamous. Sociologically, they argue that polygamy was a contribution to 
help women whose number is higher than men. According to their data, 
the number of women in Indonesia is 68% while that of men is only 32%. In US, 
the number of women is higher eight fold than men. Research in Kenya reveals that 
76% women tended to see polygamy as positive. The women regarded 
polygamy as sociologically beneficial if the wives help each other. 48 In 
convincing the reader, they also present interviews with polygamous wives 
such as the first wife of Hamzah Haz, the former vice president and wives of 
Puspo Wardoyo, who pioneered the program of polygamy awards in 2003. In 
the interview, they tend to give positive responses to polygamy. 49

Ridwan, the editor, asserts that polygamy should be seen as a solution 
offered by Islam to solve social problems. He stresses that there are many 
benefits (*hikmah*) of polygamy, among them are overcoming the higher number of 
women, solving family problems such as illness or childlessness of a wife, 
helping unlucky women namely widows, multiplying the generation and so 
on. 50

4. Islamic Economy as the alternative

The failure of economic system in Indonesia either from socialism or 
capitalism encourages the Islamists to turn to Islamic economy as an 
alternative. According to Daud Rasyid, it is doctrinally very dangerous to 
implement the un-Islamic economic system since they do not admit the 
existence of Allah who has provided the way of life for human beings that 
must be implemented. For him, Islamic economy should be implemented since 
it stands on fundamental *aqidah Islamiyyah*. 51

This situation of the economy in Indonesia is much worst as shown by 
the fact that Indonesia, as a debtor country, has been dependent on 
International Monetary Fund (IMF) which has doubled its debt. In *Sabili*, 
Indonesian dependence on IMF could be overcome if only we were able to 
implement shari’a economic system. 52

The historical experience under Soekarno and Suharto reveals that the 
secular economic concept failed to make this country prosperous and rich. 
Therefore, the writer Salman realizes that Muslims should implement an 
economic system which is based on justice, humanity and provable results; that 
is what was implemented by the Prophet and the Caliphates after him. Such an 
economic system put humans as noble creatures, not merely the tool of 
production. Moreover, this system eradicates exploitation of humans. From an 
Islamic view, wealth and power belonging to Allah are entrusted to humans. 
Referring to al-Qardawi, the writer suggests that in any economic activities 
the doer must understand that Allah is the true owner of this universe. Thus, 
production is in fact exploring the materials created by God to adjust them to 
human needs. By such a philosophy, humans are expected to be responsible in 
utilizing economic sources. 53

47 A. Ruhendi Saifullah, “Poligami Rasulullah: Sebuah Model”, *Sabili* No. 8. 4 October 
2000, p. 22-23.
100-102.
51 *Aqidah* are values related to the economic system: first. The owner of this universe is 
Allah. So, only God who has the authority to do anything He wants for His creatures. Second, 
wealth belongs to God. Third, Allah subjugates His creatures in this universe for the sake of 
human being. Fourth, human’s possessing of wealth is not real. Fifth, to use wealth is directed to 
get blessing of God. Sixth, world is a means not an end. See Daud Rasyid, “Sistem Ekonomi 
p. 12-14.
The writers in Sabili argue that economic system is now dominated by capitalism-liberalism which applies riba (interests), while God forbids Muslim to practice riba (Q.S.ar-Rum:39, an-Nisa: 160-161, Ali Imran: 130, al-Baqarah:278-279). According to Antonio Syafii, economic and monetary crisis which beset Indonesia in particular and Asian countries in general is caused by riba practice that is forbidden by God. Therefore, he suggests that Muslim should get out of the interest system by developing Islamic economy system. It is very clear that Sabili supports the intention of Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) to announce a fatwa that banking interest is haram. Therefore, they encourage Muslims to save their money in a shari’a bank which they perceive as immune from riba (interest).

Sabili writers argue that Muslims wish for an economic system based on shari’a principles which could be implemented in Muslim business and transaction. This intention is motivated by a consciousness to implement Islam comprehensively and totally. According to Antonio Syafii, Muslims should go back to Islamic teaching. Islam has rich heritage of fiqh muamatlah (Islamic law of transaction) such as: syirkah (partnership), amanah (trust), ijara (hire), wakalah (agency), kafalah (surety), raha (debt), qard (guarantee), misara’ah (share-cropping), ajir (salary) and so forth.

In implementing Islamic economics, there is an interesting perspective offered by Zain Saidi, the director of PIRAC executive. He argues that shari’a banking in Indonesia is not really Islamic enough since they have only Islamiized the capitalist banking system, What has to be developed is an Islamic economic system, namely real trade. Therefore he offers a notion to use gold and silver coins (dirham and dinar) as an alternative to paper money. There are several reasons for this: first, gold coin was practiced since the Prophet as a tool of transaction that posses an intrinsic value. Second, if gold and silver can apply as money then they will be universal currency for all countries. Third, as a universal currency, it does not have problems with a rate of exchange. Thus, one dinar in America is equal to one dinar in Indonesia. As a result, the rate of exchange will not be played by any country especially US dollar. Fourth, implementing dinar and dirham means that we have done justice since in the transaction one exchanges his dinar with other wealth that has the same value.

Supporting Saidi’s idea, Antonio asserts that there will be a great potential if Muslim countries use dirham and dinar because Islamic trade force will grow as a great power. Rivai, the editor, again stresses that dinar and dirham were the currency used by the Prophet and the Caliphas. History proves that such a currency can compete and entails lucks and blessings. For him, every Muslim should be responsible to return the glory of this currency. If dirham and dinar can be applied, Muslim will not depend on the dollar and other currencies, and thereby an Islamic economy will survive.

The arguments of the writers in maintaining dirham and dinar as the Islamic concept by reference to the Prophet era might have problems. First, dirham and dinar were not the invention of the Prophet since they were previously used in Romanic age, long before the birth of Muhammad. Second, dirham and dinar were not only used by Muslims in transaction, but also used by many people including the enemy of the Prophet Abū Jahal. It may be said that both means of transaction were commonly used in the past before the invention of the paper money.

Against The perceived deviants of Shari’a
In the name of guarding shari’a, Sabili has heavily criticized and even labeled “sesat”(deviant) Islamic school or ideas which for them seem deviate from shari’a or the authenticity of Islam. Among the writers, Hartono Ahmad Jaz seems the most active who often unveils the “mistakes” and “deviances” of Muslim figures or Islamic groups. Those who have received criticism from Sabili are Ahmadijadi, Lia Aminuddin (the founder of Salamallah religion), NII KW IX Azzaytun, and liberal Muslim figures especially those who engage in

the liberal Islam network (JIL). The arguments they always use is that such Muslims have deviated from the Qur'an and Hadith. Due to the limit of this work, I will only focus on Sabili’s criticism to liberal Muslims to delve into their position.

Ulil Abshar Abdallah, the coordinator of Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL), wrote a controversial article in Kompas, November 11 2002 entitled “Menyegarkan Kembali Pemahaman Islam” (Freshening Up Our Understanding of Islam). This article has sparked many criticisms from radical Muslim groups including Sabili. For Sabili, Ulil’s ideas not only contradict the shari’a as presented in the Qur’an and Hadith, but he also has insulted Allah and the Prophet. Ahmad Jaiz states that Ulil’s writing has deviated from Islam.

In his article, Ulil does not acknowledge the existence of the law of God as well as shari’a mu’amalah (interaction between human beings). He claims that the commandments of the veil, qiyas, hadd, cutting off hand of the thief, flogging and stoning (for adultery), and so forth are not necessary to follow since they were merely the expression of Arabic culture. Even the prohibition against marriage between Muslim and non-Muslim is seen as not relevant any more because the verse against it is not clear. Furthermore, he asserts that the Qur’an is just half while the other half is the human experience.

In response to Ulil, Sabili seems to support Forum Ulama Ummat Indonesia (FUUI) headed by Athian Ali, who calls for the death sentence for Ulil. Sabili even questions the seriousness of police to process Ulil’s case. For Sabili, police should investigate who stands behind Ulil, his funding, and what political motive behind such raised issue.

Similarly, Irfan criticizes Ulil’s idea by relating it to the story of his educational background. He stated that Ulil studied in LIPIA in 1988-1989 with Anis Matta Lc. Although he was a smart student but he could not finish one important subject, that is Tawhid. As a result, he did not pass and he moved to STF Drikarya and then became a nice student of Romo Frans Magniz Suseno. From the story, Irfan speculates that from time ago Ulil’s understanding of Tawhid is unclear. This can be seen in his ideas as presented in his writing in Kompas.

Ulil and his colleagues in JIL regard that the demand of militant Muslims to implement shari’a is contra productive because of the complexity between the private and public sphere. For them, religion is concerned with the private life while in societal life, religion functions as an inspiration. The core is secularization namely the separation between religion and state. Ulil says “a secular state is more promising than an Islamic state as dreamed by fundamentalist, since it includes both the energies of piety and sins (ma’siyyat) at the same time”. For Husaini, such an idea is misleading because shari’a cannot exist if religion and state are separated. He argues that the implementation of shari’a is the right of Muslims that cannot be overlooked. He emphasizes that Islam appreciates pluralism and inclusivism and this Muslim demand is a part of democracy.

According to Riziq, the thought of liberal Islam is indeed the worshipping of reason. Such a mode of thought was exemplified by Mu’tazilah. The difference is that, Mu’tazilah still admits the rules while JIL is too free. To al-Anshari, for the case of cutting off of a hand, JIL’s argument is weak because they do not rely on dalil syar’i. How God’s law is abrogated by human ratio. To him, it is evident that JIL wants to interpret Islamic teaching freely without the guidance of the rule of God.

By the same token, Husaini states that JIL’s ideas are unfounded because any arguments they use do not refer to religious text or classical

---

Muslim scholars in the past. Their arguments are speculative because they do not understand the system of Islam. He stresses that shari‘a is law not a morality and such law should be institutionalized. For the case of cutting off of the hand, he argues that all ulama agreed that there is no other interpretation. For him, such texts are very clear and final.  

Husaini views the secular movement as an attempt to subjugate Muslims. The jargon they use appears similar with that used by the west. What endanger the hegemonization of the West are those who want to implement shari‘a comprehensively. If the state could implement Islamic law and Islamic economics, the West would be worry because Muslims would not depend any more on their products.

Islamist Writers tend to see that liberalism and secularism have dominated the so-called liberal Muslim. The secular Muslim propagate deviant understandings and consciously takes the role and the function of Christian missionaries to guide Muslims away from the straight path and blind them to the truth of Islam; by saying that all religions are similar, no one can have a right to claim that his religion is the best. Therefore, they often warn ummah to be aware of such ideas.

The other controversial issue advocated by liberal Muslims is the making of a counter legal draft of Compilation of Islamic law (CLD-KHI) by the team of mainstreaming gender of religious affairs headed by Dr. Musda Mulia. This step is taken to complete the compilation of Islamic law which has been applied in Indonesia with four approaches: gender, pluralism, human right and democracy. In response to this, Sabili demonstrated its resistance as can be seen in the headline “Deviant thought occupies religious affair (DEPAG)” and several reports about it. For Sabili, many articles in the draft contradict Islamic shari‘a, among them as follow.

- Marriage is conducted under the principles of willingness, equality, justice, good (kemaslahatan), pluralism and democracy.
- A husband and a wife to be can make a deal of their marriage for a certain period of time.
- A woman is allowed to marry by her volition if she is 21 years old even without her parents and wali.
- Marriage between different religions is allowed.
- The foundation of marriage is monogamy.
- The minimum age of men and women for marriage is 19 years old.
- Iddah (transition after marriage) applies both wife and husband.
- Portion of inheritance (warisan) between son and daughter is equal.

For Sabili, these tenets contradict with Islamic law as commanded by God. Athian Ali comments that CLD-KHI is not a compilation of Islamic law but the compilation of “satanic law”. It is impossible for him to call it Islamic law because it only relies on gender, democracy, pluralism and human rights without a reference to the Qur’an and Sunnah, as the main source of Islam.

Many Muslim figures referred by Sabili tend to suspect the political motive behind the emergence of the draft. Hussein for instance suspects that the political motive of CLD-KHI is to hinder the implementation of Shari‘a in Indonesia. In the same tone, Amin Djamaluddin contends that there is a hidden power that uses Muslim youth with the goal of clouding the understanding of young Muslims about their roots, namely the Qur’an and Hadith. These allegations were strengthened by the fact that the Asia Foundation, a leading US NGO, supported Liberal Muslims in completing CLD-KHI.

The spirit to fight against Islamic liberalism and secularism brought Sabili to cover IAIN (state institute of Islamic studies) especially UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta as a nest of liberal-secular thinking in two editions. The leading titles are apparently intended to discredit IAIN; “Selamatkan IAIN dari liberalisme dan Anomali” (save IAIN from liberalism and amorality), “Mau Kemana IAIN” (Quo Vadis IAIN), “IAIN: Ingkar Allah Ingkar Nabi?”

69 Tim Pengarustaman Gender, Pembaharuan Hakim Islam: Counter Legal draft Kompilasi Hakim Islam (Jakarta: TGG DEPAG RI, 2004), p. 3.
(IAIN: confronting Allah and confronting the Prophet?), “Melacak Jejak Liberal di IAIN” (tracing liberalism in IAIN).

In the coverage, Sabili describes that strange (nyeleneh) thinking has been developed in IAIN. Sabili says “instead of creating an Ulama, this institution is more familiar with those who are “too brave” in interpreting the Qur’an and Sunnah”. That is why an acronym “IAIN: confronting God and confronting the Prophet” emerges in society. For Sabili, this will not happen if they still maintain the vision and mission of the establishment of IAIN. One point of the visions is to create Muslim leaders for the struggle of Indonesia in the future. By studying at IAIN, students are expected to have good akhlak and morals, to think critically and analytically to solve problems as well as to have a future vision.

The writer of Sabili notes how “crazy” thinking has been developed in this campus. The latest controversial issue is the demand of the freedom not to use jilbab raised by FORMACI (Ciputat Study Forum) as an example of their thinking. Sabili claims that controversial thought is actually not new to IAIN. In 1970s, such a mode of thinking was initially developed by Harun Nasution, the former rector of IAIN Jakarta, who is also famous for his freedom of thought. He encouraged freedom of thinking among the academics of IAIN. This freedom was encouraged by Nuraholish Majid (well known as Cak Nur) by developing secular ideas in the midst of society in the 1980s. Cak Nur for instance raised the slogan “Islam Yes, Islamic Party No!” In Sabili, this idea clearly encourages religious secularism while for Muslim politics and religion cannot be separated. The trend of such thinking has been continued by students now in IAIN especially by student organizations and study clubs such as PMII, HMI, IMMD, Formaci, Piramida Circle, Makar, ISAC and so forth. They have contributed to the liberalism in IAIN due to their commitment to study controversial ideologies such as Marxism, Perennialism, Secularism, and Rationalism. From them, emerged various terms such as Islam Mazhab Ciputat, Inclusive Islam, Liberal Islam, and Modern Islam.

In commenting on liberalism at IAIN, Daud Rasyid asserts that the freedom of thought cannot be a rationale to interpret things that are clear in Islam. The freedom of thinking in IAIN was misunderstood. The freedom in Islam does not mean that one can think as he desires. There should be a corridor of thinking based on the Qur’an and Hadith with the understandings of Ulama. From here then one can have freedom to analyze any problem without deviating from the corridor.

In Sabili, the liberalism developed at IAIN tends to have negative impact on the morality of IAIN students because they do not hold religious values. They show this tendency by revealing the fact that men and women hold hands freely on this campus without feeling ashamed. What is more, the culture of free sex can be easily found in IAIN. They support this argument by presenting the information they got from the society near IAIN campus telling that many IAIN students were caught having sex and many students had abortions. This fact not only happens in IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta but also in IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya.

Therefore, given the fact of the negative effects of liberalism and secularism, Sabili calls on Muslims to save IAIN.

II Against the Christian and Jew

Criticism and attacks on Christianity and Jews have been a dominant and the most consistent issue raised by Sabili from 1998 to 2004. Such issues can be seen from many rubrics of factual coverage such as Telaah Utama, Telaah Khusus, Alam Islami, Indonesia Kita and of religious guidance such as Biroh and Muhdasabah. Furthermore, Sabili has a special rubric namely “Himbangan Tausid” (Tausid Guidance) which contains criticism of Christian doctrines in comparison to Islam, which is regarded as the true religion. This rubric is often written by FAKTA (Anti-Christianization Forum) team headed by Abu Deedat.

It is worth noting that news or coverage either of politics, economics, or conflict is often connected with the Christian and Jew. In Sabili, they are

73 Rivai Hutapea, “Melacak Jejak Liberal di IAIN,” pp. 74-75.
perceived and described as the great enemy who desire to destroy Islam either in national or international context. In the international context, America is perceived as a Christian state and Israel as a Jewish state who collaborate on attacking Muslim countries such as Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq. In the national context, Sabili regards the Christians as the enemies who have been struggling through politics, economics, socio-cultural approaches to eliminate Islam and proselytize Muslims in Indonesia. The argument of Sabili is based on reality and the religious texts. The reality here means the many cases where Christians and Jews fight against Muslims, while the religious texts attest to their “bad” character. The famous verse used by Sabili is Q.S. al-Baqarah: 120.

Sabili reports many facts of “Christianization” that threaten Muslim in Indonesia such as, Yogyakarta, West Java, South Sulawesi, Jakarta, West Sumatra, North Sumatra, Lampung and Aceh. Sabili argues that Christianization is motivated by the fact that Christianity is a religion of missionaries. In the Bible, Christians are allowed to use any means either in the form of deception or pretension, or laying in other this goal can be achieved. Inspired by the Bible, it is not surprising if Christians are very active in spreading Christianity across the world. For Sabili, they are not afraid to commit in-just and deceiving methods in dealing with Muslim. They often disregard the regulations of religious affairs and domestic ministry by spreading religion in Indonesia. In Sabili, there are ten tactics of Christianization used by missionaries in Indonesia: 77

1. Christianization by marriage

The main object of this approach is to corrupt Muslim Women. To marry a Muslim woman, the Christian pretends to convert to Islam. After marriage, the man then calls his Muslim wife to convert to Christianity.

2. Christianization by kidnapping Muslim woman, making her pregnant (rape) and then converting her to Christianity. The other way is building love relationship with Muslim women. The Christian man will ask her to have sex that makes her pregnant. Finally, the woman is asked to convert into Christian if she wants responsibility from the man. There is an interesting abbreviation Sabili raise in warning the Muslim women from Christianization i.e. “be alert of three D”: dipacari, dihamili, dimurtadkan (being target of love, sex and proselytization).

3. Christianization by providing jobs, courses and scholarships

This method targets Muslim men and women who have graduated from junior or senior high school and face difficulties in getting a job or continuing their studies. The church activist usually promises them job or scholarship freely on the condition they convert to Christianity.

4. Christianization on behalf of humanity aid in rural areas

This method targets the poor in rural areas. The missionaries act as social workers offering them aids in the form of foods, rice, sugar, medicine, instant, free drugs, and free education. After being dependent upon the missionaries, the poor who want to get more aids are required to convert as Christians. Sabili reports that this method could be found in Gunung Kidul Yogyakarta, Klaten, Yogyakarta and in other places.

5. Christianization by pretending to be Ulama or the family of Ulama

The Christian activist acknowledges as the former ustade (religious teacher) or the family of the leading Ulama who has converted as a Christian. By this method, he or she could raise doubts of Muslims about Islam.

6. Christianization by spreading drugs

In this way, drugs are spread to Muslim students. After they become addicted, the Muslims are put in rehabilitation to recover from their addiction. In this place, the Christian then brainwash the addicted students’ and indoctrinate them with Christianity.

7. Hidden Christianization by establishing high institute of theology

In this institute, Islamic studies are taught and some Muslim lecturers are invited to teach. This way aims to unveil the weakness of Islam especially the Qur’an and Hadith. Sabili shows the case of the college STT Apostolos which provides Islamology studies.

8. Christianization via correspondences

The letter contains questions that seem to support the God of Jesus. The one who can answer the question, he or she will be rewarded a Bible. This way aims to weaken Muslim’s belief.


There are two targets of this approach. First, to support Christian teachings as if such religion is the only true religion. Second, to deceive Muslims who have little understanding of Islam so that they want to read the books and accept the God Jesus.

10. Christianization by imitating or using Islamic idioms and attributes

This approach for Sabili occurs in many places in Indonesia especially in Betawi community in Kampung Sawah, Jakarta. The Christian use kopiah, sarung and kerudung like Muslims. Such way which is often called by Sabili as “the strategy of contextualization” is used so that Muslims doubt their Islamic teaching and admits the truth of Christian doctrines.

In some editions, it is added that the modus operandi of Christianization also utilizes free alternative recovery (pengobatan alternative gratis), VCD, TV and Radio, magic, hypnotism, and even spirits as what happened in West Sumatra and Jakarta. 78

Sabili claims that the Christian use their efforts to hinder the existence of Islam in Indonesia. This can be seen from the case of the Jakarta Charter till the regulation of the national education system (RUU Sisdiknas). The Christian groups refused to accept the Jakarta Charter which includes seven words “with the obligation of the adherents of Islam to carry out shari’a”, whereas this was fully agreed by the board of investigating efforts for the preparation of independence (BPUPKI). They threatened that if such words were put in the constitution, east Indonesia would separate from Indonesia.

Finally, after lobbying Hatta, the seven words were erased. This also happened in the era of reformation, when the Persatuan Pembangunan party (PPP) and the Bulan Bintang Party (FPBB) suggested incorporating the Jakarta Charter in 1945 constitution and the amendment of section 29, the Christian group again rejected it. 79

The other case is when the House of Representatives in the process of legalizing the regulation of national education system (RUU Sisdiknas),80 the Christian groups demonstrated in the streets insisting that the representatives do not legalize the regulation. They argued that the section on religious education does not appreciate pluralism, and is against the human rights. This action was supported by the Indonesian democratic party-Struggle (PDI-P) fraction, which was dominated by Christian, by boycotting the “paripurna” meeting on the agenda of legalizing Sisdiknas regulations. However, with the struggle of Muslims, finally such regulation was legalized.81 In Sabili, Christian actions which always tend to eradicate Muslim aspiration and existence in Indonesia are indeed in accord with the Qur’anic verse al-Baqarah 120.

The strong hostility to Christian makes Sabili biased in reporting the communal conflicts as happened in Ambon and other places of Maluku from 1999 to 2000. The religious conflict and violence in Maluku involve the Muslim community on the hand, and the protestant community on the other. The analysis made by politics observer as well as media is that the conflict was rooted in the contest for economic resources and the increasingly disproportionate distribution of political power between Muslim migrants and the indigenous Christian.82 In Sabili however, there is a tendency in many reports to see the religious conflict as the ideological clash between Islam and Christian rather than economic, social and political problem. Using verses of the Qur’an, Sabili argued that Christian will never stop opposing Islam. Moreover, Christians were in fact described as the rioters who brutally attacked and slaughtered Muslims by using organic weapons, while Muslims as the victims defending their lives with traditional weapons such as stone,
sword, and lance. The America and Israel were believed having intervention in supporting the Christian group with weapons. Siding with Muslim group, Sabili called Muslims for jihad to help their brothers against the kuffar (infidels) in Maluku. In many reports, Sabili apparently did not employ coverage both sides, one of the ethical codes of press.

In terms of criticism of the Jews, Sabili tends to associate them with Zionist Israel who desire to attack Palestine, as a Muslim Country, and conquer their land with the support of the US. Events and attacks of Israel on Muslim Palestine are often covered in Sabili to show the brutality of the Zionist. Sabili calls on all Muslims to Jihad to help the Palestinian from Israel aggression. Besides, it calls Muslim to boycott Zionist and American products following the fatwa of Syeik Yusuf al-Qaradawi that buying their products is haram since their money contributes to the killing of Muslim Palestinians.

In presenting a negative characterization of the Jews, Sabili refers to the verses of the Qur'an as theological argument:
3. Jew usually make false allegations and collaborate with the infidel (kafir) (an-Nisa:51-52).
5. The Prophet was strict in dealing with the tricks and slander of the Jew (al-Ahzab: 21).

In Sabili, the Christian and Jew are always positioned together as the great enemies of Islam. In destroying Islam, they do not necessarily use weapons any more like in the crusades since they realize that it is hard now to subjugate Muslims through war. According to Nurasyid, the strategy of destroying Islam has changed into the so-called gaww al-fikr (war of thought). It is intended to raise doubts about Islam and bring Muslims away from Islamic guidance. In general, the system of destroying the generation of Islam is committed through the 4-S: song, sports, sex and study. Moreover, the generations of Muslims are also destroyed by drugs: morphine, heroin, ecstasy and so forth. In concluding remarks, the writer appeals to Muslim figures to think and take serious steps to save the Muslim generations from the threat of the enemies of Islam.

From the above presentation, it is evident that Sabili is committed to issues against the Christian and Jew. Suspicion and allegations are addressed to them as they are perceived as “the great enemies of Islam”. The religious texts again are justification of their hatred for them. In this respect, this media only refers to verses dealing with the bad characters of the Jew and the Christian while overlook verses dealing with pluralism and inclusivism.

C. Against America

The opposition to the West as represented by America and its allies has been one of the familiar pillars of Sabili. Besides its political coverage on America in articles and special reports, this magazine has a particular rubric namely “alam Islamy” (Islamic world), dealing with the tragedies and conditions of Muslims in the world which are described as the victims of America and its allies’ invasions. Sabili often reports many cases showing the intervention of America in creating instabilities, conflicts, terrorisms and

---

86 First, porn songs are produced so that Muslims forget their religion. Second, through sports, Muslims are made busy with the sport news and this make them lazy about praying to God. Third, a culture of free sex is propagated through TV programs and VCD so that Muslims ignore their religious values. Lastly, the enemies of Islam struggle to minimize Islamic studies in school. They incorporate orientalist perspectives, secularism and materialism in the soul of the students. As a result, their understanding of Islam is limited and Islam is seen as strange by Muslims themselves. See Mulyadi Nurasyid, “Ghazwul Fikri,” Sabili No. 9 TH. VII 20 October 1999, pp. 79-80.
propaganda in the hopes of destroying Islam in Muslim countries including Indonesia. Interestingly, Sabili often frames America implicitly and explicitly as the enemy of Islam who are identical with Christian albeit the fact that Christianity is one of diverse religions in America. It is not surprising then if the magazine labels America as kafir by legitimation of Qur'anic verses such as Q.S al-Baqarah:120 and the like. This might indicate that the raison d'être of Sabili's opposition to America (read: the West) is generated by ideological factors i.e. Christianity.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, America has become the most powerful state in the world. This state appointed itself as the world police and has the right to intervene with other countries especially in Muslim countries. To Sabili, the political policies used by America are influenced by Samuel Huntington who place Islam as the greatest enemy of America after the collapse of Soviet Union. America perceives Islamic power as the rival that would handicap its hegemony and domination of the world. According to the editor Nurdi, America wants to dominate the world through gold, glory and gospel and Islam is seen as a potential threat for them. Therefore America utilizes whatever methods to hinder the implementation of formal shari'a and destroy militant Muslim movements in the Muslim world as well as to colonize rich Muslim countries for their own interests. These arguments are often used by Sabili to oppose America.

The invasion of US troops and its allies of Iraq was heavily criticized and condemned by Sabili. During the invasion and the war, Sabili actively reported the current development of Muslim situation in Iraq. As the media advocate for Muslim, Sabili described and advocated the struggle of Iraqis against the enemy of Islam and demonstrated the cruelty of US troops in killing Iraqi civilians and children, bombing their houses, and treating Iraqi prisoners like animals. For Sabili, America lied about the existence of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear and al-Qaeda network in Iraq. The invasion of Iraq, in Sabili's view, is actually motivated by the interest of President Bush to take over the oil resources in Iraq since they worry about the oil supply in their country. Besides, by toppling Saddam, America wished to show that they are the heroes who liberate Iraqi people from the oppression of Saddam and bringing democracy to Iraq. For Sabili, instead of bringing freedom and democracy, America and its allies have made Iraqi suffer.

According to Sabili, the other form of destroying Islam, America has alleges that Islamic militant movements are a part of the international terrorist network. This allegation initially found momentum in the wake of the attack of world trade center on September 11th 2001. Without evidence, US alleged Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda were behind the attack. In Sabili, Osama was seen as the victim of US allegation. Moreover, some articles even seem to perceive Osama as a symbol of Muslim hero who bravely resist to the American arrogance.

As the impact of WTC's attack, America began to link the al-Qaeda network with Islamic movements and Muslim figures in Asia especially Indonesia. The bombing of Bali, the Marriot Hotel, McDonald café, and the Australian embassy were found by police, under the pressure of America, as having connection with radical Muslim activists. The events made America believe that Indonesia is a terrorist nest. As a result, many Muslim activists such as Abu Bakar Ba'asyir were arrested without proof or evidence.

In response to this situation, Sabili described that the bombings and terrorist issue in Indonesia is actually the design and conspiracy of America to destroy Islam in Indonesia. Anis Matta, the general secretary of PKS, quoted by Salman, states that America has an interest to eradicate and destroy Islam by eliminating Islamic movements. To Sabili, the targets of American movements that struggle to socialize and implement Islamic shari'a in

---

Indonesia. It is because America worries that if such movements are not contained, they will become threats to US domination and interests in Asia.

Besides spreading terror and allegations against Islam, America has employed other methods to destroy its power. Referring to the New York Times, Sabili reported that since the end of 2001, the Pentagon has prepared special steps that would be implemented through formal procedures in Indonesia. Such steps are: first, they will try to reduce the function of the Mosque is the center of Muslim movements. Second, to change religious education curriculum especially in countries where Islam is the majority. Last, Pentagon will finance educational institutions that favor or adopt western education system.

Additionally, the writers of Sabili often question and suspect the Ford Foundation and Asia Foundation (TAF) as an American instrument to weaken Islam by supporting certain Muslim groups and rejecting others. In Sabili, this foundation is in fact behind the liberal Muslim network which actively raises the issue of gender equity, pluralism, human rights and democracy in Indonesia. In supporting the principles of pluralism and liberalism, TAF has also backed the team of mainstreaming gender of religious affairs who created the counter legal draft of Islamic law (CLD-KHI). Besides, TAF has been giving financial aid to syir’ah magazine, one of the leading liberal magazines in Indonesia which raises controversial issues. For Sabili, all of these facts indicate that the America is eager to eliminate Islam in Indonesia for the sake of its hegemony and domination.

Conclusion

The result of the study reveals that Sabili constitutes as one of the Islamist media existing in the Post-New Order. The emergence of Islamist media as represented by Sabili shows that there is a significant increase of Islamism in the emergent public sphere. The emergence of Sabili is in part the consequence of the opening of the freedom of press as one of political liberalizations held by the president Habibie in 1998.

In analyzing Sabili, the writer found three characteristics of Islamist views of Sabili. First, literal sharia oriented. This means that this media has a strong tendency to struggle for voicing the implementation of shari’a through politics. Literal shari’a denotes that Sabili bases its shari’a understanding as textually presented in the Qur’an and the Hadith. This tendency could be seen in several issues it presents such as Islamic law as the solution, the prohibition of women to be president, polygamy as a part of shari’a, Islamic economy as the alternative to secular economy system, and harsh criticism against the liberal Muslim and Muslim groups who are perceived as deviant from the shari’a. The arguments are mainly used in these issues are: religious texts (the Qur’an and Hadith), the opinions of the salafi ulama, history, scientific research, socio-politic, and demography.

Second, criticism against the Jew and Christian. This media intensively deal with issues that criticize and denounce the two groups since they are perceived as the great enemy of Islam who want to eliminate Islam. The rationale of this opposition is mostly shown by the theological basis in the Qur’an as Sabili always refers to. However, political factor also take a part into account. The former group is perceived as having desire to “Christianize” Muslims in Indonesia through political and cultural approach. The latter is perceived as the partner of the Christian in opposing Islam. Yet in most articles and reports, criticism to the Jew is mostly be associated by the action of Zionist Israel which attacks and kills the Muslim Palestinians.

Lastly, criticism against the America. In Sabili, America is perceived as having collaborated with Christians to dominate the Muslim countries. The double standard of America in treating Muslim countries such as Palestine and Iraq, as well as the terrorism issues which is addressed to Muslim countries including Indonesia, have been framed by Sabili as the design, strategy and conspiracy of the USA in dominating the Muslim world. In criticizing America, Sabili mixes political and theological language by associating them as kafir (infidel).

---

Bibliography


Liddle, R. William. “Media Dakwah Scripturalism: One Form of Islamic Political Thought and Action in New Order Indonesia” in Toward a New


Nugroho, Kelik M. “Islam Liberal versus Islam Literal.” Tempo, 38. XXX.


Sabili Magazines:

Sabili no. 4, VI: 2 September 1998.
Sabili no. 5, VI: 16 September 1998.
Sabili no. 16, VI: 24 February 1999.
Sabili no. 9, VII: 20 October 1999.
Sabili no. 8, VIII: 4 October 2000.
Sabili no. 10, VIII: 1 November 2000.
Sabili no. 11, VIII: 15 November 2000.
Sabili no. 16, IX: 8 February 2002.
Sabili no. 20, IX: 4 April 2002.
Sabili no. 25, IX 13 June 2002.
Sabili no. 11, X: 12 December 2002
Sabili no.11, X: 26 December 2002.
Sabili no.19, X: 10 April 2003.
Sabili no.12, X: 2 January 2003.
Sabili no. 19, X: 10 April 2003.
Sabili no. 25, X : 3 July 2003.