RADICAL RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC DISCUSSION

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Abstract: Despite the advancement of technology and educational level that mankind have cherished up to all these years, there are unsolved riddles that day by day becoming more difficult to decipher their answers; what has gone wrong with world peace today? Though the development rapidly elevating to the top, however the serenity and tranquillity of today's world is shaken by the uncivilized mentality of radical actions which is kind of topsy-turvy hypothesis. Thus, it is necessary to trace back the root of this global problem especially within own Islamic context since Islamophobia become so greatly discussed. The discussion will not concentrate on the labelling of Islam as religion that causing chaos, but the main focus of this paper is to highlight a preliminary analysis of the origin of radical religious extremism revolving its roots and emergence within Islamic milieu. This study is using data collected from the approach of content analysis which will be discussed around the related issue at lengthy explanation.

INTRODUCTION

Besides major destruction caused by nature, the biggest fear of men nowadays is the present of silent individuals that out of sudden doing massacre or suicide bombing in public places. At this moment, wars are not anymore in the battlefields, with battalions of uniformed armies but unjustly with the innocent, unarmed masses on the busy streets. Going back to the world black dot of 11th September 2001 earlier, the whole world was alarmed with the reality of world today is not in a secured condition (ICAN, 2014). Off from that incident, the emergence of various radical religious extremism's group coming into surface without vacillate to expose themselves to the world such as ISIL or ISIS, movement of Boko Haram in Nigeria, Charlie Hebdo assaulters and other incidents which also contributing to the phenomena of Islamophobia that stain the image of Islam as a peace religion cum wrecking the stability of harmonious living. This phenomenon longing for abundant of 'why' questions to be answered as soon as possible in order to know how this problem strongly rooted.

DEFINITION OF RADICAL RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) mentions extremism as opinions, ideas, and actions, especially political or religious ones that most people think are unreasonable and unacceptable. Meanwhile, on the following pages, radical is loosely translated as a situation where massive changes happened, but

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receive thorough and complete support especially in social and political change. Referring to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2016), however, radical denotes the idea of having extreme political views that are not shared by majority of masses. These definitions supported by explanation given by Malaysia Ministry of Home Affair (MOHA) in its book entitled Home Affairs Ministry's Strategic Plan 2015-2020, enlighten the word extremism as an action or understanding that is beyond ordinary, thus it is showing immoderate attitude or stance of understanding such as on politic or religion. MOHA puts radicalism as form of thorough changes, without putting limitation by the means of violating its core foundation. These explanations could be summarized by Kamali (2015) when he points out extremists are usually imbalanced and unable to tolerate with sound, rational, academically arguments but eventually using ferocious acts to uphold their claims.

Oversimplification of those two terms often lead to religious understanding and political movement which are mostly related to Islam as the ascendancy of a terrorist groups moving in the name of Islam, are covered primarily by both social and mass media. Currently, the biggest issue concerning radical Muslim extremist is a group of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) which 'successfully' knocking the door of everyone's acknowledgment on her ideology and ability on doing cruel acts in order to achieve her goal and determination after open announcement of ISIS's restoration of caliphate spread throughout the world (Tucker, 2014).

This group gains attention after her first video propaganda of mercilessly showing the killing of journalist, James Foley by British ISIS fighter and more video came into sequel showing the Western hostages' life worth nothing as long as threat especially to U.S can be imposed on (Webb, 2014). However, to be fair with fact, not only Islam has been labelled as a source of radical extremism, but other religions also affected to this ideology. For example, in Myanmar where the polemics and chaos between Buddhist and Muslims, ignited its big blast in 2012 where violence flare up in Rakhine state between those two rivals shedding blood in roads (Green et al, 2015). Minority of Muslim of Rohingya especially, receive threat such as subjected to inhumanly treated, blockage of receiving health aid, dismiss from right of citizenship, unable to move freely as obstructed from the government (under Buddhist ruling), endangered with mass genocide in following incidents were not something can be regarded as a small issue (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (n.d.)).

Kamali (2015) has divided extremism into three parts which are actually correlating to each other: theological extremism (*al-tataruf al-dini*); political extremism *(al-tataruf al-syasi)* and practical extremism *(al-tataruf al-amal)*. He elaborates theological extremism in the sense of anyone or groups that stood in conflict with holy text book Al-Quran, hadith and consensus of Muslim which he refers to groups of *Qadariyyah, Jahmiyyah, Murjia'ah and Batiniyyah* where basically the arguments are relating to pre-destination issues.

Next, political extremism is a situation where the attempt of throwing down the gauntlet with present government taking place. Proposing example, Kamali (2015) puts the illustration of issue between Caliph 'Ali bin Abu Talib that was being betrayed by Kharijites. In this case, authors see the fundamental of radical extremism happened within Muslim community is due to misinterpretation and radical understanding in Islamic teaching itself thus lead to intolerant of each other.

HISTORY OF RADICAL EXTREMISM IN ISLAM

Biggest rebellion sparked among Muslim community occurred in the 7th century, approximately between 656 until 661 c.e. where the time of emergence of the Kharijite (Mamouri, 2015). They were agitated to follow and rebelled towards the government led by Bani Umayyah due to few factors (Ibrahim, 1987). At first, this group was on the side of Caliph 'Ali but after the issue of *'tahkim'* after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (Arbitration Board), they chose to rebel against 'Ali owing to disagreement of fourth caliph on their idea of excommunicating or accuse *takfir* (expiation) towards Mu'awiyah (Ibrahim, 1987; Kenney, 2006).

The issue was centred about the election of the caliph or head of Islamic government where they were opposing the exclusiveness of Quraish tribe to hold a position in ruling and managing financial flows as for them the rights of be a caliph is open to all Muslims including slaves (Mamouri, 2015). This kind of struggle seems noble in theory but practically, they were doing harsh and violence engagement including onto women and children in order to achieve their aim (Koch, 2015).

Hamza (2000) clarifies that Kharijite was the first deviant group and considered as dangerous movement. His statement seconded from his narration of the killing of 'Abdullah ibn Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, done by Kharijites. This incident was happened after 'Ali denounced himself from getting victory over Mu'awiyah, hence Kharijite decided to stop people passing by the road and inquired them about 'Ali and Mu'awiyah. If anyone refuses to scourge and curse both of them, those Kharijites irrationally assassinated them. It was happened that `Abdullah ibn Khabbab, one of the prominent scholars at that time was being killed, together with his pregnant wife due to their reluctant of talking-ill on both of them. What make the situation worst, those cruel peoples also cut open the belly of Khabbab's wife to kill the inborn baby. Even, one of the Kharijites was the one whom assassinate 'Ali bin Abu Talib for the reason he was not able to command by Allah's order (Egger, 2016)

Owing to their frantic temerity actions, this group was not last long for continuously being persecuted by the majority of Muslims and surely not received any support from the caliphs. Ayatullah Murtada (2013) mentioned in his book that Kharijites only able to endure their existence nearly one and a half century, and later annihilated by their own nature. Besides, during last 7th century, there was a sect from Kharijite discarded violent approach and dwelled themselves in

discussion on how to live with non-Kharijite which were regarded as impious men (Egger, 2016). Due to many other factors, by the beginning of the Abbasid's reign, this group reported to be completely disappeared. However, the aftermath of the existence of this group seems not fully suppressed into dust but remain its seed until this present.

REVIVAL OF NEW KHARIJITE

One of the legitimate purposes of Islam (*Maqasid Syar'iah*) is protection of life or *hifz al-nafs* in Arabic terminology. Due to the vitality of safe guarding life, the Qur'an mentions, "…if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people." (Quran – 5:32). Alas, the situation of today's world seems incapable to grasp the direct meaning from Quranic verse mentioned above and continuously injecting anger in heart and eventually put men into hostile behaviour towards each other (Quran – 5:2). This is what has happened towards Muslim society today which invoking the spirit of previous Kharijite to resurrect and form a new one under various names (Baksh, nd).

To specify and direct into social context, group of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or known also as IS, abbreviation of Islamic State, which has strong establishment today, is not mounting on earth out of sudden but owing to feeling of abhorrence towards current situation, such as rivalries between Shi'a and Sunni, disastrous of being colonized by foreign power especially America and other contributing factors (Webb et. Al., nd). This argument also proposed by Tucker (2014) when he says the foundation of IS was founded from al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) during the days of American soldiers invaded Iraq in 2003. After three years, AQI assimilated into new name which is Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and expanded to Syria (ISIS) to attract more enrolment to become part of this movement towards establishing Islamic caliphate under the umbrella of Islamic law.

This idea of set up a caliphate government is akin to what had done by Kharijite back on 7th century ago. Rebellion toward present government which is considered as not Islamic and uphold justice, was the same ideology possessed by Kharijite when they were opposing 'Ali and Mu'awiya position. However, the biggest problem of this Islamic State (IS) is pertaining to their means in achieving their goal culture which is definitely going beyond right path. For example, IS reject *lenient* approach such as using political skills, calls people to rectify themselves but the only way to restore Islamic State is only by jihad in whatever circumstances (Baksh, nd).

The other movement which also possesses radical understanding of current system is Boko Haram in Nigeria which was founded recently in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf (Mauro, nd). Boko Haram, means 'western education is

forbidden' but the official name of this movement is called as *Jama'ah al-Ahlu al-Sunnah Li al-Da'wah wa al-Jihad* (Shuaibu et al, 2015). Despite popularized with the name of Boko Haram, their destruction aim did not only concern educational field but also attempted to bomb a civilian airliner from Amsterdam to Michigan in 2009 on Christmas Day (Thomson, 2012).

Boko Haram as other so-called Islamic movements, basically pointing their goal to create God's kingdom on earth, ruled with justice and based on Islamic law. However, similar to IS too, Boko Haram has an irrational principle of destroying any form of obstruction that can suspend their aim to be actualized (Campbell, 2012). Thus, it is reported various significant attack and violent done by Boko Haram even willing to massacre students from various educational levels such as what had happened on September 2013 where 44 teachers and male students being killed at a college in Gujba; 29 students killed during attack on Buni Yadi's college at February 2014, and also kidnapping approximately 276 schoolgirls in Chibox on following April (Global Terrorism Index, 2015). Statistic shows from 2014 to 2015 Boko Haram overtakes IS to become the deadliest terrorist group in the world for it recorded around 317 percent increased to become responsible to 6644 deaths recorded, meanwhile IS for 6073 deaths (Global Terrorism Index, 2015). This percentage and number of deaths set off by them is merely showing the utopian peace world, afar from what they wish of to happen.

Notwithstanding on the harmonious living in Malaysia, this country actually continuously does receive many threats that can spark the cause of violence from the existing extremist religious groups, either coming from this country or outside Malaysia, either related to IS or other influences (Malaysia's Police Chief, 2014). For example, the existence of deviant teachings which are giving rigid interpretations of holy sacred texts, labelling other institution, interpretation, scholars and institution as fake and even willingly to do aggressive action as what had done by few members of Tuhan Harun (a group that believe Harun as God) on November 2013. Five members, including Harun himself were charged for murdering the principal assistant director of the Pahang Islamic Religious Department, Ahmad Raffli Abd. Malek could not be expected normally happened and alas, it was caused by so-called religious movement (astroawani.com, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This paper seeks to explore the root of Islamic radical extremism and its establishment up until this day. Throughout this study, the finding shows that there are many contributing factors lead to the establishment of radical understanding, rooted from Kharijite group and continuously affecting or influencing others to act violently in pursuing their goal to be represented. The existence of these various movements is caused by the chaos due to political problem and wrong understanding

of Islamic teaching. Thus, it is in state of urgency to our world now providing a special program to terminate this radical extremist element from continuing spreading and also arrange for rehabilitation modalities for those affected groups.

Acknowledgement

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