

Compatibility of Islam and Democracy Towards a Civilized Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to trace the encounter between Islam and democracy in realizing a civilized society in Indonesia. The method used is the library research method by applying a historical approach. Data were collected heuristically. The collected data were then analyzed by means of criticism and interpretation, which were then presented in a narrative or historiographical manner. The results of the study show that democracy in Indonesia has experienced dynamics in its acceptance process. Moderate Islamic generally consider democracy to be in line with Islamic principles, while political Islamic consider democracy to be contrary to Islam. However, in its journey, Islam and democracy then support each other with the birth of the concept of civil society

INTRODUCTION

In terms of quantity, Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population. However, Islam is not established as the state religion as in the Kingdom of Malaysia and not as the basis of the state as in Pakistan. The existence of Islam in Indonesia is a religion that continues to develop and is inseparable from social, cultural and political conditions (Badrun et al., 2023). Muslims in Indonesia continue to struggle in the process of transformation from quantity to quality. Thus, Islamization in Indonesia is not a product of history that has ended, but continues to experience an ongoing process (Abdurrahman, 2005).

In the early process of the formation of the Indonesian state, the most crucial issue was in terms of formulating and determining the basis of the state. In the sessions of the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI), the main issues that took up a lot of time in the discussion were the issues of the form of the state, state borders, and the philosophical basis of the state related to the creation of a constitution (Ismail, 2011). The debate on these issues, except for the philosophical basis of the state, went smoothly. For the form of the state, for example, almost all members chose a republic. But once the state foundation was touched upon, the political climate in the session became heated, because there was an intense dialogue to influence each other between supporters of the nationalist side and supporters of the Islamic foundation. The debate reached a point of compromise when supporters of the Islamic foundation were willing to accept the phrase "Belief in the One Almighty God" which they had previously proposed "Belief in the One Almighty God with the obligation to carry out Islamic law for its adherents (Shalihah, 2022).

It is actually paradoxical that Muslims in Indonesia are the majority, but their presence in the life of society and the state is felt to be slit and often even antagonistic with the government or ruling elite. But this phenomenon is not only found in Indonesia, but also in similar countries such as Turkey, Egypt, and Algeria. According to Rahardjo, such a phenomenon is caused by a weak societal base. In the structure of a modern state, the institutional system of Islam has become very weak, so that it cannot reflect a significant influence in the power structure (Muhammad, 2017).

Historical Islam is present in the form of large numbers, but its institutional system and institutions have undergone a process of involution in the face of the current of modernization. The Islamic movement, especially since the 20th century, aims to revitalize Islam. This movement was pioneered by elites who were generally educated in the West, but came from religious families. But it can be said that this group is very small. Moreover, they are also experiencing a crisis of values. Because they are educated in the West, there is distrust, at least their doubts about the old authority held by the ulama. But they are still at the stage of learning Islam in a new context. They do not fully believe and accept the values of modernity.

With a minority elite base, Islam is attempted to be fought for at the political level, with the hope that after gaining power it will be able to build its social base. Meanwhile, there is an important problem, namely maintaining Islam itself from the onslaught of secularization which seeks to reduce the role of religion in state

political processes. Here, the Muslim elite in the Islamic movement faces the challenge of formulating Islam contextually. However, the concept offered is not always acceptable to other parties. For example, the concept of an Islamic state that cannot be accepted by some of the Muslim community itself which lives in three dimensions, namely universal Islam, local traditions and endless modernization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This condition raises the question, how is the future of democracy in Indonesia in relation to the rise of Islam which gives a sign that the tendency towards more democracy is not taking place convincingly. Cases that are often raised as justification for this concern are the emergence of political parties based on Islam and trying to challenge Pancasila as the only principle, the struggle to restore the Jakarta Charter in the constitution and unilateral actions carried out by Muslim groups in the name of *amar ma'ruf nahyi mungkar* (Makhasin & Sugiarto, 2020). Therefore, this article attempts to examine the extent of the relationship between Islam and Democracy in Indonesia which is expected to be able to realize a civilized state and society.

METHODOLOGY

This article is compiled based on historical research methods. According to Kuntowijoyo, the stages in historical research include several stages, including: (1) topic determination, (2) source collection, (3) verification (historical criticism, source validity) (4) interpretation: analysis and synthesis, and (5) writing (Kuntowijoyo, 2003). Topic selection is an activity carried out by researchers to determine the study material to be studied, based on the researcher's intellectual and emotional approach. In this article, the researcher studies the topic of Islam and civil society from a historical perspective. The second stage is collecting sources, both secondary and primary sources that can support the research roadmap. In this study, the author utilizes secondary sources, in the form of scientific articles that are relevant to the study theme. Then the author also uses a digital heuristic method by utilizing information and communication technology while still paying attention to the credibility of the source. Source criticism is a process or stage to ensure or validate whether the source used is appropriate. This stage includes internal and external criticism. Internal criticism is useful for ensuring that the content of the source used is relevant or not. Then external criticism is used to ensure that there are no changes in terms of form, material and printing. Interpretation is the stage of interpreting verified data in order to obtain historical facts. Historiography or writing is the stage of writing and compiling all existing data based on the rules of historical writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Democracy in Modern Islamic Political Thought

In general, democracy is defined as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Therefore, a government is said to be democratic when state power is in the hands of the people and all state actions are determined by the will of the people. In its implementation, democracy requires various social and political institutions that can support the sustainability of a good democratic system.

According to Robert A. Dahl (Sholikin, 2021) there are at least six institutions needed in the implementation of this democratic system, namely: first, elected officials. The holder or control of all government decisions regarding policy is constitutionally in the hands of officials elected by citizens. So, this modern democratic government is a representative democracy. Second, honest, fair, free and periodic elections. Officials are elected through elections. Third, freedom of speech. Citizens have the right to express their own opinions without any obstacles and threats from the authorities. Fourth, access to alternative information. Citizens have the right to seek alternative sources of information. Fifth, associational autonomy, namely citizens have the right to form relatively free associations or organizations, including political parties and non-governmental organizations. Sixth, inclusive citizenship rights. Meanwhile, according to Amien Rais, the criteria for democracy consist of: (1) participation in decision making (2) equality before the law (3) fair distribution of income (4) equal opportunity to obtain an education (5) fulfillment of four freedoms in society, namely freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion (6) availability and openness of information (7) respecting and adhering to political ethics (8) individual freedom (9) spirit of cooperation and (10) the right to protest (Fatah, 2000).

The current reality shows that Islam and politics are often described as inseparable. However, the question that arises whether Islam is a religion and a system of power is still a hot debate among intellectuals. Islamic doctrinal sources mention very little about the issue of government and state. However, the first problem that immediately confronted Muslims after the Prophet was the issue of government which required the companions at that time to develop innovation and agreement on the format and structure of government. Even the initial feud that developed among Muslims concerned politics, which eventually led to a split that gave birth to the Sunni, Shia, Khawarij and other sects (Hariyanto & Amin, 2024). As a result, this split continues to this day, including among Islamic thinkers. Islamic thinkers in responding to the pattern of state administration are divided into three poles. First, is the group that wants state affairs to be inseparable from religion, in this case Islam because Islam is a perfect religion and covers all affairs including political affairs. Meanwhile, the second party is those who want a separation between religion and state on the grounds that religion is a sacred doctrine, while the implementation of the state cannot avoid the possibility of deviation by policy makers. Thus, religion can be tarnished when its existence is mixed with state affairs.

In contrast to the two tendencies of the typology above, namely the moderate typology. Thinkers who are included in this typology see that although Islam does not show a preference for a particular political system, in Islam there are moral or ethical principles for social and state life, for the implementation of which Muslims are free to choose whichever system is best. In Haikal's view in the Qur'an and Sunnah there are no basic principles of life that are directly related to the organization of the state.

In contrast to Haikal, Islamic thinkers such as Fazlurrahman, Mohamed Arkoun and Nurchlis Madjid stated that from the principles mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith, Islam's preference is a democratic political system (Handoko, 2024). In his various writings, Fazlurrahman emphasized that Islamic society is a middle society that is not trapped in extremism and those in power do not accept the concept of extreme elitism. Islamic society is an egalitarian and open society, doing good to each other and working together and not discriminating based on gender or race.

Like Fazlurrahman, Mohamed Arkoun also argues that Islam and democracy are compatible. First of all, he explains the difference between authority and power. According to him, authority is theological-mythical, such as when the Prophet was in Mecca, and power is rational, such as when the Prophet was in Medina, who was always surrounded by a council of at least ten people. Furthermore, Arkoun accepted Ibn Khaldun's statement that the caliphate system is no different from the dominant and hegemonic kingdom system, which has carried out sacralization of the worldly as seen in the terminology of *ba'iah* and Allah's representative on earth. Based on this, he accepted the concept of democracy (Kamil, 2013).

Indonesian Islamic thinker, Nurcholis Madjid, assessed that in theory and practice, Islam has implemented political principles. These principles are the embodiment of the Medina Charter which regulates pluralism, tolerance, recognition of equality of citizens and social justice as the goal of the state. In Islam, pluralism is the understanding of diversity that sees it as a positive reality and as a necessity for the safety of humanity (Lahaji & Faisal, 2023). Thus, democracy is a vessel to realize these political principles. For Nurcholis Madjid, democracy is something that has more value than other systems. Democracy is a political system with the principle of the majority while still providing opportunities for minorities to actively participate in various aspects of national and state life. Democracy guides citizens to respect plurality, prioritize deliberation and consensus in resolving and deciding a case and provide guarantees to every child of the nation to earn a living in meeting economic needs (social democracy).

Social democracy provides space to realize a prosperous society. The welfare assistance for the lower classes is provided by the government, but it is not the result of the stages of political democracy. Health assistance in health centers, village assistance, and soft interest credit are the ways to achieve a welfare state. Of course, it is not yet adequate and without awareness of shared prosperity, but at least the central government has made efforts to realize the prosperity of the people.

Based on the assessment of various intellectual circles, democracy is currently the best system for managing a country, especially in a pluralistic country. However, democracy remains a paradox. On the one hand, democracy requires a guarantee of freedom and the opportunity to compete and have different opinions, but on the other hand it also demands the realization of harmonious stability in life. Thus, the state and citizens must be sensitive in responding to democracy as a political ideology. Democracy should be treated merely as a method or process, and not as a goal, let alone sacred. When democracy is treated as a method, then order, stability and consensus are not in a sacred position, but rather are in a position as a result of a process full of freedom, persuasion and consensual dialogue. It is different when order, stability and consensus are positioned as sacred goals, then they may be formed ironically and paradoxically by coercion, repression and intimidation.

However, it should be noted that not all Islamic religious organizations are familiar with democracy. Organizations that are not familiar with democracy, for example, Hisbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), on the grounds that democracy that is currently developing in the Islamic world region is a hidden agenda of western countries in controlling and exploiting other countries. HTI's rejection of the concept of democracy is also driven by the romanticism of the caliphate state. Based on the supremacy that the caliphate system has achieved during the classical and medieval Islamic era in uniting the Islamic world, HTI activists believe that the caliphate is the best solution that will resolve the endless problems that erode Muslims both on a national and global scale (Setia, 2021).

HTI's rejection of democracy is accompanied by the reason that the current reality is that countries that are proud of their democratic systems are creating the most hostility and destruction on earth. They are also the most active in exploiting, even enslaving, weak nations. They did all of that by first creating a democratically made decision, also after they had conducted a free and open exchange of opinions. But there are also religious organizations that try to knit the relationship between Islam and democracy, for example Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. Their closeness to democracy is an effort to strengthen and legitimize pluralism which is a characteristic of the Indonesian socio-cultural system (Uhlir, 1993).

Muhammadiyah believes that democracy is legitimate for the state to implement in governing the government. This stems from the guidance given by the Prophet Muhammad that in worldly matters you know better. In the formulation of Muhammadiyah religion, democracy and state administration are part of worldly *muamalah*. The implementation of worldly *muamalah* among Muhammadiyah is their attachment to the general public. As part of society and citizens, it is Muhammadiyah's obligation to actively participate in the processes of developing society towards welfare and prosperity. Muhammadiyah believes that democracy implemented in Indonesia is based on deliberation and consensus, as emphasized by Pancasila as the foundation of the state. In the history of Muslims in the past, the concept of deliberation has been practiced in solving problems and in appointing leaders. Therefore, democracy as part of worldly *muamalah* does not conflict with Islamic teachings. In fact, what should be

watched out for is the rise of fundamentalist and radical movements that use democracy to achieve their goals which are sometimes accompanied by acts of violence and terror. If this is allowed to continue, the image of democracy will be hijacked and destroy the teachings of Islam which are full of peace and tolerance. Meanwhile, (Fachruddin, 2006) explained that Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in understanding democracy is divided into three groups, namely accommodationists, rejectionists and the middle group. The accommodationist group considers that the basic values of Islam are in accordance with democracy based on the principle of shura or deliberation. For the concept of deliberation in Islam, dialogue must be prioritized in solving problems so that Muslims have an adequate understanding of deliberation or dialogue so that it can be grounded in the context of Islamic democracy. Meanwhile, the rejectionist group considers that democracy is not in accordance with Arab and Islamic culture. For this group, anything that is not produced by Sunni scholars of the middle period must be rejected. Democracy is currently only used as a propaganda tool by the United States and its allies to oppress Islamic countries that do not agree with them, especially countries in the Middle East. Unlike the middle group of NU, they consider that democracy is the best system for Indonesia in the current context, but it has not been implemented optimally. Sometimes democracy still follows its country of origin, namely the application of double standards.

Civil Society: The Fusion of Islam and Democracy

It is generally understood that civil society is equated with civil society. As befits democracy, when the concept of civil society was first introduced to Islamic society, it received many challenges from Islamic movement figures and intellectuals. As explained by (Huwaydi, 1996) around 1993 in Tunisia there were widespread demands for the implementation of civil society. In Egypt, on the other hand, the idea of civil society actually encountered many obstacles because it was considered inconsistent with Islamic Society, where the state must be in the form of a religious state (Islamic State). Huwaidi's assessment certainly departed from the reality that Egypt at that time also experienced the rise of Islamic fundamentalism pioneered by the Muslim Brotherhood. Fundamentalists are understood to interpret religious texts in a rigid, dogmatic, absolute manner and view all ideas originating from the West as contradictory to Islamic teachings and are slowly but surely believed to be able to damage the faith of Muslims.

The development of the idea of modern civil society then follows Hegel's concept which divides modern life into three areas, namely family, civil society and state (Hikam, 1999). The family is a private arena that has a function to socialize each individual as part of society to realize a harmonious life pattern. Civil society is a public space for individuals to carry out activities in order to fulfill economic needs. Meanwhile, the state is the highest peak of power that has the authority to exercise full control over citizens to protect the political interests of the state. Hegel's idea of the state and civil society was refuted by Alexis de Tocqueville. In fact, Tocqueville argued that civil society is a force consisting of religious groups, non-governmental organizations, professional associations that have a role in overseeing state policies. Civil society is the basis of modern life

based on togetherness, autonomy and independence, citizenship, involvement in social spaces voluntarily and nationalism (Keane, 1989).

In the context of Southeast Asia, civil society was then interpreted by Anwar Ibrahim with the term civil society. In Anwar Ibrahim's view, civil society is an ideal entity in which there are groups of individuals who have advanced knowledge and civilization. Civil society is a social order that maintains and guarantees a balance between the fulfillment of individual rights and the stability of a country.

Anwar Ibrahim's argument is strengthened by Quraisy Shihab who considers that the term civil society was adopted from the life of the Medina community in the early days of Islam. The Medina community at that time was considered an ideal society, where individual freedom in all aspects of life was guaranteed by the government regardless of ethnicity and religion. With the guarantee from the government to all citizens, it gave rise to a stability where the community called on each other to do good and prevent bad deeds.

The condition of the Medina community during the time of Muhammad was not much different from the conditions of multicultural Indonesia. In the Indonesian context, civil society is defined as a society that is building, interpreting and maintaining bonds of solidarity among fellow citizens in creating a civilized society by prioritizing human values (Azra, 1996). Every individual is given the opportunity to actively participate in controlling state policies. On the other hand, the people are always required to maintain order and defend the sovereignty of the state as part of the responsibility of citizens.

In the current condition of the Indonesian nation which has not been able to free itself from the chaos of SARA-based conflicts, the threat of national disintegration, and the increasing prevalence of Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism carried out by officials involved in executive, legislative and judicial institutions, the open democratic space should be utilized by Muslims in overcoming and providing solutions to these problems. Islam does not only deal with sacred matters, but must be involved in profane matters, not trapped in private affairs, but can play a role in the public arena. In the public arena, Islam's opportunities are not only at the level of state administration or involvement in practical politics, but there are opportunities to empower society together with other forces without having to claim unilaterally or close oneself off. Islam must be open to all levels of society as a form of embodiment of the concept of *rahmatan lil alamin*.

The Islamic approach in this description is interpreted as a religious action that is politically motivated. Religious actions aim to provide awareness, enlightenment and empowerment. The approach is not entirely as a cultural *da'wah*, but contains political messages (Singh & Qodir, 2015). The cultural Islamic approach is not a concept that is anti-political, but Islamic activities are not only centered in the form of practical politics that are involved in the arena and contestation of power that is only temporary and tends to only think about the interest groups of the party that supports it (Hilmy, 2017).

Muslims are expected to have an important role in actualizing the noble values of Islam related to tolerance, protection of human rights, justice, and propriety in acting. Various traditions that exist in the Islamic community such as the independence of the ulama versus the rulers, Islamic cosmopolitanism and siding with the poor, are the cultural potential of Muslims in Indonesia which are not much different from the civil society tradition in the United States (Hikam, 1999).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Indonesia as a complex country in terms of ethnicity, religion, race and inter-groups makes the government administrators in this country must have the ability to embrace and create a harmonious atmosphere in the lives of the people. In terms of religion, Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population. However, there is no indication of Islamic domination over adherents of other religions. The unity woven between adherents of religions actually opens up spaces for dialogue, very close relationships between adherents of religions, and the growth of bonds of friendship and an open attitude in solving various national problems.

The integration of Islam and democracy in Indonesia has given rise to a moderate and tolerant Islamic attitude. Democracy and Islam are quite a large force in fortifying the Indonesian state from the influence of acts of violence and terror. The democracy that is developing in Indonesia is a democracy that is based on the Almighty God. Religion (Islam) is the foundation for the implementation of democratic government and power, while democracy provides responsible freedom to all citizens to carry out activities and worship according to their religion. Thus, to achieve the welfare of the people and strengthen the spirit of nationalism, Islam and Democracy are not the time to be opposed, because the journey of history shows that the contact between democracy and Islam has been able to create a country that is able to protect all its people without any domination between one party and another.

FURTHER STUDY

This research only focuses on the study of the relationship between Islam and democracy in realizing a civilized Indonesia. Therefore, this research still has the opportunity to be continued by focusing attention on the relationship between Islam and democracy in realizing social resilience in the economic and social welfare sectors.

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