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Liberal Islamic Thought in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The understanding of freedom of thought in Islam, the soul/spirit of the liberal Islamic movement that grows in Indonesia's context of Islamic thinking, originates from Islamic tradition. However, Western modernization has also colored liberal Islamic discourse in its development. Therefore, liberal ideas need not always be understood in the Western context and by using Western barometers. On the other hand, liberal Islam can be understood as those opposed to revivalism that often discusses orthodox themes that are considered established, such as Islamic teachings on politics, democracy, women's rights, religious pluralism, freedom of thought, and ideas about progress. By constantly re-enacting these themes, liberal Islamic groups believe that Islam will be able to play an essential role in the contemporary world. Furthermore, the development of liberal Islam in Indonesia cannot be separated from the development of the understanding of the liberalization of Islamic thought in the Islamic world. This case includes the treatment that often discredits liberal Islamic groups in the Muslim world and Indonesia.

ABSTRAK

Pemahaman kebebasan berpikir dalam Islam yang merupakan jiwa/semangat gerakan Islam liberal yang tumbuh dalam konteks pemikiran Islam di Indonesia bersumber dari tradisi Islam; meskipun dalam perkembangannya modernisasi Barat juga mewarnai wacana Islam liberal. Oleh karena itu, ide-ide liberal tidak harus selalu dipahami dalam konteks Barat dan dengan menggunakan barometer Barat. Di sisi lain, Islam liberal dapat dipahami dalam arti mereka yang menentang revivalisme yang sering membahas tema-tema ortodoks yang dianggap mapan, seperti ajaran Islam tentang politik, demokrasi, hak-hak perempuan, pluralisme agama, kebebasan berpikir dan berpendapat. tentang kemajuan. Dengan selalu menghidupkan kembali tema-tema tersebut, kelompok Islam liberal percaya bahwa Islam akan mampu memainkan peran penting dalam dunia kontemporer. Lebih lanjut, perkembangan Islam liberal di Indonesia tidak lepas dari konteks perkembangan pemahaman liberalisasi pemikiran Islam di dunia Islam. Termasuk dalam hal ini adalah perlakuan yang sering mendiskreditkan kelompok Islam liberal yang terjadi baik di dunia Islam maupun di Indonesia.

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1. Introduction

The development of the religious awareness of Muslims in Indonesia cannot be separated from the emergence of the movement of thought renewal since the 19th century. The term "renewal" movement (Arifan, n.d.) gives a relatively different direction and religious perspective from the centers of Islamic civilization in the Middle East. One of its main characteristics is the strong assimilation between Islamic values and local traditions. The assimilation occurred due to the dialogue process between Islamic values and the needs of modernity and the actualization of the era of the people through peaceful means (*penetration Pacifique*) and prioritizing the cultural concessions of the local community (Geertz et al., 1989).

In the periodization of Indonesia's Islamic thought reform movement, the incompatibility between the standard of sacred religion and the customary practices that deviated from Islamic sharia, the insistence of colonialism, and the dominance of state power became structural determinants. Culturally, the historical periodization of the religious awareness of Indonesian Muslims, as mentioned by Kuntowijoyo (1999) is divided into three levels, myth, ideology, and science (Iryana, 2017).

However, a social change cannot be separated from historical forces such as social mobility, but the existence of a creative minority and creative personality as the initiator who cannot be silent in introducing ideas fresh ideas that are challenging, especially relating to Islamic thought. This paper intends to explore and uncover the phenomenon of liberal Islam in the Islamic world as a movement of thought by emphasizing studies on aspects of history, the context of its birth, important themes discussed, and its development in Indonesia. Among the references are the works of Binder (Binder, 1988) cited, Kurzman (Kurzman, 2001), Greg Barton, and Zuly Qodir (Qodir, 2010). In addition, several references, both pros, and cons, to the idea of liberal Islam are also used to produce a more comprehensive and adequate understanding (bin Ismail, 2006).

According to Biyanto (Biyanto, 2018), the work of Binder and Kurzman, although both were born from Western scholars who were interested in discussing liberal Islam, turned out to have many fundamental differences in thought. If traced to the common thread, Binder's work seeks to trace the link between Islamic liberalism and political liberalism in the Middle East, along with the waning influence of secularism as the basis of state ideology. Binder concluded that without Islamic liberalism, political liberalism would not occur in the Middle East (Binder, 1988). To support this thesis, Binder has discussed the ideas of several Islamic thinkers whose opinions are partly enveloped in Western liberalism and the relationship of these teachings to Islamic elements.

In contrast to Binder's study, Kurzman's work intends to contribute to intellectual projects by presenting the texts of most liberal Islamic thinkers into English in the form of pastiche. In addition, Kurzman also wants to contribute to liberal Islamic literature by emphasizing his Islamic context. Because, according to him, the analysis of liberal Islam is generally compared to Western liberalism, with the implications of judgment according to Western barometers. For Kurzman, the similarity of liberal Islam with Western liberalism has no sense that liberal Muslims are not dynamic and are plagiarists of Western philosophy. Many of their writings come from interpretation of the Qur'an, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the early generations of Islam, and traditional forms of Islamic debate (Kurzman, 2001).

2. Liberal Islam: Terminological Problems

The meaning of the word liberal Islam is not always clear. Even Kurzman himself acknowledged that the concept of liberal Islam does sound like a contradiction in terms (Kurzman, 2001). The appearance of a contradiction in the terminology of liberal Islam can also arise if asked questions; can Islam be compared with liberalism? Because Islam means surrender or submission to God and bound by the provisions of the shari'ah that the Prophet brought. In this perspective, Islam is not free.

Answering this terminological problem, Kurzman cited the opinion of Asaf 'Ali Asghar Fyzee (1899-1981) who stated, "We do not need to ignore the nomenclature, but if a name must be given to it, let us call it liberal Islam" (Kurzman, 2001). Even Fyzee named liberal Islam as "Protestant Islam".

With the term Protestant Islam, Fyzee conveyed the message of the need to present another face of Islam, namely non-orthodox Islam; Islam that is compatible with changing times; and Islam oriented towards the future and not to the past (Husaini & Hidayat, 2002). However, it must also be acknowledged that the term liberal Islam for some people often contains negative connotations, where it is associated with foreign domination, unlimited capitalism, a hypocrisy that deifies truth, and hostility towards Islam.

In connection with this problem, Kurzman stated that the concept of liberal Islam must be seen as an analytical aid, not an absolute category. This is where Kurzman defines "liberal" with a rather loose understanding, namely groups who are opposed to Islamic revivalists. At the same time, Islam is understood by those who believe that Islam has an essential role in the contemporary world instead of secularists (Kurzman, 2001).

For Greg Barton, in his book titled *The Idea of Liberal Islam in Indonesia* (Paramadina Publisher, Jakarta, 1999), "Islamic liberalism" seems quite clear. In his book from the dissertation, he said that liberal Islam, especially those which are symptomatic in the Indonesian context, is the same as Islamic reform or neo-modernist Islam. Furthermore, in the research covering the period 1968-1980, Barton limited himself to the thoughts of four prominent figures from the neo-modernists, namely Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib, and Abdurrahman Wahid.

The term neo-modernism is a term that comes from Fazlur Rahman. According to Rahman, there are four phases of the reform movement in Islam. *First*, revivalism (Mulia, 2021) pre-modernism, which emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries, was represented by Wahabiyyah in Arabic, Sanusiyyah in North Africa, and Fulaniyyah in West Africa. *Second*, classical modernism (Esposito, 2001) emerged in the mid-19th and early 20th centuries under Western ideas, methodology, and thought. This movement was pioneered by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (W 1898) in India, Jamaluddin al-Afghani (W 1897) in the Middle East, and Muhammad Abduh (W 1905) in Egypt. *Third*, neo-revivalism or postmodernism revivalism (Jaelani, 2007), appeared early in the 20th century, represented by Maududi with his famous organization, Jama'ati Islami, in Pakistan. *Fourth*, neo-modernism emerged at the end of the 20th century. Fazlur Rahman himself entered into this group with the characteristics of a progressive synthesis of modernist rationality with ijtihad and classical traditions (Hidayatullah, 2000; Nasution, 1992).

In Indonesia, the revivalism reform movement refers to the Paderi movement in West Sumatra (1803-1837). Aside from being a religious purification movement, it was also a movement against social institutions protected by aristocratic and feudalistic custom (Schrieke, 1973). But when the Paderi War ended in 1837, the revivalism movement that was fought for failed to substantially change the social, cultural, and political structure of the Minangkabau. However, it cannot also be eliminated that he succeeded in strengthening and enlarging the influence of ulama or religion in the Minangkabau social system with one of the main examples of the new formulation (aphorism) of adat that, *adat bersendi syara '(religion), syara' bersendi Kitabullah (Al Quran)* where previously the custom was based on religion, religion was based on custom (Azra, 2003).

With the defeat of the revivalists at the hands of the Dutch colonialism, Islam rediscovered its transhistorical power with the rise of the modernist movement in the early 20th century. Surau Jembatan Besi and Adabiah School in West Sumatra and Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta are forms of Islamic modernism that emphasize Islamic educational institutions that have been modernized as the basis of the movement (Abdullah, 2009; Noer, 1996). The critical issue of this movement is in the form of, First, cleaning religious practices and thoughts from foreign elements (heresy). Second, to restore the authority and greatness of Muslims through the rejuvenation of Islamic thought and practice (worship) and encourage them to follow developments and progress in Europe. *Third,* rejecting imitation or imitation blind to the interpretation of ancient texts that previous scholars have compiled and emphasizing ijtihad. *Fourth,* reform in education by establishing Islamic schools that teach religious knowledge and modern science. These reform movements were pioneered, including H. Rasul (Abdul Karim Amrullah) (Noer, 1996), H. Abdullah Ahmad (Noer, 1996), Zainudin Labai (Noer, 1996), and KH. Ahmad Dahlan (Noer, 1996). Two main elements support the success of this

movement in Indonesia; *first*, integrating modern features in the Islamic education system; *second*, intellectual networks between one character and another through personal or institutional relations.

It is not easy to set limits when this movement of modernism ends. But as the emergence of the neo-modernism movement in 1970, it can be said, Islamic modernism has become "obsolete" and lost its social relevance, especially the schools that were established are now "defeated" by state schools and "private superior" schools that are no less religious. And the time limit of neo-modernism was taken from the "January 3, 1970 moment" as a mouthpiece or signal of the emergence of this Islamic thought reform movement (Janah, 2017).

In essence, the reform movement promoted by neo-modernism is a continuation of the reform movement brought by modernism that was so strong in the 20th century ago. The geopolitical situation occurred at that time, namely the transition from the Old Order to the New Order; the transition between freedom of political expression that is relatively free to the ideological tightening of society with the strengthening of the state by military tyranny, even in the name of democracy and the good of society, whether requested or not.

There are three main characteristics of the Islamic neo-modernism movement in Indonesia. *First*, the relationship between religion and the state is ethical, where religion is a leaven of value in state life. *Second*, the formulation of Islamic ideals is based on the embodiment of Islamic values as a cultural force. *Third*, the ethical aspects of Islam that are used are a blend of understanding between classical and modern Islamic thought that forms a new understanding in accepting pluralism in society through the creation of Islamic society through educational facilities (Janah, 2017; Nurcholish Madjid, 2019; Rahman & Mimbar, 2018).

Islamic Neo-modernism as a typical intellectual movement cannot be separated from; first, the establishment of a universal and permanent methodology for interpreting the Qur'an that is rational and sensitive to historical and cultural contexts. This means how to formulate Islamic doctrines that are in line with the actual needs of Muslim communities. Second, although his birth in Indonesia was not as a political opportunistic — trying to align himself with the ideals of the development of the New Order —he had political consequences (Barton & Tahqiq, 1999).

3.   Liberal Islam in Indonesia's New Order

Since the beginning of the 1970s, along with the emergence of the New Order, which gave its challenges to Muslims, some Muslim scholars have tried to respond to situations considered not to give freedom of thought. This group later gave rise to ideas about the "Renewal of Islamic Thoughts". This group tries to interpret Islam not only textually but rather more contextual interpretation. They can be classified as Liberal Islam in rejecting imitation, advocating ijtihad, and leaving the authority that only specific individuals or groups have the right to interpret Islamic teachings (Arifan, n.d.).

There are at least four versions of liberal Islam, namely modernism, universalism, democratic socialism, and neo-modernism. Modernism develops patterns of thinking that emphasize aspects of rationality and renewal of Islamic thought following current conditions. Notable figures representing modernism include Harun Nasution, Nurcholish Madjid, Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif, and Djohan Effendi (Munawar-Rachman et al., 2022).

The idea of Islamic liberalism of the modernists appears, for example, in the thoughts put forward by Harun Nasution or Nurcholish Madjid. Harun Nasution, for instance, holds that Islam is a religion that is needed by humanity throughout the ages. Therefore, it must be rational, in the sense of a religion that can balance out the materialism of science and technology; religion whose moral values are absolute to compensate for Western relativism; religion whose ritual (worship) functions to revive the conscience of modern humans which is dry from the values of religious spirituality; and religions whose teachings on humanism are rational and avoid being obsolete (Nasution, 1995; Qodir, 2010).

The same thing also appears in the thinking of Nurcholish Madjid. Islamic Liberalism, in his view, is a reasonable effort to gain effectiveness in review and working optimally for the happiness of humanity. The goal of that liberal attitude can be achieved by continuing to strive for all

improvements, both personal and community, which are all done in the spirit of *the ultimate truth*, namely God himself (Nurcholish Madjid, 1992).

Universalism is a supporter of modernism, which argues that Islam is universal. Islam is indeed in a national context, but that nationalization is not the final goal of Islam itself. Therefore, they do not recognize the dichotomy between nationalism and Islamism. Both of them support each other. The problem will arise if the national or local Islam causes a deviation from the universal nature of Islam. This mindset is vaguely seen in Jalaluddin Rahmat's thoughts, M. Amien Rais, AM Saifuddin, Endang Saefudin Anshari, and Imaduddin Abdul Rahim (Aly & Effendy, 1986).

The socialism-democracy mindset assumes that the presence of Islam must give meaning to humans. Islam must be a force capable of being a constant motivator in various aspects of human life to achieve this goal. Proponents of socialist democracy see that the socio-political structure and, especially, the economics in several Islamic countries, including Indonesia, still do not reflect the meaning of humanity, so it can be said to be un-Islamic. The process of Islamization, as such, is not something formalistic. In the reflection of their thinking, Islamization is productive work oriented to socio-economic and political changes towards creating a just and democratic society. Adi Sasono, M. Dawam Rahardjo, and Kuntowidjojo can be included in this mindset.

Neo Modernism has the basic assumption that Islam must be involved in the process of the modernism struggle. Even if possible, Islam is expected to become the leading teaching in the future. However, that does not mean eliminating established Islamic traditions. This gave birth to the postulate (*dalil*) *al-muhâfazhat `alâ al-qadîm al-shâlih wa al-akhdu bi al-jadid al-ashlah* (maintaining good old practices, and adopting new and better traditions). On the other hand, supporters of neo-modernism tend to lay the foundations of Islam in a national context or scope. They believe that, after all, Islam is universal, but a nation's conditions inevitably affect Islam itself. Two intellectual figures are the main supporters of neo-modernism, namely Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid (Arifan, n.d.).

It seems that Nurcholish's thought, was more influenced by the idea of Fazlur Rahman, his teacher at the University of Chicago, United States. Abdurrahman Wahid's neo-modernist thought was formed because he was brought up in culture *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* the Indonesian version of the, NU circles. Because of this, his Islamic ideas seemed far more empirical, especially in his thinking about the relationship between Islam and politics (Nurcholis Madjid et al., n.d.).

4. Liberal Islam in Indonesia's Reformation Era

Since the end of the 1990s a new generation of Indonesian Islamic thought has emerged with a more open nuance and gave rise to what is commonly referred to as a new school of Indonesian Islamic thought, the school of liberal Islam (Qodir, 2010). Aside from continuing the idea of Islamic liberalism whose foundation was laid by Harun Nasution, Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and others, the emergence of a school of liberal Islamic thought born in the late 1990s was a critical reflection on Islamic theological ignorance in responding to modern problems which continue to grow. As Hamid Basyaib, this school also appears to balance the spirit of Islamic fundamentalism, which carries the spirit of implementing Islamic sharia, and theological discourse that is not pluralist and tolerant (Wahid, 1984).

Such reflections emerge not apart from the openness of the discourse of thought in the Muslim community in this country, as well as the influence of secular education, reading and association with the outside world (international), as well as the many references to the work of thinkers of the world that are read by Indonesian Muslims, especially concerning essential themes occurring in the modern era, such as the works of Khaled Abou el Fadl (Abou El Fadl, 2014), Farid Esack (Haq, 2018), Hasan Hanafi, Abid al-Jabiri, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Mohammed Arkoun, Fazlur Rahman, and other famous thinkers.

Their works are part of the reading of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, both from Muhammadiyah circles, such as Amien Abdullah, Munir Mulkhan, and Ruhaini, as well as young

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) intellectuals, such as Ulil Abshar Abdalla, Hamid Basyaib, Budi Munawar Rachman, and Lutfi Asyaukanie.

The theology developed by the liberal Muslim community is indeed different from that developed by fundamentalist groups. The same thing also happened in understanding and responding to various issues that developed in the modern world, including in seeing the Qur'an. For liberal Muslim intellectuals, the Koran is not a practical guide for all actions. Because, al-Qur'an is more talk globally, it requires interpretation of the contents of the al-Qur'an. For the liberal Muslim community, the Koran is still recognized as a holy book that must always be exalted and used as a guide, but that does not mean that its contents should not be interpreted. Because what keeps the Koran alive is because of interpretations of what is contained in it (Qodir, 2010).

At this point, the liberal intellectuals do what is called the "new reading" of the text of the Koran (*beyond on the text*) as a way to refresh in understanding Islam, as they acknowledge, is not something entirely new because it had been done by Muslim intellectuals before. It is just that liberal Muslim scholars try to give "another way" in reading the sacred text by avoiding the tradition of "bibliolatry", a tradition of stewardship and sanctification in reading the holy text, which is the result of intellectual interpretation of the religious sacred text. In addition, liberal academic circles also avoid ideologically biased reading (Qodir, 2010).

Responding to many ideas considered to be "dangerous" to the Indonesian Ulema Council at its 7th National Conference on July 25-29, 2005 issued a fatwa that pluralism, secularism, and liberalism were understandings contrary to the teachings of Islam. Therefore Muslims are forbidden to follow the sense of pluralism, secularism and religious liberalism (Husaini, 2005). In MUI Decree No. 7 / MUNAS VII / 11/2005 states that what is meant by liberalism is understanding religious texts (al-Qur'an and as-Sunnah) using free thoughts and only accepting religious doctrines that are following mere ideas.

Liberal Islam in the reform era in Indonesia appeared more real after establishing a "network" of discussion groups on March 8, 2001, whose purpose was to enlighten and liberate Indonesian Islamic thought (Arifan, n.d.). It must also be said that the emergence of the Liberal Islam Network in Indonesia was driven by anxiety among progressive young people, such as Lutfi Asyaukanie, Ulil Abshar Abdalla, Hamid Basyaib, Budi Munawar Rahman, Taufik Adnan Amal, Rizal Pangabean and Saeful Mujani regarding the understanding of a part of the community for religious teachings believed to be fixed prices.

As seen from the website of the Liberal Islam Network (Fathoni, 2016), Liberal Islam is a form of interpretation of Islam with the following basis:

a. *Opened the doors of ijtihad in all dimensions of Islam*. Liberal Islam believes that ijtihad or rational reasoning for Islamic texts is the main principle that allows Islam to continue to survive in all weather. Closing the door of ijtihad, either limitedly or as a whole, is a threat to Islam because then Islam will experience decay. Liberal Islam believes that ijtihad can be carried out in all aspects, both in terms of *muamalat* (social interaction), *ubudiyyat* (ritual), and divine (theology).

b. *Give priority to the spirit of religious ethics, not the text's literal meaning*. Ijtihad developed by Liberal Islam is an effort to interpret Islam based on the spirit of religio-ethics of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, not to interpret Islam solely based on the literal meaning of a text. Literal interpretation will only paralyze Islam. With understanding based on the spirit of religio-ethics, Islam will live and develop creatively as part of a universal humanitarian civilization.

c. *Trust the truth that is relative, open, and plural*. Liberal Islam bases itself on the idea of truth (in religious interpretation) as something relative, because an interpretation is a human activity confined by a particular context; open, because every form of interpretation contains the possibility of wrong, other than the possibility of right; plural, because religious interpretation, in one way or another, is a reflection of the needs of an interpreter in a time and space that is constantly changing.

d. *Siding with the minority and oppressed.* Liberal Islam is based on the interpretation of Islam which is in favor of the oppressed and marginalized minorities. Every socio-political structure that preserves the practice of injustice over the minority is contrary to the spirit of Islam. The minority here is understood in its broad meaning, covering religious, ethnic, racial, gender, cultural, political and economic minorities.

e. *Belief in religious freedom.* Liberal Muslims believe that religious and non-religious affairs are individual rights that must be respected and protected. Liberal Islam does not condone persecution based on an opinion or belief.

f. *Separating worldly and ukhrawi authority, religious and political authority.* Liberal Islam believes that religious and political power must be separated. Liberal Islam opposes the religious state (theocracy). Liberal Islam believes that a healthy form of state for religious and political life is the state that separates the two powers. Religion is a source of inspiration that can influence public policy, but religion has *no sacred right* to determine all forms of public policy. Religion is in the private sphere, and public affairs must be organized through a consensus process.

Why is it called Liberal Islam? The name "liberal Islam" describes the principles we espouse, namely Islam which emphasizes personal *freedom* and *liberation* from oppressive socio-political structures. "Liberal" here means two: *freedom* and *liberation*. We believe that Islam is always adhered to by adjectives because in reality, Islam is interpreted differently according to the interpreter's needs. We chose one type of interpretation, and thus one adjective against Islam, "liberal". To realize Liberal Islam, we formed the Liberal Islam Network (JIL).

Why is the Liberal Islam Network? Our main goal is to spread the ideas of Liberal Islam to the greatest extent possible for the public. For this reason, we chose the form of networks, not social organizations or political parties. JIL is an open forum for anyone who has aspirations and concerns for the ideas of Liberal Islam.

What is JIL's mission? First, develop a liberal interpretation of Islam following the principles we adhere to, and spread it to the broadest possible audience. *Second*, to try to open a dialogue room that is free from the pressure of conservatism. We believe that opening up a dialogue space will create a healthy Islamic thought and movement. *Third*, to strive to create a just and humane social and political structure.

The main activity of this group is to discuss matters relating to Islam, the State, and social issues. According to the discussion results released on March 1, 2002, the Liberal Islamic Network (JIL) claimed to have succeeded in bringing 200 discussion members from among writers, intellectuals, and political observers. Among them appear names such as; Taufik Adnan Amal, Rizal Mallarangeng, Denny JA, Eep Saefullah Fatah, Hadimulyo, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, Saiful Muzani, Hamid Basyaib, Ade Armando and Lutfi Asysyaukani. Of course, not everyone who attended the discussion meant supporting JIL's ideas.

The initial discussion raised by JIL was around the definition and attitude of Liberal Islam around the issues of Islam, the state, and social issues. The purpose of Liberal Islam begins with a study of Kurzman's book, which sorts Islamic traditions into three categories: *Islamic customary*, *fundamentalist* or *Wahabis* or *Salafis*, and *liberal Islam*. The third category is claimed to be the correction and response to the first two categories. The question that arose in the initial discussion was whether Liberal Islam in Indonesia would be elitist and merely build discourse or Liberal Islam that provided empirical reflection and appreciation of reality? If Liberal Islam is parallel with *civic culture* (*pro pluralism, equal opportunity, moderation, trust, tolerance,* has *sense of community* a national, then where is Islam? Or is Liberal Islam skepticism and agnosticism living in Islamic societies? Discussion in the mailing list Finally, they disagreed on a definition of Liberal Islam, but they marked a movement and thought that tried to respond to modernists, traditionalists, and fundamentalists, Liberal Islam developed through the mass media, the leading newspaper that became the mouthpiece of Liberal Islamic thought was Jawa Pos published in Surabaya, Tempo in Jakarta and 68H Radio, Utan Kayu

Jakarta, through which the liberal ideas and interpretations were spread, and at one time these thoughts and movements drew protests and even threats of violence from their opponents. The community around Utan Kayu also once demanded Radio and the JIL community to pin already from that environment. The works suspected of being representations of liberal Islamic thought are discussed and condemned by its opponents, mainly through sermons and recitation. Books such as *Interfaith Jurisprudence* (Team of Paramadina Writers), *Becoming Liberal Muslims* (Ulil Abshar-Abdalla) *Counter-Legal Draft* Compilation of Islamic Law (Musdah Mulia et al), *Beautiful Intermarriages* (Types of IAIN Walisongo Journals), and many other articles about Islam that follow the mainstream of liberal thought. Tensions between the pros and cons of JIL, peaked after issuing the MUI Fatwa on the illicit Liberalism, Secularism and Pluralism in 2005. Tension declined slightly after one of JIL's contributors and coordinator, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, went abroad to study in the United States (Arifan, n.d.).

Ulil, through his book "Becoming a Liberal Muslim" rejects hegemonic, non-pluralist, anti-democratic types of religious interpretations, which can potentially undermine the Islamic joints themselves. With a straightforward narrative and semantic style, Ulil, for example, launched his criticism at the MUI, which had monopolized Islam's interpretation. MUI fatwa states that pluralism, liberalism, and secularism are misguided understandings; Ahmadiyya is out of Islam - has ignited the almost uncontrollable emotions of Ulil.

Ulil's thinking is not one hundred percent free. As a pesantren alumnus, he remains appreciative of the pesantren's scholarship. Through his column *On Being Muslim* we know that Ulil got the roots of liberalism in his Islamic thinking from traditional sciences such as *usûl al-fiqh, qawâ`id al-fiqhiyah,* which was taught by his ustadz in pesantren. Pesantren sciences such as *balaghah* and *mantiq* (logic) seem to have helped train Ulil to structure words and sentences, systematize arguments and strengthen the power of reasoning.

Unfortunately, only fundamentalists try to do rhetorical resistance. Magazines such as Sabili, Hidayatullah, and the media within the Indonesian Da'wah Council tried to provide a counter opinion on the ideas promoted by JIL. After Ulil left, the dynamics of contemporary Islamic thought and movements were cooling.

5. Profile of Some Liberal Islamic Groups in Indonesia

The Liberal Islam Network in Jakarta Islamic Liberal (JIL)

Nong Darol Mahmada and Burhanuddin explained (Aly & Effendy, 1986; Mahmada, n.d.), JIL was formed on March 9, 2001. The date refers to the initial launch of the@ yahoogroups mailing list. JIL was established partly because of the post-New Order socio-religious conditions which, according to the founders of JIL, were felt to show an unfriendly face of Islam increasingly and tended to display conservatism. In the view of JIL figures, the public at that time was marked by an understanding of radical social-religious issues and anti-pluralism. This condition prompted several young activists to conduct various discussions on Jalan Utan Kayu 68 H, East Jakarta. Then, referring to that location, a group of young Islamic leaders founded the Islamic Utan Kayu Community, which served as a prelude to the formation of JIL. Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, Nong Darol Mahmada, Burhanuddin, Ihsan Ali Fauzi Hamid Basyaib, Taufiq Adnan Amal, Saiful Mujani, and Luthfi Assaukanie are among those who helped create the Utan Kayu Community and afterwards JIL. The growth of violence in the name of religion, the constant demands for applying Islamic law, and the absence of a reform movement of Islamic thought that Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid previously launched were among the topics discussed by these activists.

The name liberal Islam, according to the founders of JIL, describes the Islamic community which emphasizes personal freedom and liberation from the existing social and political structure. According to JIL activists, Liberal Islam is a form of interpretation of Islam (Nurcholis Madjid et al., n.d.).

In general, JIL activities aim to alleviate the rise of religious fundamentalism in Indonesia while opening up public understanding of pluralist and democratic religious understandings. Specifically, JIL activities are aimed at:

1. Creating *intellectual discourses* on religious issues that are pluralist and democratic and with a gender perspective;
2. Establish an *intellectual community* that is organic and responsive and has a strong will to fight for religious values that are supportive of strengthening the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia;
3. Promoting *intellectual networking* that actively involves campus networks, NGOs, mass media, and others to reject fascism in the name of religion.

The existence of JIL, which brings a new way of thinking in understanding Islamic teachings has led to pros and cons. The pros and cons towards the Liberal Islamic Network can be mapped into two, namely in physical and intellectual form. The intellectual form can be seen from the publication of various books that both blaspheme and respond positively. Writers who opposed the Liberal Islam Network include Adian Husaini, Adnin Armas, Yudhi R. Haryono, Hartono Ahmad Jaiz, and Fauzan al-Ansari. Meanwhile some try to think scientifically and make the Liberal Islamic Network the focus of discussion in preparing theses and dissertations.

Meanwhile, some Islamic community groups think that the thought of the Liberal Islamic Network is considered to be damaging to the *aqidah* of Muslims. Therefore they oppose it in the form of physical violence. That was partly in the form of demonstrations by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). The mailing list managed by JIL also received spam attacks and was hijacked by hackers several times. Meanwhile the Islamic Ulema and Ummah Forum (FUUI) in Bandung issued a dead fatwa to Ulil as chairman of the Liberal Islam Network. Liberal Islamic Network Institutions are also increasingly fussed after issuing the MUI fatwa, which forbids the ideology of liberalism, secularism, and pluralism.

Muhammadiyah's Young Intellectual Network (JIMM)

It is unclear when forming the Muhammadiyah Young Intellectual Network (hereafter JIMM—Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah) (Burhani, 2005). In mid-2003 many news and opinions in the national mass media contained articles about JIMM or articles written by JIMM figures. Suddenly, many Muhammadiyah youths joined in and engaged in joint intellectual activities in various workshops, seminars, discussions, scientific research, etc. Although the actual date of JIMM's formation is unknown, various internal and external circumstances accompanied the rebirth of young Muhammadiyah intellectuals. There are at least three internal factors. First, consider Muhammadiyah's perverted thinking following the 43rd Congress, which was led by M. Amien Rais, Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif, and M. Amin Abdullah. Second, the reintroduction of Muhammadiyah philosophers like Moeslim Abdurrahman. Third, the Maarif Institute for Culture and Humanity, which was originally intended to mark Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif's 70th birthday. JIMM was founded in response to the aggressiveness of the young generation of NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) that colors contemporary Islamic thought and movement, whether individual or incorporated in institutions such as LKiS (Islamic and Social Studies Institutions), JIL (Liberal Islamic Network), Lakpesdam NU, P3M, and Desantara. Muhammadiyah youths are envious of this ferocity. When compared to young NU activists, the Muhammadiyah, as a reformer and modernist Islamic movement, should have far-reaching thoughts (Qodir, 2010).

JIMM was created for three reasons, according to JIMM activists. To begin, JIMM is believed to be defending the fading heritage of tajdid (renewal). Second, JIMM was created to bridge the intellectual divide between generations in Muhammadiyah, hence it is expected to serve as a forum for the formation of Muhammadiyah's young intellectual cadre. Third, JIMM arose as a result of external challenges and accusations. The birth of JIMM elicited both positive and negative comments from both the older generation of Muhammadiyah and outside Muhammadiyah members. Some Muhammadiyah elders regard JIMM's establishment as an extension of Indonesia's liberalism

movement, a Western agent conducting hegemony against Muslims, and even deemed to have broken Muhammadiyah principles.

JIMM's movement approach has been built on three pillars: hermeneutics, social theory, and new social movement. Hermeneutics is designed to undermine Muhammadiyah's dominant method and structural understanding. Hermeneutics will result in the reproduction of new meaning. Critical social ideas such as Antonio Gramsci's theoretical framework for opposing hegemony and Paulo Freire's theory for oppressed liberation are utilised as Islamic intellectual tools. By employing critical social theory, Muhammadiyah members will serve as mediators and articulators for social reform. In contrast, the new social movement idea elevates theology from a scientific field to a movement. All disenfranchised elements of society have been motivated bytheology to unite to make changes together.

6.   Conclusion

The understanding of freedom of thought in Islam, the soul/spirit of the liberal Islamic movement that grows in Indonesia's context of Islamic thinking originates from Islamic tradition. However, in its development Western modernization has also colored liberal Islamic discourse. Therefore, liberal ideas need not always be understood in the Western context and by using Western barometers. On the other hand, liberal Islam can be understood as those who are opposed to revivalism that often discusses orthodox themes that are considered established, such as Islamic teachings on politics, democracy, women's rights, religious pluralism, freedom of thought, and ideas about progress. By constantly re-enacting these themes, liberal Islamic groups believe that Islam will be able to play an essential role in the contemporary world. Furthermore, the development of liberal Islam in Indonesia cannot be separated from the development of the understanding of the liberalization of Islamic thought in the Islamic world. This case includes the treatment that often discredits liberal Islamic groups in the Muslim world and Indonesia.

The liberal Islamic thought movement in Indonesia became a widespread movement. In addition to the Liberal Islam Network (JIL), many other organizations have liberal ideas in mind, such as FORMACI, Yogyakarta LKiS, Letsform (Muhammadiyah Transformation Institute) in West Java. Their influence is almost negligible.

General characteristics of Islamic thought as stated by Greg Barton, among others: first, carrying the spirit of ijtihad; second, bringing rationalism; third, upholding democratic values; fourth, upholding the role of science; fifth, view that the desire to establish an "Islamic state" is a distraction of distraction; sixth, accept and support community pluralism; seventh, holding the principles of humanitarianism, even looking at it as the essence and heart of Islam; eighth, fight for gender equality.

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