

Paper Presented at

**AMSS 34th Annual Conference
“Muslims and Islam in the Chaotic Modern World:
Relations of Muslims among Themselves and with Others”**

**Cosponsored by
Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
September 30 – October 2, 2005**

**“Militant and Liberal Islam: The Unwanted Twin Children of
Modernization - Indonesia, a Case Study”**

**By: Achmad Munjid
(Ph.D. Candidate, Temple University, PA)**

Abstract

This paper deals with Islamic Militanism and Liberalism as particular phenomena resulted from complex interplay between Islam and modernity within the context of Indonesia. Here, the development of both phenomena is seen as highly conditioned and shaped, but not necessarily determined by modernization. No matter how sophisticated Soeharto's scenario of modernization project within his political framework, eventually Islam has its own story. As an effect of improvement in public education system, especially through massive development of SD Inpres (Presidential Directives Elementary School) in 1970s and obligatory course on religion for every school level, a significant socio-religious orientation among Indonesian Muslims took place in the following decades. As an extreme swing from the 'ugly traditional' past, many young well educated santri generation then becomes the main exponent of Islamic Liberalism. On the other hand, as redemptive endeavor of the 'sinful' past, many young abangan generation now becomes the most vehement defender of correct Islam, the Militant. Although both groups are shaped under the same roof of modernization, their different backgrounds led each to different direction in understanding and practicing Islam. Nevertheless, the present day contestation over the 'right' place of Islam in Indonesia between the Liberals and the Militants in fact has long root in the past and reflects

Muslims' theological, historical, socio-political and intellectual struggle before modernity. Accelerated by huge modernization project, the emergence of Militanism and Liberalism articulates the dynamics of Indonesian Muslims' negotiation with Islam, modern world, and their social reality. Dialectical interaction, both between Islam and modernity and between different groups of Muslim is used as the main point of view in this paper.

Introduction: the Old Tension, a Long Struggle

Presumably due to the strong influence of Sufism since its earliest period, Islam in Indonesia has always been considered ambiguously by different perspectives, including those within academia. On the one hand, in Indonesia Islam is generally claimed to have always demonstrated tolerant and inclusive faces¹. Historically embedded in a plural society, Indonesian Muslims are known for their open mindedness towards any 'wisdom' from outside worlds, including those of other world religious traditions, indigenous system of beliefs and modern ideologies. The history of nine Muslim saints (*wali songo*) in Java from an earlier period and the Islamic thought reform by contemporary figures such as Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and others, aptly illustrate this perspective. Many people even believe that because of these tolerant and inclusive characteristics, Indonesian Muslims, constituting the largest population among the Muslim worlds, could play a leading role in the future.

On the other hand, viewed from different perspective, Islam in Indonesia is frequently believed as suffering from deep syncretism. That way, Indonesian Muslims' practices and understanding of Islam are seen as less correct or even incorrect and thus in need of fundamental correction². Not surprisingly, as early as 19th century there have always been movements of purification that supposedly provide with the 'correct' Islam³. Without the due correction and purification, as the 'purificationist's assumption goes, Indonesian Muslims will be just as useless as foam on an ocean's surface. This is so

¹ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslim and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 14.

² Cf. Hefner, *Ibid*, p. 15.

³ Karel A. Steenbrink, *Beberapa Aspek tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke-19*, Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984, p. 33.

despite the fact that Indonesia has the largest population of Muslims amongst all of the Muslim countries. They are always uncared and play only peripheral role—which unfortunately, for this and other reasons, describe Indonesian Muslims’ situation to this day.

Clearly, the aforementioned description is not only a theoretical issue of different perceptions, but practically it is also a matter of social contestation. In fact, as happened in other similar cases, this purification or ‘correction’ movement eventually results in tension, even conflict amongst people. Indeed, some people fight for the ‘purification’ ideal and fight against their fellow Muslims. Social conflict in *Paderi* movement that took place between *kaum tua* (the old group) and *kaum muda* (the young group) in West Sumatra during the Dutch colonial era is a clear example⁴.

In the same line, *Muhammadiyah*—now the second largest Muslim mass-based organization with approximately 30 millions of membership—was initially founded in 1912 among other things for that purification purpose⁵. Its popular slogan was “to fight against ‘TBC’” (*tabayul, bid’a, (c)hurafa*—sociologically understood as superstition, ‘unlawful’ religious innovation and legend). Eventually, as a counter from among the ‘traditionalist’ group whose Islam is supposed to suffer from syncretism, NU (*Nahdatul Ulama*) was then founded in 1926. NU is now claimed to be the largest Muslim mass-based organization with approximately 45 millions members. Since then till not long time ago, rivalry between both organizations had been regular part of almost any public discourse amongst Muslims in the country. Meanwhile, before and after *Muhammadiyah*, there have always been dozens and more organizations/movements, either primarily socio-religious or also political ones founded for similar motive which in most cases then are followed by counter organizations or movements. As will be clear in the next discussion, this long chain of tension between the ‘purificationist’ and the

⁴ William R. Roff, “Kaum Muda—Kaum Tua: Innovation and Reaction Amongst the Malay, 1900-1941” in *Paper on Malayan History* edited by K.G. Tregonning, Singapore: Journal South East Asian History, 1962, pp. 162-192.

⁵ James L. Peacock, *Purifying the Faith: The Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian Islam*, Menlo Park, California: The Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Company, 1978.

‘traditionalist’ will contribute to the issue of militant versus liberal Islam in contemporary Indonesia.

To go further, when entering into political arena or dealing with political interest, often times, the main goal of such “correction” groups is either to make Indonesia an Islamic state or to implement Islamic *shari’a* in public life through state sponsorship. Only when manifested through state power will Islam be practiced correctly by Indonesian Muslims and thus spark the real truth of Islam for the rest of the people. That is the assumption. The longwinded pre and post-1945 Independence debate over Indonesian Constitution between the “nationalist” and the “*shari’atist*” groups clearly describe the issue⁶. The first group, which includes the NU as the representative of the traditionalist view point, insisted that as multicultural and multi-religious society Indonesia should be based on *Pancasila*⁷; i.e. secular principles formulated from the existing value systems, while the second group, where such ‘purificationist’ groups as *PERSIS*, *Masyumi* and others are included, insisted to make Islam as the foundation of the state⁸.

Needless to say, neither traditionalism nor purificationism is a matter of genealogy, but of ideology. This helps us to understand why, in a certain circumstance, like in the case of contemporary Indonesia, a similar group but with different motives and orientations belong to the ‘purificationists’ might come out from a very different background. What I am referring to here is Militant Islam. What makes the purificationist and the militant similar is a tendency to perceive Islam as separating line between them and the ‘others’ while assuming themselves superior as they claim to be the possessor of truth. Therefore, they deserve to make purification or correction of the

⁶ About the debate, read Ahmad Syafi’i Ma’arif, *Islam as the Basis of State: A Study of the Islamic Political Ideas as Reflected in the Constituent Assembly Debate in Indonesia*, PhD dissertation at Ohio University, Athens, 1982.

⁷ *Pancasila*, “The Five Pillars” is Indonesian state ideology, consisting of: 1) Belief in One Supreme God, 2) Justice and civility among the people, 3) Unity of Indonesia, 4) Democracy through deliberations and consensus among representatives, and 5) Social justice for all. These Five Principles are claimed as common platform among the elements of Indonesian society.

⁸ Various separatist movements on behalf of Islam in the earlier years after Independence, however, are not always related to this *shari’atist* group. Many are merely political discontentment by using Islam as mobilizing vehicle to recruit supporters.

‘others’ who, accordingly, are inferior and ‘false’. In fact, the so-called Militant Muslims usually are those who want to practice Islam as literally and formally as possible. In addition, they believe that everyone else should be like them.

However, there is a fundamental point that distinguishes the purificationist and the militant. The purificationist primarily orients their view inwardly, i.e. into the Muslim community, while the Militant orients their view outwardly. The ‘others’ for the purificationist generally means other Muslims with different understanding of Islam. Since their mission is to purify the Islamic teaching, non-Muslims are not really taken into their focus. Clearly, we can purify Islamic teaching only when Islam is there. Meanwhile, the ‘others’ for the Militant generally means non-Muslims. If the purificationist wants to ‘correct’ their fellow Muslims, the Militant wants to ‘correct’ the whole world that is different from them. Understandably, awareness of the presence of the ‘others’ in the sense of non-Muslim or non-Islamic world view is fundamental here. In relation to the emergence of Islamic Militanism in Indonesia, the aggressive and imperialistic modern western world as particularly brought into the country by modernization project called “national development”, clearly, is among the strongest factors.

Therefore, it is necessary now to look over the huge modernization project under Soeharto’s era as the background and determinant factor for the emergence of Militant Muslims in Indonesia. In that relation, Soeharto’s policies, especially in politics, religion and education will be carefully examined in details. Interestingly, as will be seen from the following discussion, it is this same situation that gives a way to the Liberal Muslim group to flourish in the country. Certainly, international factors do play significant role. However, due to the scope and limits of this paper, international factors are only assumed to have been implied through the modernization project that uses the West as the model.

On Behalf of Modernization, for the Sake of Power

For Soeharto, Indonesia under Soekarno (1945-1965) was a nightmare. With politics as the hard-core, Soekarno only led the Indonesians to busy themselves with foamy ‘nonsensical big words’ and slogans about revolution to finally end up with severe protracted ideological conflicts among each other. In reality, people’s miserable daily life was ignored: skyrocketing prices, huge money inflation, massive poverty and serious political segregation. Replacing Soekarno right in the critical moment after a failed 1965 bloody military coup d’etat, Soeharto wants not only to distinguish but also to disconnect himself from his predecessor. Fully backed up by the Indonesian army—i.e. Soeharto’s background—as well as supported by students who were so frustrated by Soekarno’s corrupt regime and by the middle class group, Soeharto wants to make a ‘fresh start’ for Indonesia. Therefore, he calls his era “New Order” in opposition to the previous one that he poorly labeled it as the “Old Order”.

According to him, political ‘frenzy’ ala Soekarno is now enough. Any ideological debate should be terminated to keep national unity and stability. Every potential and actual threat to these “unity and stability” needs to be paralyzed. Consequently, accused of being the main actor of the 1965 coup, communism is prosecuted “to its very roots”⁹. Although Muslims played major role in helping Soeharto to wipe out communism, disappointedly enough for many Muslim groups, in the end (political) Islam is perceived by Soeharto as equally dangerous as communism.

⁹Accused of being proponent, member or having any kind of association with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), some 500 thousand people were killed mostly by Indonesian military, many other were put to jail without any trial. In this communist extermination, Muslims played a major role. A Nahdhatul Ulama (NU)-affiliation youth organization called *GP Anshor* was even directly involved in this communist massacre. Until today, the Law prohibiting communism in Indonesia is still effective. An effort made by former President Abdurrahman Wahid to annul that Law, i.e TAP MPRS XXV/1966, had only provoked wide criticism and disagreements from various parts. As a reconciliation effort made by young NU generation, SYARIKAT (*Santri untuk Advokasi Rakyat*, Santri for People Advocacy) was founded in 2002 to handle human right issues especially among the so-called communist victims of 1965 tragedy in Indonesia.

Therefore, any form of Islamism is also exterminated¹⁰. Everyone should now accept only *Pancasila* as the final national ideology¹¹. Not to repeat the previous crisis, now political activity should be sterile from ideology¹².

In accordance with that, in 1973, Islamic political parties are forced to fuse into one political body called PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, Development United Party). Moreover, none of the previous strong Muslim political leaders is allowed to play a significant role both in political parties and social mass based organizations¹³. Many Muslims called this situation as the “depolitization of Islam”¹⁴. In the same manner, Christian and other smaller political parties are also forcefully fused into the other

¹⁰ Since Muslims are majority (85%), debate on the place and role of Islam in the modern Indonesian nation state came out since its Independence in 1945. Due to the emergency condition at that time, the debate was pending in the form of most compromising document called “Jakarta Charter”. During Soekarno’s era this topic was repeated for sometime and consumed so much energy. Rebellions asking for Islamic state for Indonesia or part of its territory even took place in certain areas. Impatient to the longwinded and time consuming debate about constitution, including the place of Islam in national life as a hottest topic, on July 5, 1959, finally Soekarno issued a decree by which he dissolved the parliament and named his government as ‘Guided Democracy’. In 1963 Soekarno also dissolved Masyumi, a very influential Islamic party and the second largest one in 1955 election, with the reason of the involvement of its leader, M. Natsir, in PRRI rebellion to establish Islamic state in Sumatra. Until that point, the fair debate on the place and role of Islam in modern Indonesian nation state actually was not properly finished. For the role of Islamic political party before Soeharto era, read Deliar Noer. *Partai Islam di Pentas Nasional, Kisah dan Analisis Perkembangan Politik Indonesia, 1945-1965* [Islamic Party in the National Stage, Story and Analysis about the Development of Politics in Indonesia, 1945-1965], Bandung, Mizan, 2000. Now, so cautious to this historical experience, although most major Muslim groups, including NU and Muhammadiyah, agreed that Indonesia should not be an Islamic State, Soeharto views that political Islam is a very potential threat to his power and he doesn’t want to open any slightest chance for them. With regard to Muslims’ major role in helping the extermination of communism in 1965, Soeharto’s hostile political attitude to Muslims in general is perceived as betrayal to them that result in long lasting frustration.

¹¹ During the formulation debate, as recorded in Jakarta Charter, the First Principle of Pancasila was followed by a clause reads “with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law”. Those “seven words” was finally removed, with longwinded and sometimes furious debate, for the sake of democracy. For debate on this issue during the earlier years of Indonesia, read B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971. On the role of Pancasila in contemporary Indonesia, read Douglas E Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995

¹² About the Muslim dilemma concerning the issue of Pancasila as the sole foundation read M. Rusli Karim. *Islam dan Konflik Politik Era Orde Baru*. Yogyakarta: MW Mandala, 1992.

¹³ Mohammad Roem, a former Prime Minister and chairman of Masyumi, the most influential Islamic party during Soekarno era was banned from any political activity by Soeharto. In one funeral ceremony, Soeharto even prohibited him from praying together with other funeral ceremony participants.

¹⁴ Karim, Ibid.

political body; i.e. PDI (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*, Indonesian Democratic Party). One only other political party that is allowed to exist is *Golkar*, namely the government party that then becomes the ruling party for more than 30 years. To prevent any political problem, participation of the people is limited to a minimum by a program called “floating mass”. Also, in order to foreclose any potential threat to Soeharto’s political stability, key person of almost every organization is only allowed to either be appointed by Soeharto himself, or at least, politically accepted by the state¹⁵. For what? For the “national unity and stability” as the sine qua non for the success of national development project. With that weak civil society so exhausted for a long time by political problem and economic depression, almost no one or group can be expected to control power exercised by the state. Therefore, the seed of Soeharto’s authoritarianism grew up rapidly and extensively.

Furthermore, instead of politics, now the orientation of Indonesian national life is economy. Instead of ideology and debating over abstract words, people are encouraged to participate in concrete programs of the national development called PELITA (*Pembangunan Lima Tahun*, Five-Yearly Development Program). If in the past Soekarno was very critical of capitalism and Western countries, Soeharto makes any possible cooperation with them. Every door is now opened to World Bank, ADB, UNDP, IMF, and other international monetary organizations as well as many capitalist countries. The reason is more than obvious: his ambitious national development project needs a lot of money. Needless to say, Soeharto’s “eliminate politics, grow the economy” agenda is part of developmentalism that is widely spread among the third world countries during that period. From its orientation to continued linear progress, expansion of production, supremacy of technology, and rational design of social order,

¹⁵ Abdurrahman Wahid, later became the fourth president, perhaps, is among the unwanted person due to his frequent public criticism to Soeharto. When Abdurrahman was three times reelected as chairman of NU (1984-1999), Soeharto tried any effort to topple him down, but without any success. His case is almost exceptional, though.

developmentalism as applied by Soeharto, certainly, is a version of what James C. Scott called as “high modernism”¹⁶

In order to fully guarantee the success of his national development and secures his power, Soeharto does not only tightly control political life. He also designs and applies huge social engineering by mapping out, structuralizing and rationalizing every aspect of social life. For example, each group of people either based on the category of age, sex, profession, motive or others is provided with a particular organization that is structurally centralized. Any existing organization for the same category or purpose should be fused into the state-sponsor institution. So, there is a central organization for labors, peasants, fishermen, teachers, veterans, Islamic scholars, engineers, lawyers, journalists, medical doctors, youth groups, women, retirements, businesspersons, artists etc. Again, *Pancasila*, massively socialized through official indoctrination by the state, is also obliged to be the sole foundation’ for every of these organizations¹⁷. Jakarta Charter, a historical document with a chance for the return of political Islam is foreclosed for any political discussion.

Understandably, Muslims react in different ways to Soeharto’s regime that is now clearly authoritarian and so powerful. In relation to *Pancasila* as the sole foundation for each organization, including religious organization, most of the major Muslim organizations, such as NU and *Mubammadiyah*, can accept it without serious institutional problem. Some, however, like PII (*Pelajar Islam Indonesia*, Indonesian Muslim Student) openly rejects and chooses to dissolve itself and becomes ‘underground’ movement. Other group, like HMI (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*, Muslim Student Association) experiences protracted internal conflict and finally split into two groups: one accepts, the other rejects the “sole foundation” idea. Nevertheless, under Soeharto’s powerful and very repressive military regime, eventually most Muslim groups concentrate themselves

¹⁶ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State, How Certain Scheme to Improve Human Condition have Failed*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998, p. 89.

¹⁷ In 1978, People National Assembly (MPR) issue a decree about this official national indoctrination of *Pancasila* called P4. An official institution, called BP7, was established to handle the huge job of indoctrination.

to ritual and social programs or education without entering political arena¹⁸. In fact, as noticed by Olaf Schumann, during that time, religious activities would be supported by the government only when it is advantageous to national economic development¹⁹.

The Seeds of Liberal and Militant Islam

Nevertheless, for Nurcholish Madjid, who later becomes the most important and outspoken 'locomotive' of Indonesian Islamic thought reform movement, Soeharto's political behavior towards Muslims is "a blessing in disguise". Indeed, for him, Indonesian Muslims have spent too much time and energy for politics since the 1945 Independence. What is the result, however? More than just a deep political segregation that brings Muslims to no where but their powerlessness under Soeharto's authoritarianism, political Islam, in fact, does not suit the plurality of Indonesia. Now, the time has arrived for Muslims to understand and to apply Islamic values more substantially in social life beyond politics, beyond short term interests and contestation for the sake of Islamic banners. Hence, since 1970s he promotes what is known as "Islam yes, Islamic political party no". Right in the era when many people are so haunted by the danger of secularization as the consequence of modernization, he publicly says that secularization is necessary, but it should be understood to wisely treat anything secular as secular, including politics, and anything profane as profane. Clearly, he does not adopt the ideology of secularism. He also consistently argues that Indonesian Muslims should have no problem with *Pancasila* as the best common platform that was creatively formulated by their founding fathers to meet the need of Indonesian multicultural and multi-religious society.

To encourage Muslims' participation in the national development project—and not just being passive object of it due to either political, sociological or theological problems—he also massively promote the idea that Islam is definitely compatible with

¹⁸ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Kemoderenan dan Keindonesiaan*. Bandung: Mizan, 1998.

¹⁹ Olaf Schumann, "Christian-Muslim Encounter in Indonesia" in Yvonne Yasbeck Haddad., *Christian-Muslim Encounters*. Jacksonville: University Press of Florida, 1995, p. 291.

science, the idea of progress and modernity. For Madjid, Islam and modernity is not alternative or counter to each other. When modernization is understood as to think and to act in accordance with natural law, then it is a historical necessity; it is a divine order”²⁰. Furthermore, Islam in itself inherently is always a ‘modern’ religion. In order to provide Muslims with theological foundation for their social interaction in a plural society, Nurcholish Madjid who is well trained both in *pesantren*, i.e. traditional Islamic schooling system, and the Western system of education, then also formulates a widely praised and criticized idea of “Islamic inclusive theology”. For many people, Madjid indeed has given a strong coherence intellectual response to Muslims’ socio-political peripheral situation by means of establishing ethical and moral foundation for the national development project²¹. Together with *Paramadina* Foundation that he founded in 1986 and later becomes a popular center for Islamic studies especially among the Muslim middle class groups in urban area, in fact he has laid a very important foundation for the development of Liberal Islam in Indonesia.

In the same line with Nurcholish Madjid is Abdurrahman Wahid, a three time-elected chairman of NU (1984-1999) and the fourth President of Indonesia. If Madjid’s audience is mainly Muslim middle class of urban areas, Abdurrahman Wahid who comes from a very strong background of *pesantren* speaks mainly on behalf of and works with traditionalist Muslims. Being aware of his people’s potential and handicaps before the national development project he incessantly and critically articulate the challenges and problems of modernization that should be properly overcome by the Muslims and the government altogether. While some Muslims promote the purification of Islam, which often times means anti-cultural, if not Arabization, he promotes the idea of “Indigenization of Islam”. For him, the adoption of local culture in a proper way is necessary if Islam will be an integral part of Muslims’ life, instead of isolating them from reality.

²⁰ Madjid, Nurcholish, op. cit, pp 173.

²¹ Panggabean, Samsurizal. “Enerji Utopia Nurcholish Madjid” in *Ulumul Qur’an* Journal, Number 1, Volume IV, 1993. p. 34.

In response to general negative judgment, including from most bureaucrats that Muslim traditionalist are backward, ignorant, static minded, parochialistic and both economically and administratively poor, Wahid always critically reminds the government that modernization should be implemented in accordance with the need, values and culture of the society. In other words, a bottom up, rather than top down social engineering. Being aware of huge and long-term social cost result from New Order's paradigm of modernization, together with many Muslim leaders and activists, then in early 1970s he founded P3M, an NGO that offers alternative social project of empowerment especially for *pesantren* people. Moreover, in response to the political Islam, he argues that instead of being taken as the only one, for Indonesian context, Islam should be considered as one among the major resources for the establishment of the nation. Instead of being a counter disintegrative factor in the national life, Islam should be directed to be a complementary factor²². While many political Muslims group cry for their rights as majority, Wahid openly keep criticizing any sectarian tendency among Muslims, actively involves in inter-religious programs and tirelessly speaks for the rights of minority on behalf of democracy. Not only he annulled the wide spread assumption about the incompatibility of traditional Muslim world with modernity, as Barton records, Abdurrahman Wahid's Islam, by definition, is dynamic, cosmopolite, fundamentally tolerant and egalitarian²³.

Together with people like Ahmad Wahib, Harun Nasution, Munawir Sadzali, Djohand Effendi, Dawam Rahardjo and others, Madjid and Wahid are among the first generation of modern Indonesian Muslim thinkers who have nourished the seeds of Islamic Liberalism during the first half of Soeharto era in 1970s. As seen from the previous discussion, Islamic Liberalism here emerges as Muslims' struggle with modernity. Challenges and responses from both sides depart from down-to-earth issues and situations. As reflected in Madjid's and Wahid's ideas, in responding to modernity,

²² Abdurrahman Wahid. "Massa Islam dalam Kehidupan Bernegara dan Berbangsa" [Muslim Mass in the National Life] in *Prisma*, Extra Edition, 1984, pp. 3-9.

²³ Greg Barton, "Pengantar" [Introduction] in Abdurrahman Wahid, *Prisma Pemikiran Gus Dur*, Yogyakarta, LKiS, 2000, p. xxx.

exponents of Liberal Islam came out with genuine interpretation of universal values of Islam that are deeply rooted in its tradition which is also compatible with principles of modernity at the same time. It is also worth noting here that while this non-political Islamic thought reform is favorable to Soeharto's policy on Islam, it has nothing to do with political support for him, or at least it did not mean for that purpose. As seen from later development among the Indonesian Muslims, when Soeharto was weakening in power, on the contrary, these seeds initially spread by Madjid and Wahid began to grow as significant contribution for the establishment of civil society in the country.

On the other side, also as a reaction to modernization project launched by Soeharto's government, the seeds of Islamic Militanism are growing. Unlike Islamic Liberalism that has clearer intellectual foundation, however, Islamic Militanism based more on political activism. For these Muslim groups that inherit or at least are inspired by political Islam from the past both nationally and internationally, Soeharto and his New Order's policy are perceived as very serious threat both theologically and politically. Theologically, separation of ritual Islam and political Islam will only make the religion loses its essence as 'a total system of life'. Moreover, historically, that is an exact adoption from the Dutch's colonial strategy in conquering Indonesian Muslims in the past. When Islam is practiced merely as ritual, it can do nothing for the decadent world. And if Muslims keep silent about this, not only that the world will not be saved at all, but Muslims themselves will be punished by God on the Day of Judgment due to their ignorance to the true teaching of Islam. In that relation, politically, Muslims who have been already weak and kept made so by the *kuffar* (infidels) for hundreds of years are now successfully marginalized even when they are in the majority.

The existing political situation of Indonesian Muslims at that time speaks very clearly about this. Although they are in the majority, they only play minor role in national life. Economy, politics, bureaucracy and most of strategic positions are in the hand of non-Muslims²⁴. It is well known that during the first half of Soeharto's era

²⁴ This fact is understandable because, sociologically and historically, the well educated group during the colonial period and several decades after independence are Christians, while trading network since

Indonesian Muslims suffered from “numeric majority but mentally minority syndrome”. What made everything worse is the fact that CSIS (Center for Strategies and International Studies), established in 1971 and organized mainly by Chinese and Catholics in Jakarta, was ‘unofficially’ appointed by Soeharto as his think-tank to handle the economic policies for the national development project. It is widely known that many influential figures behind Soeharto such as Ali Murtopo, Soedjono Hoemardani, L.B. Moerdani and others are CSIS guys. Seeing all of these political ‘disorder’, according to these Muslim groups, something has to be done if the worse condition suffered by the Muslims not to happen. This means to fight against the *kuffar*, i.e. the non-Islamic powers. Only when Muslims have power in their hand, their rights will be fulfilled justly.

Meanwhile, priority of the New Order’s national development in big business is other serious problem seen by the militant Muslims. Not only that it just widens the social gap between the rich and the poor and gives privileges to the elite, who are mostly Chinese and Christians, the so-called “trickle down effect” approach of development has only invited massive and rapid Westernization and secularization to Indonesia as a Muslim country. Again, according to them, when seen as interrelated with the increase of unemployment, crime rate, huge corruption in the bureaucracy, crisis of values among the youth, strange liberal ideas and behaviors, and various social dislocation problems as consequences of the rapid change, actually all of these are an intentional long-term conspiracy by the enemies of Islam to destroy Islam and the Muslims²⁵. As a matter of fact, for many Muslims, clash consciousness with the West is now experienced as much more real than ever.

As a result, some small militant Muslim groups finally were involved in open confrontation with Soeharto’s regime: Komando Jihad (1977), Jama’ah Imran Movement

long time is always in the hand of Chinese ethnic group. Up until 1990s Soeharto was closer to these groups rather than to Muslims.

²⁵ During this period rumor about systematic long-run Christianization of Indonesia supported by Western countries such as U.S., Canada, and U.K. is widely spread. See, for example, Lukman Hakiem. *Fakta&Data Usaha-Usaha Kristenisasi di Indonesia* [Facts&Data on Christianization Efforts in Indonesia]. Jakarta: Media Dakwah Magazine, 1991, pp.53-59.

(1981)²⁶, Tanjung Priok riot (1984), GPK Warsidi Lampung (1989) and some other smaller groups spreading mainly in Java and Sumatra. Some of those groups have certain connection with similar movement in other Muslim countries such as *Ibwan al-Muslimun* (IM, Muslim Brotherhood), founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna in Egypt, and *Hizbut Tabrir* (HT) founded in 1958 by Taqiyuddin An-Nabhani in Jerusalem, but some does not. With or without international connection, however, generally speaking, they share the same commonalities. Those include the argument that Islam is the only ultimate total system of life, the necessity to establish Islamic state or, at least, Islamic *shari'a* by the State as the only solution to solve complicated problems of human being and to organize themselves by precisely imitating the practices of the Prophet in order to successfully counter the *kuffar* who never want Muslims to regain their victory.

Nevertheless, Soeharto's powerful regime is beyond all their power capacity. Accused of being organizing any effort to establish Islamic state and reject the idea of *Pancasila* as the sole foundation, they are effectively depressed by the government. Soeharto even used these cases of militant Muslims as a show off force to demonstrate to the people of what any dissident movement might get under his hands. Many people were killed in the 'engineered riots', sent to jails or escaped to other countries. Apparently, Soeharto has effective strategy to repress those Muslim Militant groups and cut of their networking. However, as seen soon after he was toppled down from power, while the old roots were paralyzed for a while, the new emerging Muslim militant power were prepared to come from different direction.

Education: Redemption of the Past, Contestation over the Future

Now, it is interesting to examine what is happening in public education. Supposedly to totally combat against communism, the New Order regime created a

²⁶ Many sources convincingly show that these two groups were actually created by, or at least infiltrated and then made used by Soeharto's military regime. Here CSIS is supposed to play a very significant role. See, for example, Al-Chaidar. *Bencana Kaum Muslimin di Indonesia (1980-2000)* [Disasters of Muslims in Indonesia 1980-2000], Yogyakarta: Wihdah Press, 2000.

policy obliging every individual to adopt one of the five official acknowledged religions; i.e. Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, or Buddhism²⁷. When, thanks to the “oil boom”, in early 1970s the government made substantial improvement in public education, among the others, by launching compulsory education program and building thousands of elementary school called “SD Inpres” in every sub-district area throughout the country²⁸, the policy on obligatory adoption of religion is further implemented at schools. Religion becomes a compulsory subject from elementary to high school, even up to university level.

In relation to our topic discussion, two important things are worth noting here. First, due to the compulsory course on religion—especially Islam in this case—, students coming from the “nominal Muslim” background, or “*abangan*”²⁹, are systematically made more and more familiar to Islam. Previously, the number of nominal Muslim group before and during 1970s was much larger than their fellow practicing Muslims, or *santri*, but after that period the number tends to turn the other way around. At the same time, unintentionally these students coming from nominal Muslim background are ‘detached’ from their parent’s traditional system of beliefs that are much closer to Hinduism or other local religions. For sure, due to the limitations of learning time and the available teachers, those *abangan* students’ understanding on Islam is somewhat limited in comparison to their fellow *santri* students who enjoy regular, systematic and intensive learning on Islam both from daily life practices of their family and from the mosques or *pesantren*. Psychologically, on the side of *abangan* students this fact leaves a sense of being less Muslim. Nevertheless, in the later period, this overturn

²⁷ Confucianism, in fact, exists and was acknowledged as a religion during Soekarno’s era, but, strangely enough, although Chinese ethnic group enjoyed various privileges under Soeharto, it is not admitted as a religion during the New Order regime. Together with various local religions, they faced problem of survival during that time.

²⁸ This initiative is based on a special Inpres (Instruksi Presiden) or Presidential Directives. Therefore the schools are called “SD Inpres”

²⁹ About the discussion of the word *abangan* and *santri* that will be frequently used henceforth, read Clifford Geertz. *The Religion of Java*. New York: The Free Press, 1964. Of course, *abangan* group in its strictest sense is a Javanese phenomenon. While keeping other non-Javanese ethnicity in mind, I will argue that what happened to Javanese as the largest and the most influential ethnic group in politics and culture will have a very substantial, or even ‘exemplary’, effect to the rest.

among the *abangan* children certainly becomes a very supportive factor for the process of *santrinization* (purer Islamization) and the Islamic resurgence in Indonesia.

Second, since the majority of the population is Muslims, particularly the “practicing” Muslim (*santri*) take benefit from this compulsory education program. It was for the first time that Muslims could enter modern secular education system in a massive and affordable way. Before that period, practicing Muslim families would send their children mostly to *pesantran*³⁰ to get better education. Now, chances to make vertical mobilization, such as opened by the need of huge number of teachers—especially position for course on Islam as a compulsory subject—both to fulfill the large opportunities provided by the sudden increase of schools numbers and to replace the fired communist teachers, become one very interesting offer for many practicing Muslim families to enter secular system of education.

As a result, according to William R. Liddle³¹, over the following period, the number of educated “practicing” Muslims increases substantially. In this relation, as an initial consequence of national development in public education, according to Nurcholish Madjid³², in the late 1970s—in fact, especially in 1980s—, for the first time Indonesia had a significant number of university graduates, most of whom had “practicing” Muslim backgrounds. By the 1990s some of those graduates had come to occupy various significant positions in bureaucracy, while the others had become established professionals. At the same time, universities are now flooded by Muslim students, both from nominal and practicing Muslim backgrounds of the “SD Inpres” generation³³. In short, thank to education, a new force of Muslim middle class is being formed accordingly.

³⁰ *Pesantran* is mainly Islamic traditional boarding school where students learn only Islam. Most of them are not acknowledged by the government in term of modern education system. About the difference, relation, tension and development of Islamic traditional and modern system of education in Indonesia, read Karel Steenbrink. *Pesantran, Madrasah, Sekolah*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 1986.

³¹ William R Liddle. “Skripturalisme Media Dakwah: Suatu Bentuk Pemikiran dan Aksi Politik Islam Masa Orde Baru” in *Ulumul Qur’an*. No. 3, Volume IV, 1993, p. 61.

³² See Nurcholish Madjid, *op. cit.*, p.81.

³³ It is interesting to note that, perhaps due to a long socio-historical and cultural backgrounds, when university level is affordable, many practicing Muslim families send their children mainly to IAIN

In line with this massive educational improvement, one thing is worth pondering. The way Soeharto's New Order defines the past as a long story of collective memory of trauma: bloody military coup of 1965, Soekarno's corrupt regime, brutal occupation by the Japan in 1942-1945, inhuman Dutch colonialism for hundreds of years and so on; and they way it defines the future: i.e. modernity is the only rational choice to a definite brighter future, have significant impact on this SD Inpres generation's perception in general. This is applicable both on their perception of history and on the other. As a product of education system shaped by the New Order they also suffered from some kind of traumatic outlook to the past and superlative dream over the future. This is then manifested differently depends on whether someone is coming from *santri* or *abangan* backgrounds.

For those who come from *santri* background, modernization has always been stigmatizing them via their modern schooling system that being *santri* is backward, static, poor, uneducated, unorganized, sectarian, narrow minded. In short, now they learn that being *santri* is so ugly in front of modernity. Therefore, this should be overcome in one way or another. In the meantime, those who come from *abangan* background learn from their schools that being *abangan* means irreligious, ignorant, faithless, transgressor, superstitious, or polytheist. In short being *abangan* means being sinful people. As we shall see in the further discussion, these two perceptions of the past from different background among the young Muslims of SD Inpres Generation eventually lead to a contestation over the future.

Before that, however, now, let us go back first to Soeharto's politics. By the 1990s, a fundamental change in Indonesian political constellation took place due to the shift of various elements of the society as a result of the national development project as well as influence from outside factors. Not as expected, New Order now had lost much of its political power and stability. Soeharto's "growth oriented" developmentalism as the pillar of the order was decaying for many reasons. Instead of real social economic

(State Islamic University under Department of Religious Affairs that has close relation to *pesantren* tradition), while those of nominal Muslims background will send their children to secular universities.

betterment for all, economic gaps between the elite and the rest of the people grew wider and became irreversible. Despite its stable appearance, the regime's economic structure, as proven later, actually was very fragile. At the same time, huge diverse businesses run by each of Soeharto's children grew mainly based on favoritism now became very serious handicap for the health of Indonesian national economic system. Corruption, collusion and nepotism resulted from the long history of ill-managed bureaucracy became parts of the national governmental system that led to highly cost economy, feudal "yes, Sir" culture and political totalitarianism. Above all, international debt to the capitalist countries also became quadrupled.

Therefore, as he began to lose support from the military³⁴, President Soeharto, who is a pragmatist politician, then tried to win the new emerging political force of the Muslim groups³⁵. In accordance with this, long efforts made by such Muslim thinkers such as Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid, as have been discussed in previous part of this paper, also made Soeharto felt more secure with Islam, at least not as cautious as before.

Soeharto's government then more actively sponsored many Islamic projects, especially the non-political ones. Thousands of "Pancasila" mosques funded by *Yayasan Amal Bakti Muslim Pancasila (YABMP)*, one of Soeharto's foundations, were built all over Indonesia. Soeharto also launched a "1000 *da'i* (Muslim preacher) Movement" by sending a thousand of Muslim preachers to transmigration areas³⁶. Various festivals on Islam, such as *Istiqlal Festival* and National Qur'an Recital Competition, are also celebrated annually or periodically. In effect, Islam in general enjoyed more freedom to

³⁴ Due to the betterment of education among the Muslims, rivalry between the Christians and Muslims within the Indonesian military was evident at that time. On February 28, 1988, LB Moerdani, a smart and visionary Catholic general with huge influence within the Indonesian military was abruptly removed by Try Sutrisno, a young emerging Muslim military star and Soeharto's close adjutant. Read Ben Anderson, "Current Data on the Indonesian Military Elite" in *Indonesia*, Vol 48, October 1989, pp.65-96.

³⁵ Liddle, op.cit.

³⁶ This movement aimed at two directions: 1) to improve a designed religious life among the Muslim transmigrants in their new settlement outside Java and 2) to persuade more people (including those with more knowledge about Islam) to participate in transmigration program, as a means to handle population problem and huge disparity between Java and outside it. Obviously, this is part of Soeharto's social engineering.

grow. Parliament was getting greenish, symbolizing Muslim domination. In accordance with all of the above mentioned, ICMI (all-Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association), a real articulation of Islamic resurgence among the educated Muslim middle class, was founded in 1990. With full support from the President, Habibie, one of Soeharto's closest ministers who then became the third Indonesian president, was appointed as chairman for this association. Soeharto himself became its distinguished advisor³⁷. Political pendulum now swings favorably to Muslims.

A spirit of Islamic resurgence is observable everywhere. More than in other places in the country, Islamic resurgence is so transparent in certain universities and among the more well-educated groups. Interestingly, a vehement zeal for being correctly Islamic, being true Muslims and the spirit to practice Islam totally in every aspect of life appear much stronger among the Muslim students of secular-state universities. During the fasting month of *Ramadhan*, many corners of secular campuses will be crowded by students who are busy themselves with discussion, studies, seminars, workshops, and various festivals on Islam. In fact, by that time, as a result of extensive translation, books, ideas, and even movement method and organizational structure of militant Muslim thinkers like al-Banna and al-Mawdudi are very popular among Muslim student circles in most reputable "secular-state" universities such as UI (Universitas Indonesia), UGM (Universitas Gadjah Mada), ITB (Institut Teknologi Bandung), IPB (Institut Pertanian Bogor), UNPAD (Universitas Pajajaran), UNAIR (Universitas Airlangga) and others. The word "Islamic" was used extensively to demonstrate the embodiment of the spirit "being total Muslim" or to practice Islam correctly and totally. Since this period the so-called Islamic journalism, Islamic fashion, Islamic press, Islamic food, Islamic sport, Islamic music and so on became part of their new discourse. A certain typical 'Islamic' way of dressing, addressing peer group, behaving, and the using of particular vocabularies are intentionally used as a mode of presence.

As indicated in the previous section, when carefully investigated, most of these groups' members so energized by Islamic resurgence in fact come from "SD

³⁷ On the dynamics of this period, read for example, Hefner, op.cit.

Inpres generation” of “nominal Muslim” families who, psychologically, are kind of suffering from being “less Muslim” syndrome. Why is that so? Uprooted from their parent’s tradition, on the one hand, and with minimum knowledge about Islam provided by the formal educational institution, on the other hand, those “SD Inpres” generation from nominal Muslim families now become “eager Muslims” in the era of Islamic resurgence. Furthermore, their eagerness in being “true Muslim” grows in a situation where social and political reality is shaped by the New Order in such a way as described in the previous part of this article. In this sense, I will argue that more than just merely eager in being true Muslims, these young people actually are also an “anxious generation”.

They are anxious about their past: their childhood, their parents’ way of life, neighborhood where they grew up that are seen as far from the “true guidance” of Islam. Some of them would refer to it as a *zaman jabiliyya* (period of darkness). They are anxious about the present, i.e. their social life that suffers from so many complicated problems: “moral decadency”, economic inequality, massive corruption, political authoritarianism. Meanwhile, the Muslim people, supposedly ordered to “enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong”³⁸, are so powerless and even tend to ignore their reality. Islam as they see around is almost merely a set of empty ritual. They are also anxious about the future: in a very highly competitive and limited job market, what will be left for them? Who will marry them? Where is their place in this uncertain rapid change of social life? A luxury predicate attached to university students as “the future leaders” frequently just add up to their accumulative burden of anxiety. Yes, theoretically, with higher education they are expected to have more accesses to make vertical mobilization. However, in practice, higher education now frequently means disguise unemployment.

Shortly speaking, they are a generation in dream of immediate exact solution for a very complicated situation. Right here, Islam, being formulated in such a modern

³⁸ Taken from al-Qur’an , chapter III: 110 that is frequently used to describe the true nature of Muslims

and ‘certain’ way as a means of analysis and solution for the reality, as promoted by Hassan al-Banna and Abul a’la al-Mawdudi meet their need appropriately.

With secular campuses as the center and student as the main proponents, in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Ujung Pandang and other biggest cities in Indonesia, Islamic resurgence spread rapidly to other elements of society. At UGM Yogyakarta, “*Jama’ah Shalabuddin*”, an intra-curricular organization for Muslim students became an important center of Islamic *da’wa* both inside and outside the campus. Around “*Shalabuddin*” so many smaller groups of students are intensively and systematically study and practice Islam ‘as correct as possible’. Usually this small group consists of five to seven people under a mentor. The mentor him or herself has other peer group of higher level with almost the same number of people. Books by Hassan al Banna, Abul a’la al-Maududi, Sayyid Quthub, Sayyid Tsabiq, Sai’d Hawwa, Fathi Yakan etc are used as sources of their module. That is also the case with “*Masjid Salman*” for ITB in Bandung and similar organization for other secular campuses.

A parallel development in Senior High School campuses also takes place throughout the country. Islamic section, a sub-organization under OSIS, the only intra-organization for High School students allowed by the government, became center for learning Islam intensively³⁹. During ‘summer vacation’ many alumni from each High School who are now going to universities will go back to their alma mater to share their spirit and experience of being ‘true young Muslim generation’ in a short course program well known as “*Pesantren Kilat*”. Since the 1990s most urban mosques activities and programs are dominated by the role of these young eager Muslims.

In general, this Islamic resurgence phenomenon is not an organized movement. Despite informal coordination related to current issue, information sharing, temporary joint program etc, so far there is no structural organization among those movements within universities and high school campuses and outside them at national

³⁹ In early 1991 Department of Education finally agree to let women Muslim student who wanted to wear *jilbab* (veil) to do so as a response to the increase of protests against the previous prohibition for the reason of school uniform.

level. However, so many people share the same dream: How to translate Islam in their life as solution for problems.

In the later development, I would argue, those young Muslim so energized by Islamic resurgence can be classified into three main groups: 1) the sympathizer, 2) the activists and 3) the militants. The first group, the sympathizer, refers to people who are involved mainly in surface level of the movement. Their involvement can be only for few years during their study time or when they have immediate connection to it. Having found 'normal' or even established place in the society after finishing school and got reasonable job, these people usually will return to 'normal life'. The dream of Islamic resurgence and motivation to translate Islam totally in social life is somewhat fading away from their mind.

The second group refers to those who are intensively involved in the Islamic resurgence movement during and after their study. These young people usually keep maintaining their relation among their friends, creating sustainable programs and expanding network to wider scope of society as their serious long effort to realize an exemplary Islamic society. Thank to their persistent effort then emerged Islamic bank, Islamic press, Islamic businesses, Islamic culture and other Islamic network. As soon as Soeharto collapsed from power in 1998 these young activists established Islamic (Welfare) Justice Party (PKS) with a great success in the following two general elections, especially among the well-educated young people in urban area⁴⁰. Instead of Islamic State, their main project is the creation of Islamic society. So far they are well known for their excellent performance in doing "high politics".

The last group, the militants, refers to young vehement people who are so eager not only to create Islamic society, but also to formally implement Islamic Law

⁴⁰ Since its inception, especially thank to their popularity in high standard morality, social humility and concrete programs for the people, PKS rapidly gain sympathy and influence in Indonesian politics. Only in a brief period PKS—being the sixth biggest party with more than 8 millions of voters in 2004 election—can orbit one of its leader, Hidayat Nur Wahid (44) as the chairman of the People Consultative Assembly or MPR, the Indonesian Senate. Visit their website here: www.pk-sejahtera.org

(*shari'a*), with or without the establishment of an Islamic State in Indonesia⁴¹. For them, only when Muslims implement Islamic Law based on al-Qur'an and Sunnah, those complicated problems will disappear. Otherwise, Muslims will never escape from their current miserable life and remain become the loser. Different from the second group who has no immediate structural or organizational connection with outside or even international movement, most of the militant Muslim groups have global connection with the similar movements in other countries.

To mention a few of those connections are *Hizbut Tabrir*, *Jama'at Tabligh*, *Darul Arqam*, *Ihwan al Muslimun*, and various *Salafist* groups that were originally established in Palestine, India, Malaysia, Egypt and various Middle East countries consecutively. Each of those groups has chapter with significant followers in many larger cities in Indonesia. *Forum Komunikasi Ablussunnah wal Jama'ah* (FKAWJ) founded in 1998, *Laskar Jihad*, founded in 2000, *Majelis Mujabiddin Indonesia* (MMI) founded in 2000, *Pesantren Ngruki* in Surakarta, Central Java, and FPI (*Front Pembela Islam*, Islam Defender Front) founded in 1998 in Jakarta are other strong Militant groups with less identifiable international connections⁴².

In addition to bringing in the promise of immediate exact solution of every problem in Indonesia, those groups also bring about the global issue borne by Muslim worlds. Direct encounter with veterans of Afghanistan war and Moro Muslims movement in Philippines among some of their groups' members, for example, provide with the concreteness of the threat to Muslims and thus emergency need of their involvement. Like mushroom during the rainy season in tropical fertile land, these militant groups grow rapidly by the end after the New Order regime collapsed in 1998.

⁴¹ However, it does not mean that young "nominal Muslim" or *abangan* is identical with Militanism. What I mean here is that we can find some kind of tendency of being Muslim militant among young nominal Muslim background today. In this regard, it is also important to distinguish *pesantren* into two categories, namely 'cultural' *pesantren* and 'political' *pesantren*. The second one is political in the sense of adopting the idea of Islamic state as a necessary condition for an Islamic society, an idea that is absent among the first category. In relation to Islamic militanism, the second *pesantren* plays important role in providing with leadership.

⁴² Giora Eliraz, *Islam in Indonesia, Modernism, Radicalism and the Middle East Dimension*, Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2004.

Big cities like Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Solo, Surabaya, Medan, Palembang and Muslim-Christian conflict area in Eastern Indonesia become the main enclaves of their movements. Their massive publications, like books, leaflets, and weekly bulletins published by *Wibdah Press* and *Al-Izzah Press* as well as *Suara Hidayatullah Magazine*⁴³, *Sabili Magazine*⁴⁴, *As-Salafi Magazine*⁴⁵ and *Al-Islam* and *Al-Wa'ie* Journals, just to mention a few of them, very clearly proclaim their militant movement campaign. Many of those aforementioned groups, especially those with link to the Middle East, can be categorized, as Hefner calls them, “neo-fundamentalist or neo salafist” with strong belief that Israel and US are leading international conspiracy to destroy Islam and therefore armed *jihād* is the needed response from the Muslims⁴⁶. For them, the enemy is so clear, here, now and offensive.

To have a clearer picture about Islamic militanism in Indonesia, I will give a brief illustration about MMI or *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia*⁴⁷, one of the strongest militant Muslim groups. This organization was established in Yogyakarta, Indonesian center of education par excellence. Through the first and second Mujahidin Congress held in Yogyakarta and Solo attended by thousands of participants, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir (67) was elected twice (2000-2003 and 2003-2008) as its leader⁴⁸. There is no accurate data on its membership today. Nevertheless, predicted from its branches that spread in

⁴³ <http://www.hidayatullah.com/>

⁴⁴ <http://www.sabili.co.id/>

⁴⁵ <http://salafy.cjb.net/>

⁴⁶ Hefner, Robert W. *Civil Pluralism Denied? The New Media and Jihadi Violence in Indonesia*. Unpublished paper, 2002, p.6.

⁴⁷ www.majelis.mujahidin.or.id

⁴⁸ Ba'asyir himself, a graduate from al-Irsyad University in 1963, is the central figure of *pesantren* Ngruki, Solo, Central Java that he established in 1972. (Ngruki is an example of what I call as 'political' *pesantren*.) He got 9 years jail in 1983 due to his opposition to Pancasila as the sole foundation and then escaped to Malaysia in 1985 while his case was still in process. Since then he was actively involved in *da'wah* both in Malaysia and Singapore. He returned to Indonesia in 1999 and organizes MMI. Now he is arrested under accusation as the head of Jama'ah Islamiah (JI), an allegedly affiliation or partner group of al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia, and his role as the intellectual actor behind Bali bombing and other series of bombings afterward in Indonesia. About his short biography, see <http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/narasi/2004/04/17/nrs,20040417-02,id.html>. Interestingly, Frederick Burk, a former official translator for US President, from Clinton to Bush, declares that the accusation of Ba'asyir in his involvement in JI is just an “American scenario” for the American government in particular or for Western interest in general. About this, sees Riza Sihbudi, in http://www.republika.co.id/kolom_detail.asp?id=184149&kat_id=16

Java, Bali, Sumatra and other part of Eastern Indonesia and the number of delegations came to the last two congresses, its members could be tens to hundreds of thousands. Most of them are young and well-educated people. Irfan S Awwas, the second person after Ba'asyir, is a graduate from Gadjah Mada University (UGM), one of the most reputable secular universities in Indonesia.

The main goal of MMI is the enforcement of Islamic Law in Indonesia. “Jakarta Charter”, not surprisingly, is used by MMI as one main entry points to achieve their legal target. MMI is also very seriously and systematically presenting the concept of Islamic *shari'a* to public. Trainings on *hudud* (Islamic criminal law), including the law for adultery, apostasy, theft, drug and even terrorism, are held regularly. Move even further, MMI has already sent a draft of amendment to alter the Indonesian constitution in order to make it fit to Islamic Law. MMI members always use almost every social, political, economic and cultural problem as example of the consequence of the implementation of secular *kufr* law and thus the immediate necessity for the application of Islamic Law as the final solution. Such theme as “Wanted: a President committed to Islamic Law” and “Being Total Muslim: Plunging ourselves into Total Islamic Law” as well as “Western Strategy to Destroy Islam” and the like are their daily main topics of discussion. Although so far none of their activities are physically violent, obviously many of their agenda are anti-democratic and anti-pluralist—such as non-Muslim could not become Indonesian president— and thus have resulted in various degrees of unrest among the non-Muslims.

In the meantime, immediately before and soon after Soeharto was toppled down in May 1998, various racial and inter-religious conflicts erupted in different places throughout the country such as Tasikmalaya and Situbondo riots (1996), Pekalongan riot (1997), Ketapang riot (1998) and others⁴⁹. In eastern Ambon, eastern part of Indonesia, Muslim-Christian conflict even happened massively since January 1999 and lasted more than a year. Assuming that government was not trustable in handling the problem,

⁴⁹ Read Mohtar Mas'oeid et.al; *Kekerasan Kolektif, Kondisi dan Pemicu*, Yogyakarta: P3PK UGM, 2000.

Laskar Jihad, one of the most vehement Militant group based in Yogyakarta sent thousands of its members to the conflict area⁵⁰. Understandably, this strong emergence of Militant Muslims in the aforementioned conditions eventually results in deep concerns not only from among non-Muslims, but also from Muslims themselves.

As I mentioned earlier, claiming that many modern principles such as pluralism, tolerance, democracy, religious liberty, religion-state separation and others, are definitely compatible with Islamic teaching, Islamic Liberalism has been developing since 1970s in Indonesia. Obviously, since *santri* (refer to the people) and *pesantren* (refer either to system of education, its physical building, neighborhood, culture or a certain type of society) are those who have problem and thus struggle with this Islamic-modernity compatibility issues, Islamic Liberalism developed mostly among them, especially among young *santris* who have access to modern higher education. If Islamic Militanism found a better place to grow in many secular state universities, IAIN⁵¹ (Institut Agama Islam Negeri, *State Institute for Islamic Studies*) and other private Islamic universities became the main development centers of Islamic Liberalism⁵². Together with IAIN, HMI and PMII, as two major extra-campus Muslim student associations that used to be affiliated under *Muhammadiyah* and NU respectively also played similar role in seeding Islamic Liberalism.

Among the others, it is this young well educated *santri* group who then has serious concerns about the stronger emergence of Islamic Militanism. From among them various studies, forums, movements, networks and organizations soon emerged either

⁵⁰ Discussion on *Laskar Jihad*, read, for example, Noorhaidi Hasan, "Faith and Politics: The Rise of Laskar Jihad in the Era of Transition in Indonesia" in *Indonesia*, No. 73, April 2002, pp. 165-169. Also read Sukidi Mulyadi, "Violence under the Banner of Religion: the Case of Laskar Jihad and Laskar Kristus" in *Studia Islamika*, Volume 10, No.2, 2003, pp. 75-110.

⁵¹ IAIN is a state Islamic university with secular model built in almost every provincial capital city and or even in smaller towns through out Indonesia. Due to cultural, economic and other reasons, most of its students come from *santri* family or *pesantren* background. More about IAIN read, for example, Johan Meuleman, "The Institut Agama Islam Negeri at the Crossroad" in Meuleman (ed.), *Islam in the Era of Globalization, Muslim Attitude towards Modernity and Identity*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002, pp. 281-298.

⁵² Militant groups in particular keep on criticizing IAIN in this concern. For example, read Hartono Ahmad Ja'iz, *Ada Pemurtadan di IAIN* (There is Apostasy at IAIN), Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2005. After presenting the whole list of IAIN's 'sins', the book concludes that in fact there is a very dangerous systematic conspiracy behind the project of liberalization of Islamic thought at IAIN sponsored by the West in order to make potential Muslim youths finally renounce their faith.

directly as counter for Islamic Militanism or indirectly, in wider scope, as initiatives to promote inclusive, tolerant and liberal Islam in relation to specific issues such as pluralism, human rights, democratization, civil society, gender equality etc. Just to provide with some examples, LKiS (*Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial*, Institute for Islam and Social Studies) was founded in Yogyakarta (1993), FSAS (*Forum Studi Agama dan Sosial*, Forum for Religious and Social Studies) was founded in Jepara (1997), Desantara was founded in Depok (1998), LAPAR (*Lembaga Advokasi dan Pendidikan Anak Rakyat*, Institute of People Children for Advocacy and Education) was founded in Makassar (1999), JIL (*Jaringan Islam Liberal*, Liberal Islam Network) was founded in Jakarta (2001), JIMM (*Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah*, Muhammadiyah Young Intellectual Network) was founded in Jakarta (2003) and many others.

In the further discussion, JIL will be especially taken as an example of Liberal Muslim since it is this group that uses liberal Islam as its self-reference⁵³. Unlike MMI that was founded after a huge public gathering (*tabligh akbar*) attended by thousands of Muslims, JIL was founded through a very small meeting attended by some seven people. From the very beginning, JIL's motive is clear: "to counter the growing influence and activism of militant and radical Islam in Indonesia". According to Ulil-Abshar Abdalla, who then became the coordinator of JIL, "We've seen radical Islam grow militant, systematic and organized, while Liberal Islam has been unorganized, week-seeming, not militant, not resistant and unassertive in giving voice to its perspective. The Liberal Islamic Network was in fact motivated by the appearance of these radical Islamic movements."⁵⁴ Thank to a very good network of its exponents, both mainly in terms of financial support and mass media, JIL achieved public recognition immediately⁵⁵.

⁵³ For general discussion on JIL, read Muhammad Ali, "The Rise of the Liberal Islam Network (JIL) in Contemporary Indonesia" in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Volume 22 Winter 2005, Number 1, pp. 1-27.

⁵⁴ Linda Christanty. "Is There a Rainbow in Islam" in *Latitude Magazine*, July 30, 2003.

⁵⁵ In terms of financial support, JIL is significantly back up by The Asia Foundation and Freedom Institute, while in mass media, it is supported mainly by *Jawa Pos* Daily and 68H Radio Channel in Jakarta. JIL also has its own beautiful bilingual Indonesian-English website: www.islamlib.com

As displayed on JIL's website, *ijtihad* (defined as 'rational thinking of Islamic text), non-literal understanding of text, pluralism, minority rights, religious liberty, religion-state separation, democracy, are among the principle key words for JIL⁵⁶. With regards to its initial motive, not surprisingly, JIL's main interest is always related to such topics as criticism on intolerance attitude among Muslims, religion as source of violence, women oppression, anti literalism and formalism etc. In connection to that, Abshar-Abdalla, the coordinator, and other JIL's main exponents, many of whom are very well trained both in *pesantren* and modern education systems⁵⁷, offer hermeneutic and theological breakthroughs in understanding Islam, particularly in relation to modern issues. In one of his most controversial articles, for example, Abshar-Abdalla argues that Islam is not a monument as assumed by many people. In understanding Islam, Muslim should really pay due attention to context and distinguish between the fundamental principles and their cultural manifestations. *Jilbab* (veil for women), hand cutting, *qisas*, stoning, beard, wearing robe, are merely examples of Arabic cultures, and thus no obligation to practice them. Inter-marriage prohibition is now irrelevant; religion is basically a private matter; there is nothing such 'divine law'; Muhammad, the prophet, is a historical figure with some weakness and should be studied critically, (non-verbal) *wahy* did not stop after Muhammad, but is still being revealed, including among the Western people with their modern achievements; religion, including Islam is just like a tool 'for the total submission to the Absolute Truth' and people should not quarrel with each other for the sake of it and that the real message of Islam is justice. The real message of Islam therefore is not *jilbab*, domestication of women, growing beard, shortening men's pants. Human problems could never be solved by applying Islamic *sharia*. To understand that Islamic *shari'a* is a ready-made packet from God to solve every human problem is an indication of ignorance and incapability to perceive *sunnatullah* itself. The most dangerous enemy of Islam in fact is dogmatism, to refer to Islam and the West as 'us'

⁵⁶ Visit JIL's about us in www.islamlib.com

⁵⁷ It should not be understood, however, that JIL's members are all *santri* or that *santri* in general is identical to the Liberal. What I want to say here is that there is a strong relation between Islamic Liberalism and the young *santris* who have enough modern education.

and ‘them’ in the sense of ‘the good and evil’ consecutively, is a manifestation of social pathology that eventually will destroy Islam itself⁵⁸.

This article that was untimely published during *Ramadhan*, immediately rekindled furious reactions from the Militant Muslims. A death edict was even issued by a group of Muslim militant *ulama* in Bandung, West Java. Since its inception till today, from time to time JIL almost stand in diametrical opposition to the Militant groups. In many ways, apparently, each group keeps on trying to eliminate the other. The last case even erupted several months ago, when MUI (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, Indonesian Council of Islamic scholars) issued 11 *fatwas* on various matters claimed to be raised to this state-sponsor *ulama* council by Indonesian Muslim public. One of them is the prohibition of liberalism, secularism and pluralism in Islam⁵⁹. As a result, long heated debate between both camps exploded again. Moreover, physical agitation and petition to the government to dissolve JIL by the Militant groups are even still in the air when I wrote this paper.

Particularly within post Bali bombing situation and post 9/11 atmosphere, the way JIL promotes liberal ideas and how it reconstructs or deconstructs Islam, is not unproblematic. For some people, if Muslim militants are assumed to suffer from religious paranoia, the Liberals in JIL actually can be put in the same situation when they exaggerate the Militants as the ‘whole’ problem of Islam today. Not only this eventually leads JIL to apply what Hugh Goddard calls ‘double standard’⁶⁰, i.e. by comparing the ideal versus the real between modernism and Islam, that make them say too much ‘yes to the West’ while hyper-criticize their fellow Muslims, but also is unfair to Islam in general and unhelpful in improving Muslims’ situation and condition in particular⁶¹.

⁵⁸ *Kompas Daily*, November 18th, 2002.

⁵⁹ *The Jakarta Post*, July 30, 2005.

⁶⁰ Hugh Goddard, *Christians and Muslims: From Double Standards to Mutual Understanding*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995.

⁶¹ Read, for example, A. Mustofa Bisri, *Menyegarkan Kembali Sikap Islam, Beberapa Kesalahan Ulil Abshar-Abdalla*, in *Kompas Daily*, December 4, 2002.

It is easy to find continuity of the main ideas between JIL and the previous Indonesian liberal Muslim thinkers like Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid⁶². However, neither the way they address the issues nor how they articulate them is similar⁶³. Besides JIL's initial motive as a counter movement, in my opinion, sociological background of these young people play a significant role here. As a generation from what was the 'loser' group, the *santri*, who eventually can escape their 'ugly' past thank to modernization, now these young people are trying to redeem their past. In contrary to their past, now thank to achievement in modern education, instead of backwardness, parochialism, static-minded, and the like, being *santri* means a privilege group with enough skill to explore the 'sacred territory' of religion—a privilege does not belong to those of *abangan* background. By idealizing modernity and slapping the face of dogmatic, narrow-minded, out of context and 'anti-rational' Muslims, they enjoy intellectual pleasure as a modern people. Thus they redeem their dark history.

However, the same is the case with the Militants in the opposite side. As a generation that can learn very hard from a blessing in disguise of modernization, they now become the real defender of Islam. By idealizing Islamic history and at the same time vehemently fighting every the supposedly enemy of Islam, including Muslims who is assumed to practice Islam incorrectly or only at their will, this group enjoy religious pleasure as the true Muslims. At the same time, they are also redeeming their 'sinful' past as *abangan* who were always accused to be irreligious, ignorant, and unfaithful. The presence and challenge of Islamic liberalism only justify their position as the group who should defend the 'true' Islam.

In relation to the experience of modernization under "high modernist" ideology as applied by Soeharto, apparently both the liberal and the militant are product

⁶² In fact, Nurcholish Madjid himself had a great expectation to JIL as the next 'locomotive' of Islamic thought reform movement in Indonesia. Read Budhi Munawar-Rachman, "Cak Nur dalam Ijtihad Paramadina" in *Gatra Magazine* No. 43, September 5, 2005.

⁶³ It is interesting to see some similarities between JIL and MWU (Muslim Wakeup.com) in relation to their 'superior attitude' towards other Muslims with different view point that eventually result in uncomfortable relation with their co-religionists. About PMU in this matter, for example read Muqtadir Khan, *Is Muslim Wakeup.com Undermining the Progressive Muslim Movement?*, May, 2005. Visit: <http://www.ijtihad.org/Muslimwakeup.htm>

of modern education that suffered from ‘modernist arrogance’, both towards the past and towards the other who has different world view. Shaped under Soeharto’s national development project with ‘high modernist’ ideology that sees itself as the most victorious rational solution for human’s future, ‘being educated’ for the Liberal and ‘being religious’ for the Militant means having ticket to be the superior to judge, or even to punish, the other.

It is also worth noting that despite their relation with modernization project launched by Soeharto’s government, in the final analysis, none of both the militant and the liberal Muslims stay in the New Order’s scenario. As we saw it, Militant Muslims emerged as ‘unintended subversive result’ of New Order’s agenda. While taking advantage from modernization project, such as adoption of technology and organization, they keep on opposing modernization as the main cause of Muslim Worlds’ degradation in general. More than anything else, the Militants, like in the case of MMI and *Laskar Jihad* see that modernization, secularization, interchangeably used with westernization, secularization and liberalism are the epicenter of Muslim society’s catastrophe. Those are the most ‘real’ Muslims’ enemy that should be conquered. On the other hand, as an ‘expected result’ of modernization, in fact Liberal Muslims adopts some main principles of modern world such as democracy, pluralism, civil and religious liberties, separation of religion and state, gender equality, freedom of speech and others. However, thanks to those modern ideas interwoven with Islamic values, they could empower the structure and culture of civil society among Muslims to finally, in many cases, stand in opposition with Soeharto’s authoritarian state. In my opinion, therefore, they are actually two unwanted twin children of the same mother by the name of modernization. Furthermore, due to the different background and perspective on Islam, modernization made them stand in opposition to each other to compete over the future Indonesia in relation to the ‘right’ place of Islam.

Conclusion

As I demonstrated previously, interplay between Islam and modernity is always complex, with various degrees of hope, tension, struggle, unpredicted result, consequence, cost and paradox among the Muslims. Based on the above discussion, let me now conclude with several important points of this paper. *First*, tension now manifested between the Liberal and the Militant Muslims in present day Indonesia actually is not a new phenomena. It has long roots in the Indonesian Muslim history. Nevertheless, modernization provides with new different condition, dimension and orientation for it. *Second*, although Islam was initially used as political tool by Soeharto and his New Order government both to support and to secure power, eventually Islam has its own story. Thank to public education improvement through the massive development of *SD Impres* and the obligatory course on religion in 1970s as part of New Order's effort in political mapping and social engineering, a significant shift in religious orientation among Muslims took place in the following decades. If in the past, *santri* group was among the most serious targets of modernization due allegedly to their backwardness, parochialism, static-minded etc; now they are the main exponents of Islamic Liberalism. On the other hand, from *abangan* background, a group that was assumed to be identical with unfaithfulness, polytheist, and ignorance in Islam, now emerges strong Islamic Militanism. However, both groups eventually become counter movements to the New Order's initial scenario of power. *Third*, in perceiving and competing with each other both Muslim Militant and Liberal actually are redefining themselves while redeeming their own 'dark' history as produced by New Order's modernization. The 'ugly' past for *santri* group and the 'sinful' past for the *abangan* are redeemed by being Liberal or Militant. At the same time, by their opposite relation, not only that each finds a 'privileged' position, but also they enjoy certain pleasure in accusing the other as the 'enemy' of Islam. Apparently, the nature of "high modernist" ideology, under which both groups developed, significantly influences their character of movements. *Fourth*, the present day conflict between Muslim Militant and Liberal over the 'right' place of Islam in Indonesia in fact reflects a long struggle of Muslim in the country in their negotiation with Islam, modernity and their social reality.

