Research Article

Analysis of Hamid Mawlana's Thoughts on Islamic Communication Theory

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Abstract.
This paper explores Islamic communication theory developed by Hamid Mowlana (1979, 1993, 2007). The analysis includes the context of the emergence of a discourse on Islamic communication in the academic realm and the elaboration and criticism of the substance of Hamid Mowlana's Islamic communication theory. Using the literature study method, the author found that the emergence of Islamic communication theory was motivated by the meeting of two streams of criticism of Western science, namely the criticism of Islamic intellectuals against the paradigm of Western social science (and therefore, against western modernization); and the tendency towards international communication studies by emphasizing the DE westernization approach, motivated by the cultural turn in the development of the social sciences. Hamid Mowlana formulated Islamic communication theory by proposing the concept of tabligh initially developed from his studies of communication practices and systems in Iran, especially around the period before and after the revolution. Tabligh, besides being a theory, is also an ethic and is based on five fundamental principles: Tauhid, Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, Ummah, Taqwa, and Amanah. Hamid Mowlana's Islamic communication theory has its weaknesses, especially in its basic assumptions about Islamic exceptionalism and the singularity of Islamic and Western civilizations.

Keywords: Tablighi, Islamic communication theory, Hamid Mowlana

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1. Introduction

In the practical realm, the growth of Islamic media is very rapid. Many Muslim groups and individuals utilize various digital platforms to convey various Islamic knowledge, meet and exchange ideas, and even form communities. Within the framework of the division of communication science that is popular in Indonesia, which consists of interpersonal, group, organizational, and mass, digital communication using social media is undoubtedly not only a part of mass communication. It has become an inherent part of all levels of communication, from interpersonal and mass to international (global).

In this regard, several researchers have initiated research initiatives to see the intersection of religion and digital media, especially in practice. However, these studies

generally still use theoretical tools taken from the Western scientific tradition. This is, of course, understandable, considering that it is currently very difficult (if not non-existent) to find a theoretical framework that can be used to see religious phenomena in relation to the growth of digital media in the context of Indonesian Islamic society.

In addition, there are many problems in the realm of media and communication practices and policies that have not been resolved. The government, for example, is still stuttering in handling the issue of freedom of expression and protection of user privacy on social media. These phenomena and problems are challenges for communication science academics, including those under the auspices of Islamic universities.

This article aims to conduct an initial exploration related to Islamic communication studies that focuses on tracing and analyzing the emergence and development of Islamic communication theory formulated by Hamid Mowlana [11]. As far as the author's research is concerned, this is one of the first (if not the only) attempts ever made by communication scientists to build a communication theory that is developed, or at least linked, to the treasury of Islamic knowledge.

2. Method

This paper is based on a literature review. In analyzing Hamid Mawlana's thoughts on Islamic communication theory, this paper will focus on (i) the context of the emergence of discourse on Islamic communication in the academic realm, (ii) elaboration and criticism of Hamid Mawlana's thoughts on Islamic communication theory.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Context of the Emergence of Islamic Communication Theory

Before explaining how the discourse and debate on Islamic communication emerged and developed in the academic realm, it is important to understand the background behind the emergence of Islamic communication. By understanding this context, we can see that this dynamic does not stand alone but is part of a larger wave of criticism of the Western-biased social science paradigm launched by intellectuals from both Muslim countries and Western countries themselves.

The paradigm of the Islamization of knowledge or Islamic knowledge began to emerge from the works of Sayyed Hossein Nasr in the 1970s. This discourse continued

to develop through the works of other intellectuals, such as Syed Naquib Alatas and Syed Farid Alatas. These three thinkers have similarities in criticizing the paradigm and dominance of Western science, although each later took a different focus. Nasr, who emphasized the philosophical approach to science, initially criticized the Western scientific paradigm, which he thought was increasingly externalized and desacralized[13]. according to Nasr, knowledge cannot be separated from the sacred. As the primary instrument or tool for knowing, intelligence has been endowed with the ability to know God by nature[13] . Thus, the more humans know (knowledge), the more they know the all-knowing. The desacralization of science, even to examine the most sacred things, has released this nature and thus. Starting from this criticism, Nasr proposed a new paradigm, namely the Islamization of knowledge, which can be simply interpreted as bringing knowledge back to its essence, namely as a way to know the Ultimate Reality. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Atas also conveyed criticism of Western science (and civilization). According to Alatas, western science, instead of bringing peace and justice, has brought chaos to human life[1]. This problem, according to him, is caused by Western science relying solely on reasoning[1]. If Hossein Nasr proposed the idea of the Islamization of science, al-Atas offered the idea of the de-westernization of knowledge. Al Atas's idea is based on the assumption that the knowledge that currently exists and is widely spread in society is not actual knowledge but rather an interpretation (and contains values) of Western civilization. The first thing to do, therefore, according to al Attas, is to isolate knowledge from the interpretation bias and then reinterpret it based on Islamic principles. If, in the 1970s, criticism of Western science came from non-Western countries, in the following period, criticisms emerged from Western thinkers about science that they realized was more based on the context of Western society. The problem is that this science is then considered universal, representative, and applicable in various other parts of the world. In communication science, awareness of Western bias emerged as part of the 'cultural turn' process in the development of social sciences[6]. As a basic assumption, the cultural turn in social science rejects the assumption of cultural[14]. The cultural turn emerged along with the increasingly intense globalization process, which allows for the interaction of various cultures from various countries both constructively as stated by 'culturalists' and exploitatively as criticized by the political economy view.

In media and communication studies, globalization and the awareness to understand the diversity of contexts outside the United States and Europe emerged simultaneously in some cases, helped drive the emergence of global communication studies. Downing

(1996), in this case, became one of the first communication scholars to criticize Western bias in media and communication studies. Subsequent works appeared, including collections of writings entitled De-Westernizing Media Studies[2] and De-Westernizing Communication Research[6]. These works attempted to broaden the horizon of media and communication studies in parts outside Europe (West) and the United States through comparative media and communication studies. These works also critique the dominance and Western bias in media and communication studies so far. Suppose we refer back to Al Attas' work above. In that case, the tendency towards de-westernization of science shows a collective and reflective awareness among scientists about the weaknesses of social science that has been built so far and about the importance of seeing and seriously considering alternative approaches or even paradigms other than those that have been used so far not least, for some scientists, the paradigm based on Islam. Among the ideas that emerged from the meeting of the two critiques of Western (communication) science, we can find the Islamic communication theory offered by Hamid Mowlana. Mowlana is one of the few thinkers who consistently voices ideas about Islamic communication science. Mowlana and his ideas represent an interesting combination of cultural and academic identities.

Regarding cultural background, Mowlana, like Nasr, Naquib al Attas, and Farid al Attas, is a non-Western intellectual who received higher education and then had a career in the Western academic world. In terms of approach, Mowlana combines a religious perspective (Islam) and global or international communication studies. Mowlana is one of the communication science academics to be reckoned with. The recognition of the academic community, in addition to being seen from the citation of his works, can also be seen from their trust in making Mwolna the president of The International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) for 1994-1998.

Based on the brief explanation above, it can be seen that the emergence of Islamic communication theory was motivated by the meeting of two streams of criticism of Western science, namely, first, criticism of Islamic intellectuals towards the paradigm of Western social science (and therefore, towards western-style modernization); second, the tendency towards international communication studies which were partly motivated by the cultural turn in the development of the social sciences. The two contexts overlap in the fact that both emerged as a form of criticism of the paradigm and dominance of Western (social) science. If the group of joint critics came mostly from non-western ('external') intellectuals, the second group of critics came more from Western thinkers themselves, or in other words, as a form of self-criticism.

The following section will explain Mowlana's thoughts on Islamic communication science and the responses and criticisms of other thinkers towards this idea.

3.2. Hamid Mowlana's Islamic Communication Theory

Mowlana's ideas about Islamic communication can be traced back to his study of the role of communication and the Iranian revolutionary process[10]. He had not yet put forward any ideas regarding Islamic communication at that time. Instead, he showed how the contestation between the mainstream media channels controlled by the ruling regime (newspapers, television) and the informal communication channels used by citizens to exchange messages and ideas and to organize. Among the informal communication platforms that Mowlana referred to was the Bazaar, which transformed into a public space that functioned as a place for transactions and where citizens exchanged messages and discussed political issues. This communication platform, Mowlana continued, was connected to other informal and traditional communication platforms, including the mosque, where thousands of worshipers met and communicated with each other regularly.

Along with using "small media" such as cassettes and recorders, Mowlana showed that these communication platforms had transformed into a total communication system that played a role in rolling out the revolution in Iran. Although he did not mention the term Islamic communication, in this early work, Mowlana began to show his views on the transformative nature of communication, which is not only in the form of exchanging messages but also encouraging radical change in society. In his work published almost three decades later, Mowlana, citing Ibn Khaldun, wrote, "...communication as a social institution [that] determines the direction and the pace of dynamic social development"[11]. Second is the binary or oppositional view of the relationship between the West and Islam. In his study, Mowlana contrasts the traditional communication system used by (Islamic) citizens versus the mainstream media controlled by the regime and, simultaneously, a mouthpiece for the West in Iran.

Furthermore, from this study (and subsequent studies), he builds an argument that Western penetration whether in terms of culture, politics, or economy has no significant influence on the way of life and values of the wider society or if it does happen, it will be through quite fierce contestation (or even rejection). According to him, this happens because Western civilization is incompatible with Islamic society. This conclusion about incompatibility, in turn, becomes an important basis, or raison d'etre, for Muslims to build

and use an Islamic communication system based on Islamic communication theory. Although starting from the case of Iran, Mowlana's theory attempts to show that the nation-state is not the primary context in which a total communication system operates. In this case, Mowlana emphasizes the cultural dimension that is not limited by the state's territorial boundaries as a context[10]. Through the case of Iran, he shows that the politically dominant system (the Pahlavi regime) supported by the West cannot stem the cultural (system) that moves through 'traditional' communication modes. Furthermore, he criticizes that politically and economically, the Western communication model "helped to concentrate power in the hands of a few and to contribute to the centralization of the state apparatus and corporate monopoly"[10]. On the other hand, the communication model in Islamic society "helped to decentralize and diffuse the power of the state and economic interest and to counterbalance authority in the hands of those grounded in the oral tradition"[10].

At this point, we can begin to understand the intersection of Mowlana's ideas with the critics of Western civilization discussed earlier. Mowlana, like Nasr, for example, tried to dig into the treasures of classical Islamic civilization about how Islamic society, especially in its heyday, was organized political systems, culture, values, and in Mowlana's cash what communication was used. This method does not necessarily end in the same conclusion. However, both of them raise criticism of the Western scientific paradigm that is currently operating while offering an alternative paradigm that is considered more compatible with Islamic society, even globally.

Through studies on contemporary Islamic society (especially Iran) and tracing the treasures of Islamic history, Mowlana offers a theory of Islamic communication based on the tabligh (propagation) concept. Mowlana draws the concept of tabligh further from just conveying messages. In a broad sense, Mowlana wrote that tabligh is both a theory and an ethic of communication[11]. He differentiates the concept of tabligh from communication in general, as he wrote below[11].

The word communication comes from the Latin communico, meaning "share," and it is essentially a social process referring to the act of imparting, conveying, or exchaning ideas, knowledge, or information. It is a process of access or means of access between two or more persons or places. [...]. Propagation, on the other hand, is dissemination and diffusion of some principle, belief, or practice. The Islamic word for propagatin, tabligh, means the increase or spread of a belief by natural reproduction; it is an extension in space and time... tabligh in an Islamic context have a set of ethical boundary and guiding principles.

Furthermore, Mowlana quoted Ibn Khaldun, who wrote about the importance of tabligh in forming an Islamic society (ummah). In this case, tabligh is a "theory of communication, and global community integration is well stated by Ibn Khaldun... Here he cites "truthful propagation" (tabligh) and group cohesion (sassabies) as two fundamental factors in the rise of world powers as States and large communities.

From the quote above, we can see that Mowlana wants to build a distinction between Islamic communication theory (tabligh) and communication in general. Unlike communication that appears to be value-free, tabligh has a transformative nature (encourages change Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar), constitutive (forms institutions, society/ummah), and comes with specific values (e.g., divine values or tauhid). In this case, Mowlana states that tabligh is not only a theory but also an ethic of communication. Epistemologically, Islamic communication theory thus comes with a set of values that are inseparable components of it. In this case, Mowlana mentions five fundamental concepts in Islam that are the basis of communication ethics. These concepts include Tauhid, Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, Ummah, Amanah, and Taqwa[11]. As the most basic concept, Tauhid is characterized by a view of the unity, coherence, and harmony of all parts of the universe. With this principle, one of the most important functions of Islamic communication is to free people from dependence on anything other than Allah and to destroy myths. Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, by Mowlana, is interpreted as social responsibility. Every Muslim, in this case, is responsible for reminding each other. This function must also be practiced in media institutions such as radio, television, and the press. The third concept is ummah (community). Through this concept, Mowlana emphasizes that the Islamic communication system operates across ethnic, political (state), and geographical boundaries. Islamic communication, thus, is global. Fourth, taqwa, which can be interpreted as obedience (piety). Fifth, amanah. One of the main elements of this concept is the principle of serving the public. In Islamic communication, the media has a responsibility to serve the public.

3.3. Criticism of Islamic Communication Theory

Mowlana's ideas about Islamic communication theory are not free from criticism. Gholam Khiabany is among the leading critics of Islamic communication theory. Khiabany first criticizes the assumptions behind Mowlana's theory, which, according to Khiabany, are based on the idea of Islamic exceptionalism.[4][5][6] This idea is characterized by the understanding that Islam is a universe completely different from other civilizations, especially the West. The problem with this idea, of course, is the neglect of the fact

that Islamic communities in various parts of the world have long interacted with various other cultures and have, therefore, formed a variety of different entities. The second criticism, which is also related, is the assumption of the singularity of Islam and the singularity of the West. Through the (total) dichotomy between Islam and the West, Mowlana has consciously or unconsciously assumed the existence of only "one Islam" and "one West" and ignored the various branches and traditions within each civilization. Islam, like other civilizations, consists of various schools of thought, cultures, and value systems that have often been indigenized with the local context in which Islam grew. Mawlana's view, which tends to be simplistic, cannot be separated from the basis of his study which departs from the Iranian model around the period of the revolution. The Iranian Islamic model with its Islamic Republic system is different from other countries with Muslim majority citizens, both in the Middle East and in Asia, including Indonesia. In addition to the two criticisms conveyed by Khiabany, the author argues that another problem with the Islamic communication theory offered by Mawlana is that it does not adequately analyze what Western communication theory means. He only briefly outlines the concept of Western communication in general with a review of the basic definitions related to communication. If what is meant is communication theories in the scientific tradition born in Western countries, we can find so many communication theories with a very broad spectrum—from objectivists who emphasize scientific causality to interpretive who pay more attention to the construction of reality that is based on various dimensions and contexts.

4. Conclusion

This paper finds that (i) the emergence of Islamic communication theory was motivated by the meeting of two streams of criticism of Western science, namely, first, the criticism of Islamic intellectuals against the paradigm of Western social science (and therefore, against Western-style modernization); second, the tendency towards international communication studies by emphasizing the de westernization approach which was motivated by the cultural turn in the development of the social sciences. (ii) Hamid Mowlana formulated Islamic communication theory by proposing the concept of tabligh initially developed from his studies of communication practices and systems in Iran, especially around the period before and after the revolution. Tabligh, apart from being a theory, is also an ethic and is based on five fundamental principles consisting of Tauhid, Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, Ummah, Taqwa, and Amanah. Hamid Mowlana's

Islamic communication theory has weaknesses, especially in its basic assumptions about Islamic exceptionalism and the singularity of Islamic and Western civilizations.

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