Is Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia Part of Islamic Revival?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to academically define Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia's characteristics before its revocation. Although the current Indonesian regime had officially disbanded this transnational organization in July 2017, its existence remains stimulating to discuss. Hizb ut-Tahir Indonesia's primary objective is to implement Islamic laws in total, which can only be accomplished within a superstate called al-Khilafah al-Islamiyah (Islamic Caliphate) led by a Khalifah (Caliph). Its followers believe that Islam will revive under the caliphate. In Indonesia, Hizb ut-Tahrir actively criticized the government's policies through its articles, preaching, and street rallies. The ideas were conveyed not only through direct campaigning but also via its internal media. Even though it has been formally disbanded, HTI was mentioned in the vortex of the 2019 presidential election competition. The organization was accused of being behind one of the contestants, and still tried to change the state ideology. Regardless of the issue, the research argues that HTI is part of Islamic revival that wishes to change the social-political structures through the re-creation of the caliphate by conducting intensive direct communication activities in small groups, street rallies, and or indirect communication through printed and social media.

Keywords: Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia; revival; revivalist; transnational

ABSTRAK


Kata kunci: Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia; kebangkitan; kebangkitan rohani; transnasional
INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of broader research about Republika’s ideology and political interests that were hidden in its news concerning Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia’s (HTI) disbandment in 2017. Republika was chosen as a research subject for its ideological identity as an Islamic media, which is clearly defined from the contents. When Joko Widodo regime had decided to disband HTI, Republika consistently reported the event. This article is not examining the disbandment itself, yet the existence of HTI as a part of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), a global Islamic organization. Burhani (2017) quoted Osman (2010) observed that HTI was one of HT’s largest chapters in the region of Asia – Pacific.

HTI’s voyage as a legal entity ended when Joko Widodo administration officially revoked its legal status on July 10, 2017, by the Government Regulation in Lieu of Acts (Perppu) number 2/2017 on Mass Organizations. HTI filed a lawsuit against the revocation to the Jakarta State Administrative Court afterward. The judicial panel upheld the disbandment a year later. The central government’s decision was based on several reasons: (1) HTI did not have positive roles in the process of achieving national development; (2) HTI conducted activities that were contrary to the principles and objectives of Pancasila and 1945 Constitution; (3) The activities carried out by HTI to achieve the establishment of the caliphate would cause potential clashes in the community and might threaten national security which in turn endangered the existence of Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). According to Baran (2004), although Hizb ut-Tahrir prohibits direct conflict with local authorities and avoids violence, its Islamic ideology and politics compromise the ruler parties as the holders of the dominant ideology.

As a part of a transnational organization, HTI was, in fact, just a ‘small piece’ amongst the long yet still-ongoing ideological battle between Islam, Judeo-Christian, and the West (Liberalism-Capitalism). Imtiaz Gul (2010) argued that some large-scale events in the past that were involving many parties and enormous economic, socio-political interests of the Europeans, such as World War I, British colonialization of India, the secularization movement in Turkey (before and after the downfall of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1923), and the struggle for political power in Egypt has bred the transnational Islamic movements. Consequently, the Islamic movement that arose in the early period in the Indian Sub-continents, Arab, and African was anti-violence and inclined to reform the faith of Muslims who at that time believed in superstition and practiced heresy. The great conflict between Muslims and Hindus in India coincided with the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt, and the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate in Turkey became an essential factor for the global evolution of Islamic ideology.

In relations with the purpose of this paper, the research assumes that there is a robust genealogical relationship between Islam’s renewal and purification (revivalism) with HTI as a part of the transnational Islamic movement. The arguments for this assumption are as follows: (1) HT, as the head organization, operates in more than forty countries. All chapters, including HTI, run the same methods of da’wa and refer to the same guiding books. (2) Its ideology is vis-a-vis democracy and the concept of the nation-state, which has recently been well-recognized and accepted as the foundation of the political system in most Muslim states. This fact contradicts HT’s primary goal: the re-creation of the caliphate. (3) It does not focus on religious practices that are furu’iyyah (branch), khilafiyyah (trivial differences), and personal ritual worship. Its guideline master books were mostly written by Taqiyyuddin an-Nabhani and the content specifically talks about ideology, economy, social-politics, and governance. (4) It refuses to get involved in mainstream politics, as the Tarbiyah Movement (Indonesian Muslim Brotherhood) has done in the format of a political party, adapting to the state’s system.

ANALYSIS

The Emergence of the Islamic Movement

The intersections of Muslims with the advancement of western thoughts (related to ideology, political, administrative systems, cultures) are essential aspects that triggered the emergence of Islamic movements, both aggressive and allowing violence acts, such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, or the nonviolent ones, such as HT and Tablighi Jamaat (Alamsyah, 2004). As further explained by Alamsyah, one side of the Muslim community is trying to pursue the nature of the ride from the
western world by accepting modernization which is the unavoidable excess of the industrial revolution. On the other hand, another group facing challenges to new ideas contained in it, such as the political system, democracy, egalitarianism, secularism, and gender issues.

Therefore, the commotions befell to Muslims around the world, regarding how they adapted to the new things by ideology and concepts of Islamic laws. Major transnational Islamist groups, including Tablighi Jama'at, Salafi, and Hizb ut-Tahrir, explicitly reject liberalism, secularism, democracy, and nation-state format that have been accepted by many countries as remarkable ideas, building their social, economic and political systems on it. Democracy, for instance, is considered a form of a regime that is opposed to the concept of Islamic sovereignty, for it places humans as holders of power to make rules and to govern (highest sovereignty). However, in the Indonesian context, many scholars of local Islamist entities such as Nahdlatul Ulama (Revival of Muslim Scholar) and Muhammadiyah (Follower of Prophet Muhammad) have flexibly acknowledged democracy as an ideal mechanism, side by side with Islam teachings. On the contrary, other Muslim scholars, including Sayyid Qutb and Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani, considered that western philosophies and cultures are responsible for moral degradation, alienating Muslims from Islam. In turn, these scholars manifested their rejections to western ideas by establishing Islamist organizations.

A study of the new Islamic social movement by Philip W. Sutton and Stephen Vertigans (2006) revealed the fact that the development of the Islamic movement is also closely related to social, cultural, economic and political changes correlating to the values of post-industrialism and post-materialism and the process of interconnectedness with modernization and globalization. Modernization deserves appreciation for being instrumental in developing human civilization. Though, on the other hand, it is creating new cultures that are manifest in ways of thinking, attitudes, behaviors, and cultures that substantively conflict with Islamic teachings. Capitalism, which is the mother of modernization, gave birth to liberalism that departs from the idea of individual freedom, while Muslims are bound by the limitations outlined in their Holy Qur'an and Al-Hadith.

Liberalism, as moral and political philosophy, rests on two main ideas, namely, the individual and freedom. Liberalism places individuals at the center of society and believes that the highest order of social value is an order built to protect individuals. As a result, the goal of the community is to allow everyone to reach their highest potential as far as can be achieved. The ideal way to realize this is to give the possible freedom to individuals (Chau, 2009). In turn, the principle of the appreciation of values for human existence promoted by liberalism gives birth to a democratic system, where sovereignty exists in humans. At this point, democracy has differences with Islam, where individuals have not the right to hold sovereignty.

The West disseminated the concepts derived from liberalism over colonialism (and later, globalization) into the Muslim-majority regions. The contact of Muslims with western thoughts and cultures resulted in "loosening" of their aqeedah and sharia bonds which lead to moral and ethical deprivation, and sinking original values. The notion from Karen Armstrong, a famous orientalist, is worth taking into account. She said that the emergence of radical fundamentalist Muslims was a response to secularism as the basis for the structure of modernism that contributed to the crisis of spiritual identity (see Watt, 2010: 3). Muslims, on the other hand, are experiencing difficulties in translating the spirit of the times (zeitgeist) about how to live meaningful as a decent person in the modern secular world or to accommodate it by what they understandings.

The marginalization occurring to Muslims, according to Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani, is due to the brittle of caliphate which was supposed to become the bearer of the messages of Islam and to bring together the divergent schools of thoughts (ijtihad), and also the reduced application of the Qur’an and Hadith as sources of Islamic laws. Nabhani argues that the faintness developments concerning the Islamic thoughts emerged after the time of the four Caliphs ended. At that time, some scholars stated that the door of ijtihad had been closed. This situation continued until the era where the Westerns began to rise from hard times of the previous Crusade, Thus, the inability of Islam in response to the rapid social-political and cultural changes caused by the idea that is no longer possible to perform ijtihad (new ideas).

The variance in attitudes and thoughts about how Muslims should accept this change then gave rise to types of movements that have different visions and missions, even though they refer to the same sources of Islamic principles. Typology of the Islamic movement generally divided into two: revivalist and modernist. Islamic revivalists try to implement a comprehensive total Islam, both individually and publicly (kaffah). In contrast, the modernists attempt to adopt Islamic teachings and laws to the times. For these people, Western thoughts are not something unlawful to follow. Yunanto
(2017) contended that the differences arose among Muslims were boomerang for the rise of Islam itself, apart from the full flow of egoism, the exclusion of analytical aspects based on the reality of contemporary Muslim society, and the weakness of the leadership of the Muslims an sich. Different views of Islamic groups in addressing how Islam should play a role in this world is very complex, found in various measure types.

**Islamic Movement in Indonesia**

Hasani and Tigor (2012) explained that Islamic movements in Indonesia could be categorized into four groups: Moderate Islam, Transnational Radicals, Local Radicals, and Radical Jihad. Moderate Islam is groups that are adaptive to the concept of modernization and reject violence in the name of religion. Muhammadiyah and NahdlatulUlama fall into this category. The second is Transnational Radicals.

In contrast to Muhammadiyah and NU, which are locally native, these groups originate from abroad. The main agenda is to change the social, economic, and political systems. However, instead of promoting violence, their proselytization methods are prioritized by ideas and ethical attitudes and manners. HT, TablighiJamaat, Salafi puritans, and the Muslim Brotherhood (Tarbiyah movement) represent this category. The third category is Local Radicals, which like NU and Muhammadiyah, was established in Indonesia and is not directly related to the international Islamic movement. Their struggle agenda is a combination of ideological and practical, allowing violence as long as necessary. Examples of this movement are Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defender's Front). The fourth is the Radical Jihad group, which considers the non-Islamic system of government to be secular, thaghut, and kuffar so that it is not obligatory to submit to the authorities and must even be corrected. They vent their dissatisfaction with violence in the form of attacks the state officials and acts of terrorism.

The transformation of contemporary Islamic movements in Indonesia, said Hasani and Tigor (2012), is the result of an adaptive process of the political situation that occurs especially post 1945. First, an Islamic movement that is characterized by nationality departing from cultural struggles and after the independence become a political movement. NU and Perti became NU party, in addition to the existence of Parmusi and PSII. These parties participated in the 1955 and 1971 elections. Second, is an Islamic movement that is a transformation from the political movement of practice to the da'wa movement and education. This movement is a two-sided process of the first movement. Third, is the transformation of the radical Islamic movement into a Jihad movement, such as KomandoJihad. The root of this radical movement is traced to Darul Islam (Domain of Islam)/ Negara Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic State) movement which had previously carried out a revolt against the Old Order regime.

Based on the explanation above, the phenomenon of Islamic movement and transformation and all of the complexity is essential. Although rooted in the same source of law, Islamic theological thinking has always evolved as a result of differences in the methods of interpretation of the texts of the Qur'an and Al-Hadith. Another factor is the similarity of the ideological basis of the Salafis, Hizb ut-Tahrir and TablighiJamaat are moving from social movements Salafism, which became known as the understanding of AhlusSunnahWalJamaah, a religious practice that is different from other philosophies, such as Shia, Khawarij, Mutazila, Qadiriyya, and Jabartiyyah (Suhanah, 2011). This religious practice was later reformulated by IbnTaymiyyah and later followed by Muhammad Abdul Wahhab (Wahhabism), Muhammad Ilyas (TablighiJamaat), and Taqiyuddin al-Nabhani (Hizb ut-Tahrir) who transformed for socio-political reasons in their respective regions.

Regarding the Islamic renewal movement, Gul (2010) divided Islamic groups into two big categories: traditionalist and reformist. The first group views sharia as essentially legalistic and casuistic. While the reformist group, Gul quoted Oliver Roy, as an antithesis of the traditional group. Fundamentalist reformists criticize the practice of worship, deviation (bid'ah), and belief in the superstition that is run by traditionalists. In Indonesia, Muhammadiyah is a manifestation of this fundamentalist reformist group which often voices the elimination of innovations in the context of worship as practiced by most of NahdlatulUlama followers.

**Islamic Revival**

Revivalism means to reform and renewal, which stems from the Arabic words islah and tajdid. Nevertheless, the meaning of reform and renewal as believed by the followers of the Ahlussunahwa
al-Jama'ah is to return entirely to the Qur'an and Sunnah. According to them, the book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Apostles can provide solutions to all the problems of humanity, starting from social, political, cultural, educational, and others. Nonetheless, Muslims have a variety of meanings for the revival itself.

In the context of Islamic revivalism, Onapajo (2012) divided it into three periods: the early, mid, and modern periods. The initial period of the Islamic revivalism movement took place after the end of Ali bin Abi Talib's reign as the last Caliph. During the Caliph Ali, there were several conflicts which led to the war of fellow Muslims. After that, the people of Islam began to be contaminated and depleted by faith degradation and social ills. This discretion manifests itself in injustice, immoral acts, sectarianism, and the adoption of Greek spiritual philosophy.

The middle period of Islamic revivalism took place in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was a period of transition from the early and modern periods. During this time, Islamic societies that had previously been under the auspices or had coordinative relations with the Ottoman Caliphate split into some nation-states. At this time, the faith and morals of Muslims were getting worse. The renewal movement in this period occurred in almost all Muslim-majority countries. In Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792) persisted in eradicating ritual practices that were contradictory to Islamic traditions. In India, Shah Waliyullah (1703-1762), Shah Abdul Aziz (w.1824), Sayyid Ahmad Shahid (1786-1831), and Ismail Shahid (1779-1831) launched a reform movement on the rise of dissent over Islamic jurisprudence, criticism of the concept the divinity of the Sufis and rectifying the Indian Muslim faith which was contaminated by Hinduism and Sikhism.

The Modern revivalism that occurs in the Islamic world, according to Onapajo, is the excess of European colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism towards Muslim countries. At this time, all Muslim lands were contested by Europe. Egypt was the first Arab country to experience colonialism by France in 1798 after the Ottoman dynasty later liberated it in 1801. The division of power by France and Britain after World War I made East Arabia split into Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Hijaz. The reformers of the Islamic movement at this time came from the middle class who received western education, such as Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), and Rashid Rida (1869-1935).

However, Islamic revivalism is strongly influenced by historical, cultural, and political backgrounds where it was first established. Rahman (1985, in Rosadi, 2015) divided the reformist group of Islam into four types. The first is Premodernist revivalists. The characteristics of this type is a deep concern about the moral degradation that occurs in the people of Islam and advice to leave the practice of worship, which is not exemplified by the prophet and the companions, such as Sufism; abandoning the idea of the establishment and finality of traditional schools which are mostly followed by majority Muslims and trying to do ijtihad by reflecting on the meaning of the original message in the Qur'an and Al-Hadith; an appeal to dispose of a belief that is a burden such as a view of the destiny/divine nature found in popular religion; invitation to renew through force of weapons or jihad if needed.

The second is Classical modernists. The main characteristic of this group is to expand the scope of ijtihad according to current problems based on knowledge. The knowledge they obtain from the west is not forbidden to use as long as it is not against the main principles of Islam. Classical modernist thinkers are not allergic to the concepts of culture and science, even developing the concept of western thoughts to conform to Islamic values. The third is Neo-revivalists. This group manifests into groups that focus their work on organized social and political movements. Islam is their basis in conducting activities, yet they also cooperate with other groups to attain their goals. The last is Neo-modernists. Neo-modernist thinkers attempt to reinterpret Islamic teachings with a systemic method. This kind of reformists always tries to adjust aspects of Islam by interpreting Al-Qur'an and Hadith with new methodology other than one that is agreed by most scholars.

Revivalism and Transnational Islamist

The main factor of the existence of transnational Islamic organizations or movements is the desire to revive Islam as a comprehensive belief system. In particular, this can be viewed from several factors. First, the dissemination factors. Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country that helps many Muslim-majority countries through funding schools, scholarships, building mosques, and so on. However, such assistance is also to disseminate Wahhabism, the leading school in Saudi Arabia. Second, ideological factors. The primary driver of the transnational Islamic movement is to unite the people in
the same frame of ideology in the form of a global Islamic state. Hizb ut-Tahrir is formed by the second factor (Riaz, 2009).

The birth of HT is also inseparable from the significant events that underlie the current Islamic movement. The particular factor that stimulated its establishment was the Palestinian struggle for the annexation of Jerusalem by Israel in 1953 (Gul 2010). Somewhat different from Rahman (1985), Gul categorized HT as a neo-fundamentalist organization because instead of seizing power through a coup and imposing the application of Islamic laws, Hizb ut-Tahrir prioritized non-violent methods of da'wato change the mindset and public awareness so that people shall automatically accept the Islamic laws. With the kind of scheme that focuses on thinking and discussion, Hizb is attractive for young middle-class intellectuals. Not surprisingly, this Islamic movement then proliferated in universities.

Imtiaz Gul also contended that the first modern revival movement proceeded peacefully, intending to purify Muslims' faith who had been contaminated as a result of acculturation with Western philosophy and religious thought. Then, the occurrence of several critical significant events caused the Islamic reform movement to surpass and cross geographical boundaries, the occurrence of sectarian Islam and Hinduism in India, World War I, annexation of the Arabian peninsula by Europe, the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna, and the abolition of Ottoman caliphate by Mustafa Kemal in Turkey. The chaotic world situation due to war and the weakening of the Ottoman power of the caliphate made Muslim countries which were previously under the administration of the Ottoman Empire separated themselves into nation-states by ethnicity and nationalism (Gul, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia as a part of the transnational organization sought to restore the Islamic belief system and ideology into life by changing the way Muslims view the world and society through massive proselytization. The method of da'wa, recruitment, and regeneration of its members, as we observed, was centralistic, yet with necessary adjustments depending on the domestic situation of each country where it operates. Even though it functioned in Muslim-majority country, its Islamic ideology and political version considered a "non-dominant ideology." They competed with other Islamist groups, especially the local ones, in disseminating their belief.

In conclusion, HTI, as a division of HT, belongs to Islam's revival corridor in specific issues. Nevertheless, its denial to democracy as well as the political and belief systems built on it is its major challenge in evolving their ideology into concrete actions that is more acceptable, both by the public and the state.

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