Exploring the Nexus of Islamic Modernism and Intellectual Development

Nur Fauziah
1 Doctor of Islamic Studies. Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah. Indonesia

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ABSTRACT
This paper discusses Islamic modernism and the development of Islamic intellectualism. The method used is descriptive-analytical method with a historical approach. Its aim is to understand Islamic modernism and the development of Islamic intellectualism. The author finds that: First, Islamic modernism is a renewal of understanding that is more relevant to modern life, interpreting things to open the door of ijtihad and avoid blind adherence to schools of thought by thinking rationally in understanding and reflecting on Islamic teachings. Second, the development of Islamic intellectualism is divided into three eras. Each has a different pattern. The classical era began at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, where the development of Islamic intellectualism was practiced through teaching and education using methods of writing and memorization. In the medieval era, Islamic intellectualism began to flourish. Institutionalization began to emerge through theological movements, Sufism, and schools of thought. Furthermore, in the modern era, there is a struggle within Islamic intellectual tradition. The modern era seeks to eradicate superstition, myths, and innovations that have constrained the Muslim community.

INTRODUCTION
The golden age, decline, and revival of Islamic renewal have been experienced. Certainly, many challenges have influenced it. The main factor causing the decline of the Islamic community is its distance from Islamic teachings as the primary source, namely the Word of Allah, the Qur’an, and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (Hasbullah: 2014). The existence of various sects and sectarianism has led to the division of the Islamic community. Furthermore, Western dominance, political manipulation, and excessive fanaticism towards schools of thought have become prevalent (Munir: 1994). The decline in intellectual development is due to the stifling of Islamic thought, which is a factor causing the regression of the Islamic community. Meanwhile, philosophy, science, and technology are advancing rapidly in Western countries. Consequently, the West can dominate the world, including the Islamic world (Nasution: 1988).

The Islamic world before the 19th century experienced a period of colonization and decline. The early 19th century marked the beginning of the renewal and awakening of rational thinking among Muslims. At that time, the Islamic world came into contact with the modern Western world. Muslims began to realize that through rational thinking, the long-abandoned teachings of Islam could be easily
understood again. Thus, the rethinking of Islamic teachings became a new spirit for the progress and development of the Islamic world in the future (Nasution: 1988).

This paper will attempt to examine Islamic Modernism and the Development of Islamic Intellectualism, as well as influential figures in Islamic modernist thought. The presenter will only present three highly influential figures in the modernist Islamic renewal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term modernization in Islamic terminology is referred to as tajdid (renewal) and islah (reform). Tajdid and islah have the same essence, which is to examine, reflect, and interpret new understandings contextually in response to the challenges of the times (Rahmat: 2001). Western countries define modernism as efforts to reform deviant beliefs and customs in society. Moreover, modernism entails thoughts, movements, or trends aimed at adapting to new conditions brought about by modern science and technology (Nasution: 1995). Modernism involves the infiltration of foreign culture into society (Sukamto: 1999). Therefore, modernism cannot be separated from globalization, which implies changes in social and intellectual structures. Globalization is closely related to secularization, forming a unified issue affecting both the Western and Eastern worlds (Lauer: 2003).

Islamic modernism emerged in the early 19th century as the beginning of the Islamic community's renewal. Muslims began to rise and develop through ijtihad. However, Western superiority continued to grow, leaving Muslims behind in philosophy, science, and technology. Various responses emerged among Muslims, reflecting their Islamic orientation (Mawi: 2017).

The first response acknowledges Muslims' decline compared to the West and suggests renewal through Westernization. The second response rejects anything from the West, advocating a return to the Quran and Hadith, believing Islamic teachings are superior to Western influence (Mawi: 2017). Nurcholis Madjid contributed his perspective on modernization, defining it as rational thinking grounded in moral dimensions and faith in Allah. He vehemently opposed the notion that modernization equates to Westernization, as the latter entails secularism linked to atheism (Majid: 1998).

The primary goal of modernization aligned with Islamic teachings is rationalization, where critical thinking is essential, and blind imitation (taqlid) is discouraged. Modernization, therefore, aims for a balance between action and reason, promoting beneficial changes while adhering to Islamic principles (Suadi: 2014). Moderate Islam advocates for interpretation and urges Muslims to embrace ijtihad and reject blind adherence to tradition (Owoyemi: 2011). They emphasize open-mindedness in understanding Islamic sources, believing there is room for reinterpretation and continuous intellectual growth. Modernist Islamic groups are religious reform movements that adopt ideas from modern thinkers like Al-Afghani and Abduh. They prioritize the importance of ijtihad in responding to changes within the Muslim community and advocate for a scientific approach to understanding Islam.

The modernist Islamic group is a religious reform movement that seeks renewal by embracing ideas from modern thinkers like Al-Afghani and Abduh. Al-Afghani and Abduh promoted reform by abandoning blind adherence to the four orthodox schools of thought (madhhabs) and emphasizing the importance of ijtihad in addressing changes within the Muslim community. Modernist Muslims strive to advance the civilization of Islam through a scientific approach to understanding Islamic teachings. They advocate for a return to the primary sources of Islam, the Quran and Hadith, and encourage flexible and continuous reinterpretation of Islamic teachings (Esposito: 2014).

The renewal of Islam began with the meeting between Muhammad Abduh and Jamaluddin Al-Afghani. Philosophy and social political sciences were further expanded. Religious practices were scrutinized to determine what needed to change and what could not be altered. This change was pursued by convincing Muslims not to give up or despair but to remain steadfast and unwavering, continually pursuing renewal in all areas (Sani: 2012). Sayyid Jamaluddin Al-Afghani was a prominent reformer deeply concerned about the condition of the Muslim community at the time. He made tremendous efforts to awaken Muslims and promote renewal through ijtihad. In the Islamic world, Sayyid Jamaluddin Al-Afghani is known as a reformer and activist, altering the mindset of Muslims.

Factors that drove renewal in Egypt, led by modern Islamic thinkers, include the contamination of
Islamic teachings by superstitions, myths, and innovations, as well as the increasing backwardness and colonial domination by Western powers, known as the "Gold, Glory, and Gospel (Asmuni: 1998)

RESEARCH METHOD
This paper constitutes a literature review utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach to explores Exploring the Nexus of Islamic Modernism and Intellectual Development. The research methodology involves data collection through documentation, including various articles and books. Subsequently, content analysis is employed to analyze the descriptive data and scholarly analyses of the premises. The data analysis methods utilized include deductive, inductive, and comparative approaches.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The development of Islamic intellectualism
The evolution of Islamic intellectualism is categorized into three periods, each with distinct characteristics: classical, medieval, and modern. The classical period began during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, where Islamic intellectual development was primarily transmitted through teaching and education via methods of writing and memorization (Fabian: 2018). During the medieval period, Islamic intellectualism began to flourish compared to the classical era. Institutionalization emerged through theological schools, Sufism, and legal schools (madhhabs). This era marked the pinnacle of Islamic intellectualism.

Subsequently, the modern period signifies a struggle within Islamic intellectual tradition. Renewal of thought in understanding Islam is emphasized. Modern times seek to eradicate superstitions, myths, and innovations that have hindered the Muslim community. Islamic teachings are reoriented towards the Quran and Hadith. Rational thinking is promoted, encouraging interpretation through ijtihad to address contemporary challenges. The advancement of Islamic intellectualism reinstates Islam as a religion that provides truths in addressing issues by prioritizing critical thinking. This is due to the ongoing and increasingly complex challenges of each era, necessitating solutions that are difficult to attain. Therefore, ijtihad is required as a path to renewal.

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani possesses unique qualities in the context of Islamic renewal. His distinctiveness is evident in his response to Western dominance over Islam. Additionally, Al-Afghani exhibits moderation by accommodating ideas originating from the West, aimed at rectifying the decline of the Muslim community and the weakness of Islamic intellectualism. However, on the other hand, Afghani is resolute in addressing national issues related to Islam (Mawi: 2017). The emergence of divisions among Muslims is the primary factor exploited by Western colonialism to subjugate the Muslim community. Furthermore, Western colonialism begins to usurp the wealth of the Muslim community. The lack of knowledge and understanding of both Islamic sciences and other fields of knowledge has led to the waning of Muslim intellectual vigor. Jamaluddin Al-Afghani emerges with noble intentions, aiming to uphold nationalism, patriotism, and the glory of Islam. This is done with full awareness, high intellectual spirit, and responsibility as a Muslim towards the Muslim community (Mawi: 2017).

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani endeavors to awaken Muslims who are still nostalgic and fettered by the past glory of Islam. Meanwhile, Muslim society faces the challenge of Western imperialism, which wields significant power. According to him, it is only fitting for Islam to rise, undertake renewal, and engage in intellectual endeavors in line with the rapid pace of modern knowledge. Jamaluddin Al-Afghani stands as a key figure in the modernization of Islam, followed by his disciple Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, and the dissemination of his ideas to Indonesia through his disciples.

Figures of Islamic Modernization
1. Jamaluddin Al-Afghani
One of the figures of Islamic modernism is Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, born in Asadabad (1255 H/1838 AD). He passed away in Istanbul (1315 H/1897 AD). Jamaluddin Al-Afghani earned the title Sayyid, meaning a descendant of Husain bin Ali bin Abi Thalib. His full name is Sayyid Jamaluddin Al-
Afghani. The name "Al-Afghani" is derived from his birthplace, while "Asabadi" is his nickname (Hartono & Noorthaibah: 2015). Jamaluddin Al-Afghani is a reformist figure in Islam who had creative ideas to revive the spirit of struggle among Muslims (Mawi: 2017). Moreover, he was firm and courageous in opposing the colonization by modern Western countries and eradicating blind adherence among the community, which had hindered rational thinking patterns.

His reformist ideas were based on the belief that Islamic teachings are in harmony with all nations, eras, and circumstances. Therefore, if deviations from Islamic teachings are found or if they do not suit the contemporary issues due to changing times, they can be adjusted through new interpretations via ijtihad, as stated in the Qur'an and Hadith. According to Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, the door to ijtihad is still open (Nasution: 1075). Hence, if Islam wants to engage in ijtihad with new ideas, the Islamic world can compete with the Western world.

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani argued that Muslims must unite in facing and freeing themselves from Western colonialism by forming a political power stronghold. His political ideas and strategies were based on the concept of pan-Islamism (renewal by uniting all Muslims). Pan-Islamism serves as an effective defense against violations and domination by foreign powers against Muslim territories (Fazlur Rahman: 1979). However, he also demonstrated his honesty in appreciating the intellectual values coming from the West, especially in philosophy, science, and technology. He advocated for Muslims to develop intellect and technology as pursued by Western nations. He believed that mastering knowledge, technology, and nurturing the scholarly tradition of Muslims would accelerate progress and strengthen Islam.

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani was a Muslim intellectual who reformed Islamic tradition by reinterpretting the sources of Islamic teachings, derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah, Ijma', and Qiyas, to address the issues faced by modern society in religious institutions regarding theory and practice. Thus, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's thinking encompasses various aspects of the Islamic world.

2. Muhammad Abduh

Muhammad Abduh was a figure of Islamic renewal in Egypt. He originated from Turkey and was born in the village of Hilir Mesir in 1849. His father's name was Abduh Hasan Khaerullah, while his mother was of Arab descent, tracing her lineage back to Umar bin Khatab. They lived in Mahallah Nasr (Komaruzaman: 2017). Muhammad Abduh was a 19th-century reformer with remarkably brilliant ideas. His reformist ideas spanned various aspects of life and were able to rekindle the spirit of struggle among Muslims after a period of stagnation, particularly in the realm of scientific advancement.

Abduh's reform focused more on improving the fate and future of Egyptian society. His thoughts were oriented towards education and the condition of the Muslim community. He was a moderate nationalist who advocated for the importance of preparing responsible individuals for the honor and progress of the nation. According to Muhammad Abduh, Islamic renewal not only meant returning to the original teachings by purifying Islam from external influences and practices that tainted its purity but also entailed reforming Islamic doctrines in line with modern thinking. He attributed the backwardness of Muslims to the weak education system prevalent at that time, encompassing both religious and secular knowledge. Therefore, he emphasized the critical importance of education.

In Abduh's view, general knowledge no longer held a significant place in the hearts of Muslims, despite being an integral part of knowledge that should be prioritized. General knowledge was more widely adopted and comprehensively utilized by the West, leading to the internal erosion of Islamic educational values (Muqoyyidin: 2013). The emphasis on moral education in Muhammad Abduh's thinking marked the beginning of the resurgence of Islam in the early 20th century. His reformist ideas were disseminated through journals like Al-Manar and Al-Urwatul Wusqa, becoming references for other reformist figures in the Islamic world (Komaruzaman: 2017). Therefore, Abduh's reform focused more on the educational aspect.

3. Rashid Rida
Rasyid Ridha developed his reformist ideas, which he acquired from Muhammad Abduh through the magazine Al-Urwah Al-Wusqa while still in Syria, before moving to Egypt and becoming a disciple of Muhammad Abduh (Qasim: 2012). Rasyid Ridha’s reformist thinking did not differ much from that of his mentor. He also believed that the Muslim community was experiencing a decline because they no longer adhered to the pure teachings of Islam (Qasim: 2012).

Rasyid Ridha argued that esoteric knowledge in Islamic teachings allowed individuals to obtain whatever they desired. He vehemently opposed Islamic teachings that deemed worldly life insignificant. Additionally, he strongly opposed excessive reliance on ta'wakkul (reliance on God) and excessive reverence and obedience to sheikhs and saints. Thus, Rasyid Ridha sought to reform Islamic teachings by returning to their true essence (Qasim: 2012).

Rasyid Ridha highly valued human reason. This was because reason could be used to interpret teachings about communal living. He believed that ijtihad (independent legal reasoning) in matters of worship was no longer necessary. Ijtihad, the function of exploring reason, could be applied to verses and hadiths that were still ambiguous and not directly mentioned in the Quran and hadiths. According to Rasyid Ridha, this is where the dynamism of Islam lies (Qasim: 2012).

CONCLUSION

Islamic modernism emerged in the 19th century as a renewal of understanding that is more relevant to modern life and involves interpreting things to open the doors of ijtihad and avoid blind adherence to the four schools of jurisprudence through rational thinking in understanding and reflecting on Islamic teachings. Its aim is for the advancement and success of the Muslim community in the future. Essentially, if Muslims engage in ijtihad, it is believed they can enhance the progress of Islamic civilization. Therefore, they advocate for a return to the Quran and Hadith.

The movement for Islamic renewal began with the meeting of Sheikh Muhammad Abduh and Jamaluddin Al-Afghani. Al-Afghani’s renewal efforts encompassed all aspects of the Islamic world. His ideas and political strategies were based on the concept of pan-Islamism (renewal by uniting all Muslims). Meanwhile, Muhammad Abduh’s renewal efforts were more focused on improving the fate and future of Egyptian society. His thinking was oriented towards education and the condition of the Muslim community. Education plays a significant role in the progress and resurgence of the Muslim community in the field of knowledge. Rasyid Ridha developed his renewal ideas, which he acquired from Muhammad Abduh. Rasyid Ridha’s renewal thinking was more focused on the field of education.

The intellectual development of Islam is divided into three periods: classical, medieval, and modern. The classical period began during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, where the intellectual development of Islam was practiced through teaching and education using methods of writing and memorization. In the medieval period, Islamic intellect began to flourish. Institutionalization began to emerge through theological schools, Sufism, and schools of jurisprudence. Furthermore, in the modern era, there is a struggle within the tradition of Islamic intellect. The modern era seeks to eradicate superstition, superstition, and innovation that have plagued the Muslim community.

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