

Conference Paper

The Challenge of the Millennial Generation of Muslims: Between the Dilemma of Progress and Setbacks

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ORCIDSyariful Alam: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2053-2373>**Abstract.**

The millennial Muslim generation has a striking, creative, energetic, and optimistic existence. But not all Muslims today are part of this millennial generation. Some groups refuse, support, or mediate. Modernity, in essence, is no longer a symptom that must be opposed, fought, and destroyed; on the contrary, millennial Muslims believe that faith and modernity can collaborate, go hand in hand, and complement each other. Muslim societies are forced to make changes in mindset and reform their communities so that they can improve their backwardness and are finally able to make many positive contributions. Science, technology, and information are vital parts of progress that have dominated all aspects of social life, even religion. The rapid freedom of information can be taken as an opportunity, while it can also become a challenge for Muslim societies in facing the positive and negative impacts that attack internally and externally, which will cause major changes in influencing the creed, association, and thoughts that slowly damage the teachings of Islam. So it is necessary to have a critical attitude and moderate understanding in facing challenges amid the current of modernity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term millennial is no stranger to society. All information relating to contemporary problems is very interesting to learn. The era that has created modernity into the universal culture, while modernity is always local or national content because it is a synthesis of the economic dimension that continues to look for 'new modes of production' with traditional values. The characteristic millennial society is a picture of a perfect society that is highly dominated by rationality, scientific far from dogmatic, and mystical elements.

Islam as an alternative paradigm for the civilization of plural societies based on the concept of monotheism was forced to deal with the situation. In many cases, Islam turned out to provide a comprehensive foundation in offering alternative solutions to

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the problems that occur. Islam as a religion that has a universal order certainly has a role in solving millennial problems.

Islam has an important role in regulating all aspects of human life both in the spiritual, individual, humanitarian aspects, and those related to nature and other creatures. Human life is dynamic, in which all kinds of phenomena in the form of matter and thought all refer to change and progress. The majority of Muslims support these changes because the concept of Islam applies to all countries and does not limit to certain places or regions.¹ Therefore, Islam strongly supports more progressive human life with the concept of modern life that connects all aspects of life with God.

It was Anthony Giddens, who believed that modernity was a necessity that could not be compromised.² The insistence on the current of modernity becomes part of the journey of space and time that must be passed by all humans. That is, can not but, we humans can only adjust and follow developments and changes in the existence of modernity. Thus, modernity is a symptom that can be found anywhere, both in developed countries, such as Western Europe and America, but also applies and is experienced by developing countries both in Asia and Africa.

The rapid change in modernity was motivated by the economic, political, and philosophical revolution of the renaissance and 16th century Aufklärung, which is rooted in ideology: (1) free from religion (church) and; (2) physics is placed as a humanities paradigm.³ While modernity is always characterized by a very high trust in science.⁴

The development of modernity now brings us to the sophistication of information technology that is developing so rapidly. Some experts call this millennium era the term new wave technology, which is the technology that can connect individuals and groups. One of the media called 'the new wave technology' is the internet, a gateway that is easily accessible to the universe's content, namely cyberspace.⁵ This information technology has provided facilities for human activities. For example communication activities, both sending and receiving messages and information can be done with a variety of technological media. Among the forms of information technology are social media, wikis, blogs, and social networks.

This phenomenon has shifted the way of human communication, from communication in the real world to communication. Even the existence of a person is also measured by the ownership of an account on his social network.⁶ The existence of this social network has a profound impact on social life, that is the relationship between individuals is no longer distant and takes place openly. At this level, people communicate only through various symbols in the form of letters and numbers.

Besides, social media is now no longer a means of communication and interaction, and a means to exist but also as a means of online business, sharing ideas, spreading information, and even effectively used for various practices of fraud, intimidation, slander, provocation of hatred, and the like. In short, social media can now be used for any purpose and is hard to block. Modernity in the millennial era has roots in thinking about choices about how people make choices, be they moral, personal, economic, or political. The issue of rational choice is a major issue for millennial Muslims. The choice of rationality, debate, discussion, and differences are part of the mindset in this era.⁷

2. METHODOLOGY/ MATERIALS

This article is a qualitative literature review that examines objects naturally where this researcher is a key instrument by referring to the literature written by objects examined as primary data extracted through various library information which results in the achievement that the influence of the millennial era on Muslim society is not only disturbing the technology sector but also other fields, such as law, religion, economics, social and culture, so that to overcome the problems in that era needed to revitalize the role of religious and social science as a basis for technological development so as not to lose the religious and human values. In this approach, it can also be seen from the procedures applied, where the research procedures produced are descriptive data, speech, writing, and observed behavior from the community or the research subject itself.^[1]

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Problems Of Muslim Community Identity In The Millennial Era

When reviewing the millennial era, the discussion of modernity that intersects with globalization is important to be discussed. Several theories discuss the issue of globalization that accompanies modernity, identity, meaning, and its influence on Muslim society. Roland Robertson said that globalization is: "The compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole".^[2] Globalization makes the world a single place and removes the autonomy of actors, and everything that is in the vortex of globalization is limited to positioning itself and defining its identity.

While John Tomlinson explained that: “.. the globalization of mundane experience may make a stable sense of “local” cultural identity (including national identity) increasingly difficult to maintain, as our daily lives become more and more interwoven with, and penetrated by, influences and experiences that have their origins far away”.[3] Globalization has changed the pattern of relationships between identity and geographical place, which were initially interrelated, but later changed through the spread of different cultures, mobilization of people from one place to another, and market mechanisms that fade local culture, which in turn can change identity individual independently. Nevertheless, globalization has a very important power in fostering cultural identity.[3]

Manuel Castells said that life today is shaped by the tendency of conflict between globalization and identity. Globalization creates what is called “the widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity that challenge globalization”.[4] While Giddens defines globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”. Giddens’ concept of time-space distinction explains that social interactions and relationships in the world today do not depend on physical presence in a particular location since technology facilitates and makes relations and interactions in the world no longer depend on physical presence in a particular location and makes relationships that are more closely between “... other people who are ‘absent’, even those who are far apart in any situation”.[5]

Giddens also explained that modernity is a post-traditional order. Some of the professional concepts related to this are “how should I live?”, “What clothes should be worn?”, “What to eat?”, And the most important is “how to interpret it?”. These are all questions that in the process of developing self-identity, are questions that must be answered and decided in everyday life about how to behave in the modern world.[6]

Post-traditional society is a community that questions traditional values and perspectives; “What must be done?”, “How should it act?”, “What must be?”, these questions are important for all people who live in modern situations. In other words, a post-traditional society is a society that experiences “manifested uncertainty” as a consequence of modernity. This situation refers to the uncertainty experienced by humans in daily life as a result of the development of science and human intervention in social and natural - especially through the advancement of communication technology - to create a cosmopolitan society that is connected (globalizing cosmopolitan society) and ultimately causes traditions that were previously held in society to be open to question.

Then when globalization eliminates traditional values, identity “..has to be created and recreated on a more active basis than before”.[7] It is at this stage that what Giddens

refers to as fundamentalism emerges when individuals seek or re-create other traditions while at the same time affirming their identity amid globalization. Fundamentalist groups, according to Giddens, want to return to sacred texts and read them literally and try to apply the doctrine in social, political, and economic life.

Identity is a dynamic entity as a result of the negotiation of old and present cultural roots, from dialectics between ethnicity, race, and nation. Mercer, as quoted by Chris Wedon, states that identity is often a crucial issue when it is on the verge of a crisis when an identity that is considered certain and stable is replaced by doubt and uncertainty.[8] This is logical because uncertainty always makes people try to find a new identity and live in that uncertainty. And that uncertainty is caused by various elements of identity formation and not only from one cultural aspect, especially in the post-colonial and global era where people of different races and ethnicities are interconnected. Wedon further assert that identity is formed socially, culturally, and also institutionally.

Socially, identity construction is influenced by human relations. Stuart Hall asserts that identity is formed through discursive formation and relationships with others. The self-construction requires the existence of the other. Culturally the formation of identity is related to cultural roots and dynamics; whereas institutional identity is often constructed on the formalization of certain institutions such as the state which gives a characteristic of the citizens.

The identification process is carried out by constructing itself in various forms of symbols. For example, the exchange aspect of religious economic transactions, especially when the symbol of faith is used to market products related to Islam. Increased welfare access among the Muslim community, encounters, and various tools of modernity, such as new technology in communicating and accessing information (cybermedia online) create a unique and interesting construction and expression of diversity to be observed.

3.2. Modernity Is Not The Enemy Of Muslim Societies

Muslim-majority countries - Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, and Malaysia - show the character of millennial Muslim generations who believe that faith and modernity are not exclusive, but the collaboration of both can make the millennial generation better.[9] Their faith certainly affects whatever they do, and they believe this can make modernity work better. They fully merge into modern life and benefit the good of individuals and society, while at the same time being able to increase their faith.

The Millennial Muslim generation has many ideas that are the pioneers of world civilization, both among Muslims and the wider community. With their young demographic, this influence will continue to grow. They will shape and direct the future of the wider Muslim population and will further have a significant impact on the global level. Economic influence gradually shifted towards the Islamic and eastern worlds. This growth is a result of the large workforce resources and youth population that can create dynamic changes.

Maybe we need to look back to the European / Renaissance enlightenment era and see it as a movement that regards religion as a barrier to progress, which puts us on a journey to leave religion so that we can become a figure who looks to the future, is oriented towards science, and uses new technology.[10] When science, democracy, and consumerism are widespread, religion will disappear. However, the attitude of millennial society is arguably surprising that religion makes modernity look better and modernity also makes religion better.

An unexpected trend regarding the next millennial generation is when prosperity is seen in the large Muslim population in the world and when digital technology opens access to information, ideas and solidarity, in fact, the reality that the trust of the Muslim community is increasing. The Muslim community, especially the Millennial community, reflects their heritage to see what their strengths are and how to make them inspire the past to rise again in the modern world.[11] The idea that science is firmly rooted in the golden era of Islamic civilization is one of the factors that drive them to regain their position in modern life and offers a view and proof that not only religion can go hand in hand with modernity, but religion can also inspire modernity.

3.3. The Future Concept Of Millennial Muslim Societies

The future concept of the desired Islamic community, formulated in a basic concept that contains an operating framework for the future, which contains five main thoughts;

First; alternative non-capitalist economies that pay attention to the poor and the environment. In general, the economic problems of the Muslim community from the beginning until now are inseparable from four major issues namely; poverty, economic inequality, unemployment, and inflation. Poverty is a major issue in the economy because poverty causes economic inequality. According to Umer Chapra, there are two approaches to Islamic economics in resolving cases of economic inequality that prevail in society namely justice and brotherhood.[12] An ideal Islamic society must actualize both simultaneously because they are the same two inseparable sides. Thus, these two

goals are integrated very strongly into Islamic teachings so that their realization becomes a spiritual commitment (worship) for the Islamic community. Brotherhood and justice in distribution demand all economic actors to jointly utilize natural resources based on sharia goals. Namely, the fulfillment of community economic life needs, especially the primary aspects, namely; clothing, food, shelter, education, and health are of mutual concern, one of which is by using Islamic philanthropic instruments; sodaqah, zakah, infaq, and waqf.

Second; gender partnership. Gender partnership here refers to the concept of gender which involves differences in roles, functions, responsibilities, needs, and social status between men and women based on the formation or construction of the culture of society.[13] The social role of gender is not natural, but based on community agreements that can be exchanged and can change depending on local cultural conditions and with behavioral components ranging from the contribution of ideas, attention, moral and material assistance, advice based on knowledge gained, to the assistance of workers and time.

Third; as a world community that guides the principles of tolerance. There is no advantage of an individual over another individual, one group over another group, a master over his servants, and the government over his people. Based on the origin of all human events being the same then it is not worthy of anyone or one group to boast of others or insult them.[14] The primary mission of the Qur'an in social life is to uphold the principle of equality (egalitarianism) and erode all forms of fanaticism in a community or group. With these similarities, fellow members of the community can work together even though there are differences in principle between members, namely differences in aqidah (faith). The differences are not intended to show the superiority of each other, but to know each other and uphold the principles of unity, brotherhood, equality, and freedom.

Fourth; leadership is based on science, morals, and technology. As the caliph (leader), humans are required to have compassion, which is at the same time their identity. The quality of compassion is a reflection of the human tendency to emulate the character of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. As the human caliph was given the mandate to regulate life on earth, humans can not be separated from their attachment to the Creator. In this case, humans are required to be grateful for their existence and the environment. The caliph's personality is combined in four interrelated sides:[15] (1) obeying the assignment given by Allah, (2) accepting the assignment and implementing it in the lives of individuals and groups, (3) maintaining and managing the environment for mutual benefit, (4) Making the tasks of the caliph as a guide for their implementation.

This will be a capital for increasing awareness of Muslim communities so that they can participate in realizing millennial Islamic society with creative, critical and constructive thoughts. This concept is not imperialist, but is a multiracial, multicultural, multi-religious model, and supports pluralism in society.

Doctrinally, Islamic societies must track the relevance of Islam to the essential values of modernity. In itself, Islam contains modern values in the sense of always giving a new perspective to the broader horizon of human values. In many cases, Islam turned out to provide a comprehensive foundation in offering alternative solutions to problems.

The Koran as a guide to Muslim life, emphasizes the importance of science and technology. The first verses of the Koran command humans to study. Islam strongly encourages humanity to use reason, demand knowledge, and learn and pay attention to the deepest. By following the explanation of the Koran; (1) "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding. (2) Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees.

Science becomes an increasingly important keyword, it is also revealed in the conclusions of Maurice Bucaille's research: "There are no problems that are explained in the Koran and can be deceived by science".[16] Modern investigations and discoveries have demonstrated the truths of the Koran, the source of Islamic doctrine and law. But science and technology, which are the key to this progress, on the other hand, are precisely a source of civilization problems.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The problems that occur today cannot be solved in the same way as in the past concept. Talking about Islam and modernity is always interesting and often invites debate. It not only concerns theoretical issues but also involves the applicative realm in social life. Islam and modernity by experts are always placed face to face, because Islam and modernity itself can not always be met as a whole, at certain points these two entities often experience polemic or conflict with each other. For this reason, some Muslim societies reject modernization because according to them modernization is not always applicable in Muslim societies. Meanwhile, other parts of Muslims also try to develop discourse and practices of social life that emphasize compatibility between Islam and modernity. Modernity that has swept the Muslim world, with all its positive and negative effects, is a challenge that must be faced by Muslims in the millennial era now. Muslims are required to work extra hard to develop all their potential to solve their problems. In

addition to preparing for superior competitiveness, it is necessary to build awareness and maturity of the community in responding to the development of the world today, especially in the post-truth era, when information is flowing freely without clarity of truth. The author believes that two paths must be taken by the Islamic community: First, to make an understanding of Islamic teachings that link and match between human resources and the needs of the age in the millennium era. Second, the prepared human resources must also be equipped with the concepts of human values and religion. If this happens, then global modernity can have a positive impact on human civilization itself.

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