Islamic Thought and Movements in Contemporary Indonesia

Edited by
Rizal Sukma and Clara Joewono

Centre for Strategic and International Studies
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CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
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Since the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, Islam in Indonesia entered a more complex façade. This is due to the growing diversity of the manifestation of Islam in Indonesia, both political and social power. Such complexity of Islam in the post-New Order era grew in significance because of its development and changes in terms of thinking and movement. Hence, Islam in Indonesia can no longer be described nor comprehended through the simple categorisation of modernist and traditionalist, as was commonly understood as the mainstream of Islam in Indonesia.

This book titled *Contemporary Islamic Movement and Thoughts in Indonesia* is the result of a study involving researchers from CSIS and PPIM UIN, Ciputat, Jakarta. The study sought to grasp and portray the complexity of the contemporary Islamic movement and thoughts in Indonesia. Although this study results from the cooperation between CSIS and UIV, the articles are reflections of the study of the individual researchers. Through this publication, CSIS and UIN hope to enrich the public understanding of the variety and movement of Islam in Indonesia.

Hadi Soesastro
Executive Director,
Centre for Strategic and International Studies
CHAPTER 5

The Salafi Movement in Indonesia: 
From Muhammadiyah to Laskar Jihad

Jajang Jahroni

Introduction

Phonetically, *Salafi* means “past/early”. The term ‘Salafi’ refers to the religious thought suggesting that the early periods of Islam— during the time of the Prophet—is the most authentic source of guide of Islam. Thus, this thought is referred to as *salaf*, which means the earlier people. According to the Salafi thought, the early generation of Islam is the *saleh* (religious) generation (*salaf al-saleh*), while the later generations committed deviations from the religion (*bid’ab*). The spirit of *Salafi* is focused on their wish to return to the religious understanding and practices according to the most authentic sources, which are the Koran and Sunnah. Within their practice of their religious values, the Salafis use a scriptural or literal interpretation, in which the religious documents are interpreted as they are, without the use of interpretation method, such as *ta’wil* or *qiyas* that are often used by the religious leaders (*ulama*).

The spirit of the Salafis is reflected by their slogan “back to the Koran and Sunnah”. Imbued by such a spirit, Muhammadiyah, a modern Muslim group in Indonesia, uses the Salafi theology in one of their basic roots. With this slogan, the Salafis ignore the historical process that has produced the religious interpretation and practice (that is so diverse,
combined within the various traditions of madhhbab) and try to rebuild it straight from the source. This is where the problem lays. They believe that history has often hindered the ability of a person to commit ijtihad, and people are locked inside a sophisticated model of religious interpretation.

There are at least two consequences brought about by this principle of 'referring directly to the source'. First, this principle motivates all individuals to build their self religious interpretation. Second, this principle destroys the elitism in religion. Basically, this principle reflects the freedom in religion, in the sense that each individual has the same opportunity and rights to interpret religious doctrines—a principle that is being fought for by the Muslim modernists. In Islam, such an effort is called ijtihad, and is considered a very noble task. However, in their process of interpretation, the Salafis tend to be literalist, because they refuse to use scientific approach generally used by ulamas. As widely known, in Islamic scientific structure, there is the usbul fiqh, interpretation of hadist (sayings of the Prophet) as a set of scientific tools significant in interpreting the religion.

This becomes a problem, as the Salafis believe that such methods create a gap between the people and the spirit of the true Islam. Since they refuse to use such methods, the Salafis are trapped within literalism. The principle of 'referring directly to the source' has at the end ignored the religious scientific construction that has existed since centuries ago, established by certain madhhabs. It is important to note that although the madhhab tradition is often considered as the cause of jurnud and taklid within the Muslim society, this tradition cannot be easily set aside. In other words, the principle of 'referring directly to the source' impacts on a contradictory consequence: motivating ijtihad, but by denying the socio-historical process, which in turn creates literalism.

Due to its contradictory nature, the Salafi movement is—according to Khaled Abou El Fadi—an uninteresting historical phenomenon. It is not interesting because it is a utopian concept. Moreover, Salafism tends to be anti-intellectualism.
This tendency is the consequence of the “referring directly to the source” principle, which has extended through a long period that has distanced the current generation and the earlier generation of Islam. Now the question is: How could the current Muslim generation, living in the 21st century, comprehend the Koran and Sunnah without prior comprehension of the Islamic concepts developed by the earlier leaders?

However, there are some critical questions that need to be answered: Why did Salafism emerge?; Why has Islamic radicalism been linked to Salafism lately?; and, Is there any link between Salafism and radicalism? To answer these questions, we have to observe the history of the emergence of the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia at the end of the 19th century. Wahhabism could be classified as, according to Arjomand, a fundamentalist group2, that emphasizes the importance of returning to the authentic sources of Islam: the Koran and Sunnah.

The roots of Wahhabism can be traced in the thoughts of Ibn Taimiyya, who pioneered the salaf movement; and later on in the thoughts of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. The latter was the founder of the Hanbali mazhab that teaches the significance of the Sunnah compared to qiyas. Meanwhile, in the 19th century in Egypt, a reformer was born. He was Muhammad Abduh. Abduh’s ideas were significant, as he was the first to attest that Islam can cope well with modernity. However, his followers were unable to continue his ideas. Instead, they were trapped in the narrow-sighted spirit of Salafi. Abduh’s subsequent modernism movements established different, if not contradictory, variants.

**Wahhabism, Salafism, dan Radicalism**

The foundation of Wahhabism was formulated by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, a purist from Hijaz. His spirit to purify religion made him resist all kinds of bid’ah. In his hometown, Nejd, he fought against religious practices
performed by traditional Muslim groups, such as devotional visits to graveyard and *tarekat*. Moreover, he also repudiated philosophy and *mantiq*, which he claimed to be 'black science'. He viewed that all Muslims have to go back to the religious teachings practised by the Prophet and his disciples. This is the kind of Islam that he considered to be pure and correct. The Wahhabis refused all efforts to interpret the Koran contextually and historically. To them, such methods of Qur'an interpretation are not valid in discovering the true spirit of Islam.

In the late 18th century, the Saudi family that was trying to build up its authority by fighting the Uthmani Turks collaborated with the Wahhabi forces through its political movements. However, in 1818, their close collaboration was destroyed. In the late 19th century, the Saudi family finally succeeded in building its power, and at the beginning of the 20th century, under the leadership of Abd al-Aziz ibn al-Saud, Wahhabism officially became the madhhab of the Saudi Arabian kingdom. During the revolution, the Wahhabi was known to be cruel and sadists, as they attacked anyone that had opposing views with them, both Muslims and non-Muslims. The *fiqih* leaders of the time, such as Ibn Abidin from the Hanafi madhhab and al-Sawi of the Maliki madhab, describe the Wahhabi group as a fanatical extremist group.3

The Wahhabi group’s success in gaining power was due to several factors. First, the Wahhabi group was the first to provoke the people by saying that the Uthmani Turks were foreign forces that were controlling the Arab region. From this claim alone, Wahhabism became the legitimacy for the Arabs in taking control of their own future—free from all foreign forces. The second factor was that, after gaining authority from the Uthmani Turks, Wahhabism was made as the official madhhab of the Saudi Arabia kingdom. Other madhhabs, which previously existed in the intellectual sphere in Arab with Mecca and Medina as the centers, were marginalized but not forbidden. At the same time, the intellectual center of the Islamic world moved from Mecca and Medina to Cairo, with
the Al-Azhar University as the center. These factors were most influential in the development of Wahhabism in Islam.

However, the most spectacular effort by the Saudi Arabia kingdom to promote Wahhabism occurred in the mid 1970s, when the oil price took a dramatic hike. Saudi, as an oil producing country, gained significant benefit from the price hike. At that time, the kingdom actively popularized the Wahhabism ideas to the rest of the Islamic world. Their methods varied, ranging from scholarships, building mosques and Islamic education institutions, to publishing books on Wahhabism. In Indonesia, such efforts can be witnessed through the establishment of the *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Babasa Arab* (The Islamic Science and Arabic Institute), a higher education institution fully-supported by the Saudi government.

It is important to note that the Saudi government has provided billions of dollars each year through the Organization of Islamic Conference in scholarships for Indonesian students to study in the Middle East. This effort was done more intensively in the post-1979 Iranian Revolution period. The Saudis were worried by Iran's plan to export its revolution to the rest of the Islamic world. As generally known at the time, the oil producing countries in the Middle East were still practicing a monarchy system, where the highest authority was held by the King. The Iranian populist revolution was considered to be a threat to these monarchies. Therefore, these monarchies did all they could to prevent any kind of influence that stemmed from the revolution.

The Wahhabis have never officially labelled themselves with the name 'Wahhabi'. They were actually not too fond of the terminology, as they view that Islam did not require such names. To them, Islam is unique, and it is implied in Wahhabism itself. Nowadays, the terminology *Salafism* and *Wahhabism* are used interchangeably. Instead of using the name 'Wahhabi', they prefer to use 'Salafi'. Their sites can be easily found on the internet. The Wahhabis see themselves as the representation of orthodox Islam. Such exclusive beliefs
made them intolerant toward other Muslim groups, and even more so toward non-Muslims. With this condition, Salafism—alias Wahhabism—is linked with radicalism.

**Reformulation of the Salaf Ideology**

There are two elements within Islam Radicalism. First, there is a call for referring solely to the original source of Islam as practiced by the Prophet and his disciples. The second element is the political militancy that emphasizes on the concept of *jihad* and the obligation of all Muslims to defend Islam from its enemies. The groups that emphasize on the first element are called Salafis. *Salafi* is the terminology used by Islamic groups to refer to the Islamic belief they follow. The media and the Western scientists refer to them as the fundamentalist group. The groups that emphasize the second element are called *jihadists*. Not all *Salafi* groups practice violence in fulfilling their interests, nor *jihadists* depart from Salafi ideas. Thus, the Salafi group is divided into two sub-groups: peaceful Salafi and radical Salafi.\(^4\) *Jama'ah Tabligh* can be categorized as a peaceful Salafi, while Al-Qaeda—led by Osama bin Laden—is considered a radical Salafi.

Both peaceful and radical Salafis seek to implement the Islamic Shari'a. They believe that Islamic Shari'a will provide all the answers to all problems faced by Muslims. Peaceful Salafi is often referred to as neo-fundamentalists. Islam neo-fundamentalism is not interested in the establishment of an Islamic state. Their sole interest is to implement Islamic Shari'a. Meanwhile, the radical Salafi is sometimes referred to as an Islamist group—a group that view Islam not solely as a religion, but a political ideology that has to be implemented in today's modern society. This group pushes the idea of radical Islam.

Many experts view that the current emergence of radicalism in *Sunnis* is related to the reformulation of the Salaf ideology. Salaf ideology, which at the beginning emphasized the purification of beliefs, experienced a change during the 20th
century. Salafism is not just a religious purification movement, but also an ideology for fighting against ideas that contradict religious values. How did this happen? Castells suggested that religion went through radical reformulation due to modernism. There is a correlation between the failure of modernism in Muslim countries and the reformulation of religious beliefs. Part of the Muslim society failed to anticipate the rapid changes of modernity. This part of the society became economically, socially, and politically marginalized. This made them turn to religion, and made it the basis for legitimating their conducts. Thus, fundamentalism of religion is basically a protest to the surrounding environment that they deemed unfavourable.

The group’s inability to anticipate these changes caused them suffering. Modernization always comes hand-in-hand with secularization and westernization. Some Muslim societies manage modernization with anxiety and suspicion that often produced resentment. Instead of welcoming global concepts, such as democracy, the fundamentalists reject modernism altogether.

The failure of religious groups in anticipating changes caused by modernism has created a recurrent crisis. During the next periods, they re-examined their religious understanding in order to continue obtaining legitimacy for their beliefs. In some stages, this reformulation served as the basis for creating an identity that could assist in fighting against the current societal system. From hereon, fundamentalism became the seed for extremism and radicalism.

The level of extremism and radicalism that occur depends on how the reconstruction was carried out. This is why doctrines of radical Islam groups differ from one another; sometimes even contradictory. There are groups that optimally make use of certain aspects of modernity, such as science and technology; some groups permit violent acts in their conducts; and some groups live separately from modern civilization and create a chrysalis culture in order to implement religious teachings in a pure (kaflah) way and free from the influences of secularism and materialism. Religious fundamentalism
provides a convenient escape that creates a give pseudo-relief for the followers.

Amongst the Muslims, fundamentalism emerged later due to the new modernization process in Islamic states during the 1960s, with its peak during the 1970s and 1980s. Islamic fundamentalism is identical with the belief that the law of God as written in the Qur'an and Sunnah is the supreme law that has to be implemented by all Muslims. The era of the Prophet and his disciples was the best era, and the people of that era constitute the best society ever existed on earth. Islam can only reach victory if all Muslims obey and implement the law of God. If they refuse, then they will suffer humiliation and defeat. They yearn to return to the golden era of Islam. The fundamentalists view their lives through the lens of the past. A liberal would try to combine the past and the present.7

Salafism in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the roots of Salafism can be traced from the religious purification movements by a number of reformers in West Sumatra in the 18th and 19th century. Although they did not use the term Salafi, the spirit to purify religion was reflected in their movements. It is well-known that the movements to purify religion led by Haji Sumanik and Haji Piambang were influenced by similar movements in the Arabian Peninsula. These two leaders were known to be strong opposers of religious practices performed by the traditional Muslim society, such as visits to graves and tarekat. The Paderi group led by Imam Bonjol continued the religious purification movements in the early 19th century.

In the beginning of the 20th century, Muhammadiyah was established. Muhammadiyah was an organization often referred to as modern Islam. However, this organization actually also possessed the roots of Salaf theology developed by the Egyptian reformer, Muhammad Abduh, and Muhammad Rasyid Ridha. Muhammadiyah shared the Salafi ideas of Ibn Taimiyyah, a reformer of the 12th century. The slogans shouted
by Muhammadiyah are “to return to the Koran and Sunnah”. Until the present time, this group is still consistent with the slogan. Muhammadiyah claimed to be the only group not attached to a certain madhhab, unlike the Nahdhatul Ulama that admits four main madhhab in fiqh (Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi’i and Hanbali). To fulfil the religious practical needs of its members, Muhammadiyah established the Tarjih Council that assembled guidance on religious matters (fatwa) based on the Koran and Sunnah.

An interesting point here is that Muhammadiyah combines elements of Salafism and modernism. Since its establishment, this organization was determined to modernize Islam. However, it has to be noted that Muhammadiyah’s modernism has a limited interpretation. Modernism here is translated as modernization in education, economy and social aspects. The vision of modernism developed by Muhammadiyah created a tremendous impact on its further development. During its course of time, Muhammadiyah emerged to be one of the civil society powers in Indonesia. This organization succeeded in developing an inclusive and tolerant discourse of Islam.

A brief introduction of the two Salafi groups in Indonesia, Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front) and Laskar Jihad is given below.

**Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front)**

One of the significant Salafi groups in post-reform Indonesia period is the *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI). As suggested by the name, this organization was established to ‘defend’ Muslims. According to them, Muslims have so far been too patient and giving in, thus have always been the ones who suffer. FPI states that Muslims have to stand up and fight for their rights and dignity. To some people, the FPI phenomenon is frightening, because in its actions, FPI more than often uses destructive and anarchic methods. They physically destroy bars, discotheques, casinos, brothels, and cafes. These places are considered by FPI as the home of
sinful conducts. Their main reason for doing this is to fulfil their religious obligation.8

FPI was established during a period of uncertain political conditions. Many events occurred after the downfall of Suharto in May 1998: the price hike of basic needs; social revolts; law uncertainty; and the breach of human rights. In such conditions, a number of Islamic groups took the initiative to establish independent groups that function as defenders and protectors. FPI is one of them. In the beginning, FPI was established as an independent group to defend and protect Muslims. However, viewing FPI as solely an independent group is not accurate, since it also has clear political and religious goals.

As a movement, FPI has its own political view that separates it from other Islamic movements. This is a consequence of the intention to bring its aspirations into reality. What is meant by political views here are views on all matters relating to politics and authority, such as views on the state including state ideology, state system, law, and institution. Moreover, we will also take a look at to what extent FPI offers alternative political system as a replacement of the current system. Before discussing FPI's political views, the ideological base of their political view will be discussed.

There are two bases of ideology for the FPI movements. The first one is Aqidah Islamiyah and second is Fiqh al-jihad. Aqidah Islamiyah is the fundamentals of faith summarized in the sixth principle of the pillars of faith. Generally, Indonesian Muslims, including FPI, follow the mazhab aqidah established by Abu Hasan Al-Asy'ari, a classical theologian known to be the founder of mazhab sunni. Basically, al-Asy'ari's ideas focus on balancing the mind and revelations.

Aside from the fundamentals of faith covered by the pillars of faith, the Sunnis also develop the fundamentals of faith in God, with His twenty characteristics, and the prophets. Aqidah is the base or foundation to create a desired society (ummah). In FPI's view, deviations and other misconducts by Muslims are essentially caused by their weak aqidah. Thus, in each of
their training, FPI always emphasizes on the importance of a good (salam) and correct (haq) aqidah.

As for fiqh al-jihad, it is a collection of the manners to conduct jihad according to Islamic views. In this material, all manners relating to jihad are explained: beginning from the determination, to the code of conduct, and finally the goals to be pursued. In Islamic view, jihad is understood as the effort done by humankind to obtain the blessing of God. There has been a misperception in society about the meaning of jihad. Jihad has been often equated with physical war. Thus, the concept is regarded as intimidating by some people. With the correct comprehension of the jihad terminology, all Muslims can apply their religious values.

For FPI, Islam represents a complete teaching. Islam provides a set or regulations that can be used and is valid for all times. They see Islam as both a ‘religion’ and a ‘state’. Islam as a religion requires all its norms to be practiced, while Islam as a state requires all its regulations and law to be implemented. Muslims are not allowed to import other cultures not suitable with Islam. Its main measure is to uphold the power and authority of God in everyday life. This means that the Koran and Hadits have to be put above all human authority in all of the institutions existing in society. Fundamentalists seek to implement all Islamic teachings completely. Their methods and comprehension of the Qur’an are literal.

FPI’s main goal is the implementation of the Shari’a. According to them, Islamic Shari’a is part of the civilian right that has to be provided by the state. If Shari’a is implemented, FPI believes that Indonesia will become a prosperous and peaceful place. Islam fundamentalist movements always link the concept of God’s punishment with the humankind’s disobedience to God’ laws in everyday life. The crisis that occurred in Indonesia is regarded by FPI to have been caused by the Indonesian economic and political system that had been too much influenced by Western values, and also by the implementation of a secular legal system that is unsuitable with the Indonesian values.
To obtain this goal, FPI established the Komisi Nasional Pemberlakuan Syariat Islam (National Commission on the Implementation of Islamic Shari'a). The task of this commission is to publicize the Islamic Shari'a to all FPI members and all Muslims in general. A local commission is created in each province. According to FPI, the public response has been positive. At the lower levels of society, appreciation for Islamic Shari'a has always existed, since—according to FPI—the secular legal system does not reflect their aspirations. Since the reformation era, a number of Muslim leaders have expressed the importance of implementing Islamic law.

Unlike other advocates of Islamic Shari'a, FPI embraces Shari'a with a more substantive spirit. This spirit can be found, for example, through FPI's ideas to integrate some excerpts from the Islamic teaching with the national legal system. FPI has suggested a number of articles, drafts and proposals to the government. For example, in fighting against immoral acts, FPI suggested that the city government of Jakarta issue a regional regulation. FPI also drafted the Anti-Immoral Acts Law, Anti-Alcohol Law, Tithe Law, Hajj Law, and Islamic Criminal Law. So far, FPI has never taken part in the discourse on issues such as the jilbab (woman's Islamic dress) or koko (Male Islamic attire), and symbolic interpretations of the Shari'a.

If one does not consider FPI's destructive methods, actually FPI's presence presents a challenge to the implementation of the national law. The FPI movement represents the expression of the public's frustration and anger towards the implementation of national law. Since the reformation era, the debate on the implementation of national law and the national legal system has become an important issue in this country. On the one hand, there has been a common agreement that there are a number of weaknesses in the national legal system that was due to poor implementation. On the other, the government's political will to improve the system is meagre. The public already considers the government to be unwilling or plain incompetent in reforming the legal sector.
Indonesia needs to improve its legal system and apparatus. It is important to stress here that the Indonesian legal system is an adoption of the Dutch colonial system that is no longer suitable with the current situation. A number of Muslim leaders have suggested that now is the time to reform the national legal system by adopting the Islamic legal system. Since the reform era, the opportunity for this has actually existed. FPI would like to participate in the legal making process by its campaign on the Islamic law implementation for its members and the general public. The implementation of Islamic law, according to FPI, has to be integrated into the national law and applies only to Muslims. FPI realizes that law reform takes time and energy. Currently, FPI aims to build a national legal system that embraces the Islamic law.

The desire of some Muslims to implement the Shari’a, according to FPI, is compatible with universal values. At the same time, this aspiration should not be interpreted as a threat to non-Muslims. In fact, should the non-Muslims desire their own religious-based legal system, the government should provide the same treatment. However, so far there has been enormous de-legitimating and stigmatization process to the implementation of Shari’a. This process is carried out by secular Muslim groups who consist of mostly Western-educated- and non-Muslim groups who suffer from Islamophobia. Both these groups have caused anxiety and fear among Muslims and non-Muslims towards the implementation of Islamic law. This fear has often resulted in a loss of momentum for Shari’a implementation. This loss of momentum has created a negative public perception toward the implementation of Islamic Shari’a.

In FPI’s view, the implementation of Islamic law does not mean the establishment of an Islamic state. There is not one verse in the Qur’an that call for the establishment of an Islamic state. Meanwhile, there are many verses that explain that Muslims have the obligation to uphold the God’s law. FPI’s concept on the implementation of Islamic law thus does not oppose the idea of NKRI (The Republic of Indonesia). The movement is loyal to the Republic of Indonesia. FPI was
established on 17 August 1998 and formally stated their loyal support for NKRI. During the early period of establishment, there is an interesting quotation in their website (no longer available) which is believed to be the words of the Prophet: "The Prophet Muhammad said that at the end of time, his nation will emerge on the face of the world with a red-and-white flag". Based on this saying, FPI's loyalty for NKRI is integrated into FPI's objectives and is recorded in the organization's documents. One of these documents is the 'Position Statement on the Issue of Female President'.

FPI actually does not care whether Indonesia becomes an Islamic state or a Pancasila state. What is important is whether or not the state gives the opportunity for each member of the society to live according to the values they believe; whether or not the state gives the opportunity for Muslims to live according to Islamic values. Living according to Islamic values is a right for every Muslim. Thus, the state has to guarantee this constitutional right, because the state was established to protect its citizens. If a state cannot guarantee, and even restricts, its citizens' rights, then the state has neglected its most important obligation.

**Laskar Jihad**

Laskar Jihad (LJ)'s views on Islam is unclear. According to a source, LJ emphasizes more on the importance of the implementation of Islamic Shari'a rather than the establishment of an Islamic state. This can be seen particularly from their strategy which orients more on the development of society. For LJ, the most important task is to develop a Muslim community based on taubid as was taught by the Salaf generation.¹⁰

According to LJ, Islamic Shari'a has to be implemented as it is, without re-interpretation. The teachings in Islam is already universal and complete, in the sense that it transcends time and space. Thus, to be consistent with Islamic Shari'a, the complete Islamic law, including hudud, has to be implemented.  

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Hudud has to be implemented as is written in the Qur'an without re-interpretation as has been lately suggested by contemporary thinkers.

Although LJ has never explicitly demanded the establishment of an Islamic state, it admits that in order to uphold the demands of Shari'a, such as the hudud, a state institution is required. A state is needed to guarantee the implementation of Shari'a. Thus, in LJ's views, the obligation to establish an Islamic state can be understood from the verses oblige Muslims to implement the Islamic Shari'a such as hudud.

It appears that the implementation of Islamic Shari'a in Indonesia serves as the main agenda for LJ. Together with the Shari'a issue, LJ also raises the importance of maintaining and defending the Republic of Indonesia. In other words, LJ orients more on its goal and agenda to formulate the Indonesian sense into the breath and terminologies of Islam. And the Islam that was practised during the Salaf generation period serves as the main guideline for the implementation of Shari'a.

Another important issue within the LJ is leadership, particularly national leadership which becomes one of the most important issue during the reform era. LJ suggests that to choose a leader is an obligation for all Muslims. Every community that consists of three or more people must elect a leader among them. A community, especially at a state level, without a leader, is unfathomable. If that happens, then chaos will certainly follow. Thus, the Sunni tradition recognizes the slogan "A year with a bad leader is better than a day without one".

In LJ's views, justice cannot be implemented if there is no leader among the Muslims. Here, the ushul fiqh belief ‘fiqh ma la yatimmu al-wajibu illa bibi fahuwa wajib' (an obligation is not perfect unless with something else, then that something else becomes an obligation as well), applies.

In the context of national leadership, LJ views that the various crises occurring in Indonesia at present are basically caused by a crisis of leadership. This lack of leadership causes the emergence of social and political disasters in the country.
LJ's political views are very much influenced by Sunni's political influence that was developed during the classic and middle period of Islam. This can be seen, for example, in LJ's doctrine on the loyalty to authority, regardless of how the authority was obtained. This doctrine was based on a hadist, "an authority is under God's shelter on earth". Sunni's position is clear and rigid, that it is not allowed to rebel to take down a government unless there is a clear evidence of their infidel state. Meanwhile, a government as the people's protector also has obligations to fulfill.

As a religious organization, LJ is involved in debates on many national issues including democracy. In this matter, LJ believes that the authority solely belongs to Allah, and all creatures on earth has to obey that authority. LJ rejects the democratic premise that "authority is in the hands of the people", or "from, by, and for the people". LJ considers these principles to be in opposition to the authority of God, and Allah is the only One who can delegate authority to whom He pleases. The voice of the majority, according to LJ, does not reflect the truth, because the truth comes only from Allah, not from the voice of the majority. LJ rejects the adagium of the western political discourse that says *vox populi vox deo* (the voice of the people is the voice of God).

As an alternative to democracy, LJ suggests the application of *syura*. *Syura* literally means discussion/deliberation. Yet, *syura* is different from democracy. In *syura*, not all members are involved in the decision making process. Only a number of certain people are involved. In Sunni, these people are called *ahl al-ball wa al-aqdi* (the institution that can make and withdraw the law). While in democracy, every individual, overlooking their integrity and capacity, is involved.

One of the problems existent in a democratic system is the election of the head of state, held through a general election. According to LJ, the head of state should not be elected by the people through a general election, but by *ahl al-ball wa al-aqdi*. This type of election refers to the way of the *al-khalifa al-rasyidun*, in which the people who elect are
not the general public but the disciples who know them for their piety. The general public would be present, but uninvolved. In the 1999 and 2004 general election, LJ refused to take part since such method of election is not recognized in Islam. LJ also rejects the existence of political parties, because they are considered *bid'ab* (deviation) that will ultimately destroy society.

**Concluding Note**

A number of experts projected that Islam in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia, will become the new picture of Islam. So far, Islam has often been pictured with violence, even as terrorists. These perceptions crystallized due to the ongoing conflict and violence occurring in the Middle East. In the midst of such portraits, Islam in Southeast Asia emerged with its own picture. Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia developed as the type of Islam that is tolerant and can develop well in a pluralistic society. This good portrait of Islam is also represented by the success of Indonesian Muslims in resolving contemporary issues problems, such as gender issues and democracy.

The position of females in Indonesia, both in religious matters and in politics, is very different compared to what occurs in other Muslim areas. In other places, not a lot of women visit mosques. In Indonesia, more women actually go to mosques to pray and to listen to sermons. In the socio-political sphere, Indonesian women have had better experience. Although at first protested by some religious leaders, there was no eminent hindrance for Megawati, a woman, to become a president of Indonesia, a country with a Muslim majority.

In terms of democracy, Indonesia has shown a different picture. After the fall of the militaristic and authoritarian regime of the New Order, a lot of demands arose for democracy to be implemented in Indonesia. Although obstacles existed, the democratization process continued in Indonesia. The current
thesis on how Islam is not compatible with democracy proves wrong in Indonesia. In a survey by PPIM in 2001, it was found that 70% of the Indonesia Muslims are committed to realize democracy in the country.

However, the portraits of a friendly, plural, and tolerant Islam in Southeast Asia have somewhat been shadowed by the movements of Islam hardliners. Their movements have even caused Indonesia to be labelled as the nest of terrorism. The picture of a moderate Islam of Indonesia has crumbled. Is the tendency for radical Islam in Indonesia a common tendency, or is it only a minority? Judging from the number of radical Muslims in Indonesia, they are in fact a small group. However, despite their size, some are militants who are capable and willing to take extreme measures, shown (among others) through the Bali bombings.

The movements of Islam hardliners will also influence the Indonesian political pattern. The existence of a number of Islamic political parties, sharing the same line with the hardliners, will also create a specific nuance. For example, on the issue of Shari'a, such issues will continue to be a trading subject and a discourse among the Indonesian Muslims. Characteristic features of the Islam hardliners—for example in manners of dressing, organizing and socializing—will continue to exist.

However, as long as the two biggest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, NU and Muhammadiyah, are not influenced by these movements, the hardliners' movements cannot flourish. With the power of the mass and their culture—The NU with the ulama network and its pesantren, and Muhammadiyah with the education and social programs—the two organizations will continue to play an important role in taking part and deciding how Islam will develop in Indonesia.

**Endnote**


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6 Ibid.

7 Charles Kurzman, Islam Liberal (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001).

8 See Jajang Jahroni, “Defending the Majesty of Islam, the Indonesia’s Front Pembela Islam” in Studia Islamika 11, no. 2 (2004).

9 Ibid.


11 Ibid.

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