CRITICAL REASONING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL DEMOCRACY IN PLURALIST COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT
This article analyzes how Islamic education and the challenges of national democracy in the midst of a pluralist state in the United States. A country that is very complex in various needs of human life, including in the field of religious privacy. More specifically about Islamic education, its implications, and implementation. Application of Islamic education curriculum and practice of religious education in schools. It is even more challenging when it collides with the conditions of a democratic, multicultural and multi-religious country. So the concept of national democracy needs to have a place in the discussion. Because later it will involve a conflict between progressive liberal Islam and conservative Salafi Islam. The purpose of this paper is oriented towards efforts to appreciate and contextualize Islamic religious claims in accordance with the ideals of reflective education, rational thinking, mutual respect, and equality in citizenship. The method used in this research is qualitative with library research. Applying a liberal and progressive Islamic perspective in education encourages Muslim students to develop the capacity for critical thinking, moral reasoning, and democratic deliberation. They learn to recognize the politics of religious interpretation, contextualize and historicize Islamic knowledge, and how it might be influenced by social, historical, and political forces. One more limitation in implementing Islamic education in the United States relates to the quality of teachers. Half of Islamic studies teachers are not certified or licensed required for education. Liberal and advanced Islamic education encourages Muslim students to build a critical spirit and a confident attitude about Islamic teachings so that they communicate their religion in a convincing and deliberative way.

Keywords: Pluralist implementation, Islamic education, national democracy

INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges facing Muslims in Western societies (US, Canada, and Europe) is to maintain their particular identity. At the same time, they must be actively involved in the cultural, social, and political life of the community (Ramadan, 2009). Living in a predominantly Christian, pluralistic, secular, and democratic country requires more adaptation to help Muslim children develop themselves and have a religious, national, modern, and democratic identity (Aslan & Hermansen, 2015). Issues of diversity, religious freedom, nationality, gender equality, and political participation run counter to conservative Islam (as developed in Muslim-majority and non-democratic countries).

Living in a pluralistic and secular way often influences Muslims to rethink their religious ways so that they can adapt to the diverse and modern demands of life. Scholars agree that Islam is not a monolithic religion and Muslims around the world have different cultures and traditions (Aslan & Hermansen, 2015). For many Muslims, Islam is seen as their ideological worldview, which consists of a set of beliefs, practices, and values (Aslan & Hermansen, 2015).
Islamic education, like other education, is influenced by various ideologies and processes of secularization, modernization, Islamization, and radicalization. Broadly speaking, we can examine Islamic education related to issues of democracy, modernity, and the application of Islamic law. Salafism is a manifestation of conservative Islam and fundamental Islamic education, and liberal Islam that supports critical Islamic thought and progressive Islamic education.

Salafism supports the literalist interpretation and exclusivity of the Quran and hadith (Ali & Leaman, 2007). Reject democracy because only God has sovereignty and not humans. This is absolute and becomes a rational transmission of religious texts. On the other hand, liberal and progressive Muslims argue that Islam is compatible with democracy. They reject the monopoly on religious hermeneutics or the literal interpretation of Islamic texts. They support equality of life in citizenship for all citizens and equal rights for women (Saada, 2015).

At the same time, liberal or progressive Islamic ideas are debated within the Islamic world. Different religious communities can interpret these concepts based on theological background, interpretation of democratic values, lifestyle, sociopolitical characteristics, and history of the country. Even in the literature, there are various growing criticisms of Islamic education in the West and the extent to which they have succeeded in preparing Muslim students for democratic and pluralistic life. For example, many schools in the US implement an Islamic curriculum, which was adopted from a Muslim-majority country. Which imposed relevance to the multicultural, diverse, and democratic life in which they live today. This curriculum is not able to encourage students to think critically, express ideas, and engage in debates in a study. They focus on rote learning such as reading and memorizing chapters from the Quran and prophetic traditions.

This Salafi model of religious education dominates the Islamic world (mosques, madrasas, and Islamic schools) today. It limits the development of religious identity and citizenship of Muslim students because it relies too much on a transmission-oriented and teacher-centered religious approach. Another effect is to foster a monopoly on religious knowledge and an uncritical approach to the contributions of earlier Islamic jurists.

Islamic education in the US, which is based on the ideology of Salafi Islam, is incompatible with the democratic and multicultural life of society because it believes that there is only one school of correct interpretation of scripture, religion, and law. Salafism is related to the Wahhabism movement which rejects ambiguity, relativism, or theological innovation and emphasizes rigidity, stability, and cognitive order in the face of the challenges and dynamism of modern life. Education-based on Salafism can lead to ideas of extremism, conflict, and intolerance towards non-Muslims in the wider society (Al-Jabri, 1996).

No Islamic school in the United States would identify itself with a progressive pedagogical philosophy. Most of the writings on liberal and progressive Islam are developed from a political or theological perspective and have no direct relationship with the policies, practices, progressives, and pedagogics of Islamic education to conceptualize education that is more in line with the life of a democratic and pluralistic society (Haddad, Senzai, & Smith, 2009). Liberal and progressive Islam values rational thought known as ijtihad and theological innovation encourages the growth of Islamic intellectualism. Facilitating Muslim students with a critical understanding of religion, history, and politics.
This article is directed at Islamic education in the US because American society is very diverse in terms of religion, culture, and worldview. There is controversy about the possibilities and limits of Islamic education in this country. Examines whether education isolates or integrates Muslim students in the wider society. For example, critics of Islamic schools argue that the lack of religious pluralism in schools prevents the spirit of discussion and tolerance as key features of liberal democracy.

There are an estimated 250 Islamic schools and 3200 Muslim students in the US. Most Islamic schools in the US are primary and secondary schools and they teach basic subjects (mathematics, science, and literature) as well as Islamic studies and Arabic. Islamic studies cover worship in Islam, the history of Islam, the moral teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, and the history of the prophet Muhammad. This teaching aims to instill a sense of personal and congregational identity based on spiritual, ethical, and moral teachings sourced from the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad, and the companions of the Prophet (Ramadan, 2009).

Furthermore, the Islamic studies taught are better known as sharia. Sharia has always been the main study in Muslim life and Islamic thought. As God said sharia serves to guide mankind on the right path. In a sense, it regulates the lives of individuals and congregations, from matters of worship to trade, war to family relations. Sharia in many Islamic schools integrates Islamic political, social, economic, and individual life into a single religious worldview. The application of sharia in modern life and how to inform Islamic education to the public is also influenced by the tension between conservative approaches and liberal interpretations of Islam.

The debate about the phenomenon of plurality in the life of the nation and state is always interesting to study. The fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) on the prohibition of plurality in 2005 which equated plurality with liberalism and secularism gave a critical response among Muslim intellectuals to the fatwa. Many writings are very critical of the narrow meaning of plurality, including M. Dawam Rahardjo's: Why Are All Religions True? (2006), Martin Lukito Sinaga: Religion Without Sociology of Religion, Reviewing Discourse on Pluralism in Indonesia (2006), Trisno S. Susanto: Reading (back) Politics Pluralism, Notes to Martin Lukito Sinaga (2006). These two articles criticize the pluralism fatwa by the MUI which lacks perspective and sparks controversy. Meanwhile, according to Rahardjo's writings, in dealing with diversity, we need pluralism. The consequence is that if one party accepts plurality as a reality, the other side rejects pluralism as an understanding.

Departing from the above review, the researcher needs to describe in detail some of the contents related to national democracy prevailing in the US, reviews of conservative Salafi Islam and progressive liberal Islam, implementation of Islamic education in pluralist countries, and the Islamization of education and democracy in the US. This aims to make the orientation towards efforts to appreciate and contextualize the claims of the Islamic religion in accordance with the ideals of reflective education, rational thinking, mutual respect, and equality in citizenship in a pluralist country in the US.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with library research method (Hadi & Afandi, 2021). To obtain information related to the concept of Islamic education and national democracy in the United States, several kinds of literature, journals, books, articles,
and other references are needed to meet the needs of writing this article. Literature studies can sharpen theoretical concepts and enrich information about scientific works and similar research. Various information that has been obtained from various kinds of literature can be used as a study of the concept of Islamic education and US national democracy as a current source, able to provide different views and updates from various similar materials written by several previous authors.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Liberal and Progressive Islam; Answering the Challenges of the Times**

Liberal and progressive Islamic ideas in the literature basically focus on the implementation and interpretation of Islamic law (sharia). How do they adapt to dynamic living conditions in Islamic and non-Islamic societies? Liberal Islam has a progressive idea and thought in understanding and interpreting religious texts related to issues of democracy, women's rights, non-Muslim rights, freedom of thought, and the meaning of progress (Kunzman, 2012). The interpretation of any religious text cannot be separated from the discourse of power or sociopolitical commitment in its interpretation. Theology and religious knowledge are not suitable for all times and places. If enforced it can maintain the status quo for the benefit of social, religious, and political elites in society.

There are three modes of liberal Islam: liberal sharia, mute sharia, and interpretation sharia. Proponents of liberal sharia claim that liberalism has been articulated in earlier interpretations and practiced in Islamic history. They avoid accusations of inauthentic by establishing a solid liberal position in orthodox Islamic sources. Shari'a mute holds that God's revelation does not cover all topics of human life and there is room for Muslims to consider what is good for them based on culture, needs, available resources, and living conditions. Sharia interpretation means that sharia is a divine prerogative, but human interpretations are contradictory and can be wrong. Scholars have debated many issues regarding the relationship between religion and politics. In interpreting the Shari'a the emphasis is on the scholars' interpretation of religion not always being holy and always correct. It can be wrong, can be argued, and maybe reinterpreted.

There is no clear definition of progressive Islam. Progressive Muslims believe that every human life (women and men, Muslim and non-Muslim, rich or poor, north or south) has the same intrinsic value. They encourage Muslims to question the structures of injustice that are built into Islamic thought. They have a critical understanding of Islam that rejects oppression based on gender, ethnicity, and skin color. They condemn all types of violence against civilians, whether that violence comes from terrorist groups or the state (Safi, 2003). Progressive Islam encourages students to develop a critical sense of religiosity and the ability to study their religion. Recognizing the diversity of Islamic traditions and seeking justice by comparing and contrasting a wide spectrum of religious interpretations. In short, it promotes educational discourse in accordance with the ideals of human rights, social justice, democracy, and pluralism.

Progressive and liberal Islamic education should help Muslims develop self-awareness and confident identity. Students can understand the implications of Islam as a universal and culturally sensitive religion. Progressive Islam provides education to students with an open and safe space to innovate, engage, and potentially explore traditions (Hadi & Iskandar,
Progressive Islamic Education relies on critical thinking about religious knowledge and taking part as an active citizen in achieving more justice in the larger society.

**Islamic Critical Reasoning; A Necessity in Pluralism**

Muslims in the US must be able to convey the moral message of Islam and contribute to public life in the larger society. Therefore, Muslims must be able to translate Islamic teachings into rational and reasonable arguments. For Muslim students, it is very important to study the moral teachings of Islam because it is related to the meaning of a good life because it has implications and influences on their lives in society.

Religious education that focuses on doctrines, rituals, and transcendental aspects of Islam is not enough when viewed from the perspective of civic education. They must acknowledge diversity and recognize local traditions in defining the common good as an extract from democracy (Moore, 2010). Therefore, Muslims must be able to explain why they believe and explain the moral teachings of Islam convincingly and rationally. If religious adherents want their morals to be considered in a democratic and secular society, they cannot simply use the language of sin and merit. They need to develop the language of reason, evidence, here, the present, and the language of science.

Living in a democratic and liberal country places the moral values and ethical guidelines of religious minorities at stake. If someone religious wants to practice equal citizenship in society, they sometimes have to think about their religion (moral claim). This is what makes Muslims have to rethink and rationalize the moral imperatives of the Islamic religion so that they make sense and can be understood by the secular world and non-religious people.

Ibn Rushd (12th-century Islamic philosopher), argues in Fasl al-Maqal (The Decisive Treatise) that God does not provide humans with a moral code that cannot be understood rationally. But it is necessary to use speculative reasoning and philosophical thought in studying and interpreting the meaning of the force of law in the Qur'an because not everyone accepts the moral teachings of religious texts as truth (Al-Jabri, 1996). Teaching Islamic morals must be prepared with discussion and debate through theological, philosophical, moral, and scientific reasoning. This kind of religious education helps Muslim students to think about their religion, not just as an individual goal but as a means of achieving a better life for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The above argument fits with democracy and citizenship education (national democracy) because it encourages Muslim students to develop their reasoning skills. At the same time taking part as active citizens in the development of their country's public sphere. From a religious perspective, this is said to be Islamic humanism which supports contemporary interpretation and rationalization of religious texts (Rahmān & Moosa, 2000). It can also be referred to as tolerance for ikhtilaf (different opinions) and pluralism in the Muslim community. The purpose of such discussions in class is not to reach winners and losers, but to let Muslim students practice and improve their reasoning and moral skills. At the same time preparing to become active citizens in a democratic society.

Critical learning of Islamic education is very important, considering that many Muslim students in the US graduate from Islamic schools and continue to public high schools. In these schools, they are exposed to multicultural and multi-religious. Characteristics of the larger society. They sometimes have to explain and even defend their religious and moral
beliefs to their peers, teachers, and staff. Muslim students in Islamic elementary schools must be prepared to continue to public secondary schools whose problems are more complex, including:

1. **Islam is not a static religion.** Muslims are allowed to develop traditions and have different schools of thought.
2. They can use philosophical, scientific, and moral reasoning to justify religious and moral claims to think about how they can contribute to the well-being of all citizens.
3. **We live in a world that is increasingly connected and needs people across countries and cultures.** As a consequence, Muslims must be able to explain their religious and moral attitudes to others, be they Muslim or non-Muslim.
4. **It makes sense for students to question the teachings of Islam and redefine their religious identity by seeking more evidence and solid arguments to support their understanding of Islam.**

Some of the points discussed above (moral and philosophical reasoning), some people may consider less appropriate for children (first-sixth grade). Because students at this age are still at the beginning of learning what Islam is, how to practice it, and the teachings of religious morals. They may not have developed the cognitive and intellectual skills to address abstract and moral issues.

Teachers cannot teach students to be critical unless they have acquired some knowledge of identity and commitment. However, Islamic schools in the US are required to be able to provide children with a comfortable environment to discuss and rationalize the teachings of Islamic morality. For example, why some behaviors in society are considered haram or halal. Able to live and be at peace with people who embrace a religion other than Islam.

**Diversity and Diversity; political and cultural manifestation**

Distinguishing between the formation of Islamic morals and the actualization of morals throughout history is very important because it relates to strategy and place. Throughout the development of Islam, there are many different schools, thoughts, ideas, approaches, and interpretations of what Islam is. The life experience of actualizing Islam is always closely related to culture, history, conditions, place, and time. Muslims need to make a distinction between static religious texts and dynamic interpretations of their context. To discuss the history of Islam must rely on the principles of rationality, egalitarianism, freedom, justice, and social activism.

Departing from this argument shows that religion as a system of knowledge can be used or misused for political purposes. The idea of violence under the pretext of religion has had several manifestations in human history. There is ample evidence that religion was used or misused to start and justify bloody conflicts. For example, the massacres committed by the Israelites in Bible times, the Crusades, the madness of witches, and the current wave of Islamic violence (terrorism).

World history is also filled with examples of the use of religion to oppress others, religious bigotry, persecution, intolerance, inter-religious conflict, and war. Many people in the Balkans, Northern Ireland, Kashmir, Uighurs, Myanmar, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt have suffered the bloodshed of conflicts based on religious ideologies. For this reason, Muslim students need to understand the science of religion as a historical and
socio-political phenomenon that can be influenced by power relations at certain times in Islamic history.

Muslim students can discuss with teachers to discuss between Islamic religious authorities and political stakeholders to gain the privileges of some groups and exclude others. For example, the status of the caliphate, the principles of shura, and ijtihad have been abused by politicians and religious leaders to justify their rule, including the suppression of others who disagree with them on legal, political, or theological issues. Historical facts say many Umayyad caliphs and Abbasid dynasties used Islam to manipulate people and to justify their regimes.

Salafis reject the idea of democratic governance on the assumption that the caliphate is the only proper order in Muslim society. However, a critical analysis of Islam shows that:
1. The Qur'an and Sunnah do not limit one way to elect a Muslim leader (after the death of Prophet Muhammad). The Khilafah is not an exclusive power the only way to lead the Muslim community and Muslims can choose what suits them based on their needs and circumstances (ijtihad opportunity).
2. There is no determination of the time a caliph can spend ruling the Muslim community and this is also open to ijtihad.
3. Islamic Sharia does not establish the professional responsibilities of the caliph. This means that there is room for discussion and multiple interpretations.

Further analysis shows that abandoning deliberations and democratic leadership elections began when Mu'awiyah bin Abu Sufyan (the second caliph of the Umayyads) took over the caliphate. The justification of the military coup in Egypt in 2013 with a fatwa from Dr. Ali Juma'a (the higher religious authority of Islam) is another example of the use of religious authority for political purposes. This fatwa led to many killings of Egyptian citizens and the exclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood as a legitimate party in Egyptian politics. The rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in the Middle East and the gruesome killing of Muslims and non-Muslims in the name of God also make clear the use of Islam to gain power and justify a political agenda (Al-Alkim, 1993).

Based on the examples above, it shows the importance of developing a critical attitude for Muslim students to read the history of Islam, the relationship between politics, religion, oppression, and religious authority in society. Do they need to ask at least who is speaking in the name of God? who claims authority over religious interpretation? why, for whose sake, and how to achieve or violate the ideals of freedom, human rights, and democracy?

Islamic democracy: The Noble Ideals of Peace

Liberal Islam believes that liberal attitudes have been embedded in divine commandments. Muslim students and teachers can investigate liberal values and democratic ideals in the sources of Islamic law. In doing so they have contributed to achieving justice in the larger society. For example, the Qur'an motivates its adherents to care for the marginalized (poor people, orphans, oppressed people, travelers, and hungry people). In contrast to the Salafi conception of ijtihad, which is limited to scholars on controversial issues. Liberal Islam considers everyone to be able to contribute suggestions and ideas for the public good. The debate about what they can do and take responsibility for joint decisions
Liberal Muslims are contemporary-oriented citizens who believe more in aqli (rational thinking) and less in naqli (knowledge and interpretations transmitted by earlier Muslims (ulama and madhhab imams)) in understanding Islam and its possible implications for modern life. This form of liberal ijtihad occurs when students can start asking questions, debating, weakening critical reasoning to articulate and practice Islam (Raḥmān & Moosa, 2000). Examples of liberal and progressive ijtihad relate to the interpretation of the meaning of jihad in Islam. Jihad means that apart from defending the homeland, it is also a struggle for freedom of religion, expression, and awareness to achieve the ideals of equality. Jihad is a noble resistance to injustice felt by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Unlike Salafism, which views differences as a threat to the unity of Muslim societies, liberal Muslims believe that diversity can enrich Islamic thought and reflect the cultural, political, and religious diversity of Islam. If you look closely, the Qur'an shows many verses that respect differences and pluralism. In Surah Al Maidah 5:48 Allah SWT says "For every Ummah among you, We have established (different) laws and a clear way of life. If Allah had willed, He would have been able to make you all one single community: But Allah wants to test you with what He has given you. So compete to do good. Only to Allah do you all return, and then He will make you fully understand what you used to dispute” This verse of the Qur'an shows that diversity in human life is a fact. People have to compete in doing good deeds and no community can rightly claim that they hold the ultimate truth about the meaning of a good life.

Verses such as "You (Muhammad) are not a coercion against them" (Surat Qaf 50: 45); "But will you force people so that they become believers" (Surah Yunus 10: 99); "And do not curse the gods they worship besides Allah, because they will curse Allah by transgressing without any basis of knowledge...Then to God is their return, then He will inform them of what they have done" (Surah Al 'lam 6: 108); and “There is no compulsion in religion (Islam). Verily, the difference between the right path and the wrong way is clear” (Al-Baqarah 2: 256). All of these verses highlight religious freedom and their right to believe or not believe in God. This assumes that God is the all-wise judge.

Islamic political thought has produced doctrines that are in accordance with western doctrines of human rights, pluralism, and democracy. For example, applying the principle of shura in choosing a caliph means emphasizing that the people have the right to control their president and to advise and criticize him. The verse reads "O mankind, indeed We have created you from a male and a female, then We made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious one. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing and Thorough” (Qs. Al Hujurat 49:12) reports that Allah encourages humans (not only Muslims) to know and respect each other’s differences in terms of nationality, race, skin color, language, and gender. That is, Muslims are expected to recognize that everyone is a family of fellow human beings and prevent all kinds of prejudice and racism.

Moreover, living in a democratic society requires Muslims to know some basic information about other religions in their local community. One of the most troubling and pressing consequences of religious blindness is that it often fuels prejudice and antagonism.
This hinders efforts aimed at promoting respect for diversity, peaceful coexistence, and cooperative efforts at the local, national and global levels.

Learning about other religions is important for Muslims in the US because they have to get used to sharing with non-Muslims in their lives. They must be able to communicate religious principles and religious values and listen to others who are secular in a respectful and dialogical manner. Historically there have been fluctuations in relations between Muslims and followers of other religions (Christians and Jews).

We can find three attitudes in this matter: the position of representing the Salafi school which believes that only Islam can save; the inclusive attitude, which asserts that Islam has the right path to salvation; and the pluralist position which holds that different religious traditions may lead to salvation for all.

Liberal Muslims tend to be less judgmental of non-Muslims and they have a more pragmatic attitude that values the good of non-Muslims and their contribution to the common good. They have general ethical principles about how to treat non-Muslims in society. For example, the verse "Verily those who believe, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabi`in, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they will have their reward with their Lord. with them there will be no fear and neither will they grieve" (Surat al-Baqarah 2: 62) represents an inclusive paradigm with peace and a message about the relationship between Muslims and followers of other faiths.

Learning about other religions in Islamic schools in the US aims to reduce religious illiteracy among Muslim children. Encourage mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect between Muslims and citizens who believe in different cultural or religious values. To let them engage in rational consideration of different cultural beliefs and values and different conceptions of the good life. Help them navigate their religious identity (in their transition from Islam to public schools) and be able to engage in ethical discussions with their non-Muslim counterparts. A right decision if it involves many people, listens to what others have to say, and proposes views either through the difference of opinion or agreement, that is what is meant by acting democratically. In contrast to the hermeneutics of past-oriented Islamic texts, liberal Islam rejects the tendency towards backwardness in interpreting religious texts or calling for modernity. Progressive Muslims believe that reasoning is socially constructed and religiously based. Every verse or letter in the Qur'an seeks to fulfill the function of religion socially and ethically. This means that revelation if properly understood, can be the basis for innovation, change, and adaptation. Allowing diversity through critical thinking and moral reasoning helps students develop their own religious and modern identities.

The results of previous relevant studies that are in accordance with this research are the research conducted by Nur Qomariah (2010) regarding the impact of the Trans Jakarta. The method used in this study is qualitative, using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is used to know the perception of taxi drivers towards the presence of Trans Jakarta buses and also to know the impact that Trans Jakarta buses have on taxis operating in Jakarta. It is also known the strategies applied by taxi drivers in facing competition with Trans Jakarta buses and with other taxi drivers (Afandi, 2011)
CONCLUSION

Applying a liberal and progressive Islamic perspective in education encourages Muslim students to develop the capacity for critical thinking, moral reasoning, and democratic deliberation. They learn to recognize politics as an interpretation of religion, to contextualize and historicize Islamic knowledge, and how it might be influenced by social, historical, and political forces. One more limitation in implementing Islamic education in the United States relates to the quality of teachers. Half of Islamic studies teachers are not certified or licensed required for education. Liberal Islamic education encourages Muslim students to build a critical spirit and a confident attitude about Islamic teachings so that they communicate their religion in a convincing and deliberative way.

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