

Book Review

Leonard C. Sebastian, Syağ Hasyim and Alexander R. Arifianto (eds.) (2021). *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia Islamic Groups and Identity Politics*. London & New York: Routledge. 230 Pages. ISBN: 978-1-003-01092-0

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The rise of Islamic conservatism in post-New Order Indonesia is related to strengthening religious attitudes and understandings in religion. However, it has several socio-economic, political, theological implications and significant challenges to democracy and diversity in Indonesia. The presence of Islamic conservatism groups and the development of identity politics have resulted in the religious conservatism movement having a significant influence on society. This book is the latest study explaining Islamic conservatism, focusing on discussing Islamic groups and identity politics at the national, regional, and local levels. Conservative groups use religion as a vehicle in expressing their identity and respond to social, political, and economic issues as part of their political aspirations. The activities of Islamic conservatism groups have changed the face of Indonesian Islam from an inclusive-moderate pattern to an exclusive-literal orientation.

This book, Edited by Leonard C Sebastian, Syağiq Hasyim, Alexander R. Arifianto (2020), focused on how Islamic conservatism in Indonesian Muslim society occurs at the national, regional, and local levels. The main argument is the religious conservatism that has developed in Indonesia over the last two decades by two things, namely the strengthening of identity politics and the presence of Islamic group organizations. The term Islamic conservatism defined in this book describes anti-mainstream Muslim organizations that feel superior, characterized by excluding others, monopolizing the truth, and wrongly judging other groups' beliefs. Islamic conservatism is a combination of normative and practical issues stemming from Islamic texts that promote literal and exclusive adherence to the shari'ah (Islamic moral ethics and adaptation of a more literal understanding of Islam in Indonesian political and legal structures). The concept of Islamic conservatism is opposed to Islamic modernism or liberalism, which promotes a contextual and inclusive interpretation of Islam. (p. 4-5)

This book have important contributions to explaining the strengthening of the wave of religious conservatism in Indonesia. There are at least two important contributions made by this book in explaining the contemporary development of Islam in Indonesia. First, studies related to religious conservatism have relatively not been used as a perspective in explaining the phenomenon of religious revival in Muslim societies. Because scholars have so far tended to explain the phenomenon of religious awakening in Muslim societies from perspective of terrorism, radicalism, revivalism, fundamentalism, and political Islam. These studies are not only biased and tend to simplify the problem but also create a negative impression of the muslim as if they cannot adapt to the modern political system. Second, so far the existing studies related to religious conservatism tend to explain that religious conservatism is influenced by a conservative turn followed by religious understanding in Indonesia, such as (Bruinessen, 2013; Fachrudin, 2020; Fealy, 2017; Sebastian & Nubowo, 2019). In addition, the development of religious conservatism in Islamic organizations such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Nahdatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah (A. N. Burhani, 2013; Hasyim, 2020; Nur Ichwan, 2013). Religious conservatism as a religious, social, political and economic phenomenon (Amalinda Savirani, 2020; Azyumardi Azra, 2019). Studies related to the religious conservatism movement in the action of defending Islam in demanding punishment of Ahok in the case of religious blasphemy (Aidulsyah & Mizuno, 2020; Eunsook Jung, 2020; Luthfie Assaukanie, 2017; Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018; Priamarizki & Dinarto, 2019). In addition, the study of religious conservatism in social media (Halimatusa'diyah, 2020; Kirana & Garadian, 2020; Osman, 2017). Based on the studies above, this book complements existing studies in explaining religious conservatism. The novelty of this book is religious conservatism influenced by the presence of Islamist groups and the use of identity politics in promoting conservative religious understanding and attitudes. The main question to answer this book is how widespread conservative Islamism was in Indonesian society before the state decided to

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intervene? How do Islamist and radical groups make use of democratic tools in spreading their group's conservative ideas and agenda? What strategies can moderate groups use in countering the narratives of conservative groups?. This book including the newest study discuss the increasing conservatism of Islam in Indonesia.

In the first chapters of this book, an article written by Burhanuddin Muhtadi and Rizka Halida entitled *Muslim identity and deprivation Socio-psychological sources of support for Islamist radical groups in Indonesia*. (p.14-38). This article describes vulnerable individuals in supporting Islamic radicalism groups caused by socio-psychological factors rather than socio-economic factors. He found the most consistent and significant socio-psychological factors in providing support to radical groups using survey data. The narrative that feels unfairly treated diverts conservative Muslim support to radical Islamic groups. the collective injustice experienced by Muslims makes them feel their religion is marginal. Although Muslims are the majority in Indonesia, they generally feel they threaten second-class citizens regarding economic and civil rights compared to other social groups.

Chapter two of this book, *Islamic orthodoxy at the regional level in Indonesia*, was written by Dadi Darmadi. (p.41-53). This article describes the influence of Muslim leaders in maintaining orthodox Islamic attitudes by framing the issues of anti-Communist, Anti-Shia-Ahmadiyah, and Anti-Liberal Islam Network (JIL) in several regions in Indonesia. The findings of this study illustrate that mainstream Muslim groups have experienced an increase in Islamic orthodoxy. Acceptance of Islamic orthodoxy is a strategic step in defending Islam from ideological as well as political threats. Muslim and non-Muslim minority groups as threats to the Muslim community voiced by Muslim preachers for their purposes and interests. This threat narrative is produced, formulated, and reformulated continuously in particular agendas. This research also reveals the potential for social-religious radicalism, participation, and actions and movements that may lead to violence.

Chapter three of this book, *Examining the growth of Islamic conservatism in Indonesia The case of West Java*, written by Irman G. Lanti, Akim, and Windy Dermawan. (p. 56-79). This article describes in-depth the growth of Islamic conservatism in the province of West Java in the last three decades. This article finds that Islamic conservatism has grown quite rapidly since the last few years due to the first, the influence of the Darul Islam (DI) rebellion in the 1950s/1960s, which has left a big scar among many Islamic clerics and Islamic schools in West Java. Second, unlike in East Java and Central Java, Nadlatul Ulama (NU) does not significantly mediate religious problems in the community. So that the wave of Islamic conservatism has experienced rapid growth over the last three decades. The indicator can be seen from applying the most Islamic Sharia regulations in Indonesia since the reformation.

Chapter fourth of this book written by Ahmad Najib Burhani entitled *Resisting conservatism Muhammadiyah's experience through its social activities*. (p.80-94). This article describes the responds Islamic organization Muhammadiyah's anti-Ahok demonstration known as the Defending Islam Action, the banning of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) as a religious organization, the controversy related to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), and the Constitutional Court's decision on the stream of belief. The Muhammadiyah organization, in responding to these issues, always puts forward the spirit of the Muhammadiyah organization as a social movement in realizing the benefit. The new culture and politics in developing organizations, such as cultural da'wah, thematic interpretation, inclusive relations with minorities, try to provide a balanced view and adapt to changes in the environment—Indonesian society.

Chapter five of this book written by Asep Muhammad Iqbal entitled *Challenging Moderate Islam in Indonesia NU Garis Lurus and its construction of the "authentic" NU online*. (p. 95-115). This article discusses the emergence of a conservative faction in the internal environment of the Nahdlatul Ulama organization (NU) named NU Garis Lurus. Straight-line NU is a reaction to mainstream NU which is judged to have deviated from the authentic teachings of NU as taught by its founder Hasyim Asya'ari. The straight-line NU considers the mainstream Islamic organization Nahdatul Ulama NU to have deviated from its fundamental values, such as supporting Shia minority groups, supporting Secularism, Pluralism, and Liberalism as well as supporting Ahok in the Jakarta gubernatorial election, and tending to be open to other religions and spread Islam Nusantara. On the other hand, NU Garis Lurus seeks to return NU followers to the pure teachings of KH Hasyim Asy'ari, namely Sunni, with the Shafi'i school

and anti-secularism, anti-pluralism, and anti-liberalism and considers the Shia sect to be deviant and contrary to Islamic teachings.

Chapter six of this book written by Syafiq Hasyim entitled *MUI and its Discursive Relevance for "Aksi Bela Islam" a Growing Trend of Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia*. (p.116-132). This article examines the critical role of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in the Islamic Defense Action (ABI) movement. Although the MUI has issued the MUI's Religious Opinions and Attitudes in the Ahok case, where the opinion can be considered of higher value than the fatwa, in reality, according to Hasyim, the religious opinions and attitudes are the same as the fatwa. In fact, according to Hasyim, the attitude of the Indonesian Council of Ulama(MUI) in the Ahok case cannot be separated from the politicization factor that can be read where the MUI used the fatwa about Islamic leadership.

Chapter seven of this book was written by Masdar Hilmy entitled *The Rise and Fall of "Transnational" Islam in Indonesia: the Future of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI)*. (p. 133-145). This article describes Hizbut Tahrir's (HTI) emergence until it dissolved under the Jokowi administration through Government Regulation No. 2 of 2017 about Society Organizations. Even though the HTI organization disbanded, it does not abolish the caliphate ideology that it stands for. Because according to Hilmy, ideology appears in the political opportunity structure in society. As long as the problems of poverty, injustice, social inequality, political oppression still surround the life of the Muslim community, the ideology of the caliphate will reappear in the same form or with other tendencies. According to Hilmy, the most effective way to end any ideology is not by banning it but by closing the possibility of its revival. If the state cannot eradicate structural problems such as poverty, unemployment, social inequality, economic deprivation, and political oppression, the ideology of the caliphate tends to grow and gain a firm grip amid social and political crises that befell the country.

Chapter eight of this book written by Muhammad Iqbal Ahnaf entitled, *Why Do Islamist Movement Die? Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia and its Decline*. (p.146-162). This article discusses the decline in the activities of the Indonesian Mujahideen Council caused by a combination of state pressure and internal dynamics within the MMI organization. The decline in MMI activities started with its prominent leader Abu Bakar Ba'asyir as Amir (Ahl Halli Wal Aqdi), leaving MMI in 2008 and joined the new organization Jamaah Ansorut Tauhid (JAD). The moving of the Amir of MMI was also followed by several MMI members following in Ba'asyir's footsteps in joining JAD. This division affects the organization's internal dynamics and affects the organization's vision between choosing a strategy of struggle using violence or accommodation politics in a non-violent way. The decline in the activities of the MMI organization has changed its strategy of struggle from using violence to become part of political contestation. MMI leaders are more committed to participating in the political process and reject the path of violent extremism.

Chapter nine of this book, written by Yon Machmudi entitled *The PKS and Tarbiyah Movement*. (p.163-180). This article discusses how the Islamic Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) guides the emerging factions in the internal party, namely between traditionalists and revivalists. The leadership of prosperous Islamic justice is more traditionalist than the previous leadership, which tended to be revivalist. The debate arose in PKS regarding the party's attitude, whether as an opposition to the ruling government supporting Jokowi or tending to be accommodative in receiving benefits from state protection. Mahmudi describes that although PKS is often seen as a political party that tends to be conservative, there are variations in its internal dynamics that paint a more complex picture of positioning itself politically.

Chapter ten of this book, written by Andar Nubowo entitled *Indonesian Hybrid Salafism: Wahdah Islamiyah's Rise, Ideology and Utopia*. (p.182-196). This article describes a Salafi Islamic organization, Wahdah Islamiyah, based in South Sulawesi. This article describes the development of the Wahdah Islamiyah organization, starting from the da'wah and Tarbiyah methods, ideology, the idea of a shariah NKRI and how the organization forms ideas about Muslim identity in the area. This article argues that after separating from Muhammadiyah in the mid-1980s, this organization developed rapidly by combining a pure Salafi ideology with a pragmatic approach to local socio-economic and political development. Wahdah Islamiyah organization to become an influential and widely accepted Islamic organization in South Sulawesi in just two decades.

Chapter eleven of this book, written by Najib Kailani, entitled *Creating Entrepreneurial and Pious Muslim Subjectivity in Globalised Indonesia*. (p.198-209). This article explains that Islamic conservatism has led to the emergence of “market Islam.” The increasing number of books related to the empowerment of Muslims and motivational seminars encourage middle-class Muslims to increase their faith while maintaining traditional capitalist values such as consumption and wealth accumulation. This article argues that Islamic conservatism does not necessarily mean increasing intolerance or the desire to establish an Islamic state but can be used to encourage middle-class Muslims to pursue increased prosperity and materialism.

The book closes with an article entitled, *Conservative Islam and Dilemma of Indonesian Democracy*. (p.210-220). The recent rise of Islamic conservatism has several implications for the development of democracy in Indonesia. The book ends with a prediction that conservative Islamism will continue to be an important influence in Indonesia’s political and socio-economic developments in the future. These conservative groups have developed, and they are not limited to using only one vehicle, namely religion, but have other ways of conveying their political aspirations. This book provides a significant contribution in explaining the phenomenon of the Islamic movement and its relationship to politics, democracy, society, and economics to be used as an alternative approach to explaining Islam’s rise in Indonesia.

Overall this book shows that religious conservatism is influenced by the role of Islamist groups and the use of identity politics in the religious conservatism movement in Indonesia. In addition, the two entities have expanded their influence both at the state level and in civil society. Religious conservatism is a significant challenge to the democracy, diversity and plurality of Indonesian society.

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