The Problem of Thaha Hussein's Political Thought

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Abstract*: This paper tries to explain the political thought of Thaha Hussein which has been considered pro and con because it seeks to juxtapose Western-style Islam and secularism in a country. Thaha Hussein's secularization efforts touched on various aspects, including education, culture, religion, and politics. Thaha Hussein in his political thought sought to release Muslims from their dependence on old opinions that were often considered part of religious teachings. In Thaha Hussein's view religion and politics are two different things hence the regulation of the political system and the formation of the state are not based on syar'i but on the interests of society itself. This study is library research. Meanwhile, the method used to process the data that has been collected by the author is the historical factual method. This paper also uses a descriptive method where the author explains and outlines the journey and political irregularities of Thaha Hussein. Thaha Hussein accepted and proposed a concept of secularization that was different from the idea of secularism that occurred in the West. Thaha Hussein points to secularization in the sense of being a process of detaching devotees from the bonds of tradition, including religious teachings that were the predecessors' understanding of the zanni nash-nash, and ending with a return to the Koran and Hadith (meaning inseparable from both). Meanwhile, secularization that occurs in the West, is dotted with the separation of the world*

Keywords *: Political; Thaha Husein; Problem*

Abstrak: Tulisan ini mencoba memaparkan pemikiran politik Thaha Husein yang selama ini dianggap pro dan kontra karena berusaha menyandingkan Islam dan sekularisme ala Barat dalam suatu negara. Upaya sekularisasi Thaha Husein menyentuh berbagai aspek, diantaranya pendidikan, kebudayaan, agama dan Politik.. Thaha Husein dalam pemikiran politiknya berusaha melepaskan umat Islam dari ketergantungan mereka terhadap pendapat-pendapat lama yang sering dianggap sebagai bagian dari ajaran agama. Dalam pandangan Thaha Husein agama dan politik adalah dua hal yang berbeda karenanya pengaturan sistem politik dan pembentukan negara tidaklah berdasarkan syar'i tetapi berdasarkan kepentingan-kepentingan masyarakat itu sendiri. Kajian ini merupakan library research. Sedangkan metode yang digunakan untuk mengolah data yang telah dikumpulkan oleh penulis adalah dengan metode historical factual. Dalam tulisan ini juga menggunakan metode deskriptif dimana penulis menjelaskan dan menguraikan perjalanan dan pemikiran politik Thaha Husein. Thaha Husein menerima dan mengajukan konsep sekularisasi yang berbeda dengan ide sekularisme yang terjadi di Barat. Thaha Husein menunjuk sekularisasi dalam pengertian sebagai proses melepaskan umat dari ikatan tradisi, termasuk ajaran agama yang merupakan pemahaman para pendahulu terhadap nash-nash yang zhanni, dan berakhir dengan kembali kepada Alquran dan Hadits (artinya tidak terlepas dari keduanya). Sedangkan sekularisasi yang terjadi di Barat, bertitik-tolak dari pemisahan dunia termasuk politik dan ilmu dari agama.

Kata Kunci : Politik, Thaha Husein, Problematika

Introduction

The history of Islam is intertwined with its particularly remarkable developments in classical times, in the Middle Ages experiencing a surprising retreat and even falling under colonial rule from the 18th century to the end of the 19th century. With a touch of Western mind Muslims see the Islamic world as very backward in the social, economic, cultural, and religious

fields, especially politics so the big issue that emerged in the 19th century was the problem of Islam and politics (Nationalism) in addition to Islamic activities that raised unity and efforts to separate themselves from colonialism and Western imperialism. The 18th century is often seen as the dark ages of Islamic history, this picture is based on the divisions that occurred in the sultanate government as well as the general decline of the Islamic world. This perception is influenced by knowledge of part of the Islamic experience, as the 19th century was the period of the disappearance of Is lam power and they were under Western colonial rule. (barsihannor 1997)

The friction between Muslims and the West has also caused a reaction among Muslims who have been "monotonous" to see the development of the problem by relying on the opinions and ijtihad of previous scholars. Not only legal, cultural, or economic issues, but the political ideas introduced by the West also received mixed responses. The idea of secularism also slowly began to be displayed to the Islamic community. In the political sphere, Western ideas with their secularism style come into direct "physical" contact with Islam.

Western political and governmental patterns are shown firsthand by them. With all the developments of science and technology, briefly, the West showed its dominance by way of entering the entire territory of the Islamic world and being able to colonize almost entirely (except the Arabian Peninsula, Afghanistan, Persia, and Turkey).(Harun Nasution 1986)

Under such conditions muslim scholars split into groups; some are indifferent; some are anti-Western; some are receptive to everything that comes from the West; and there are also those who seek worthy and positive values from Western development and thought in order to be formulated into the Islamic world.(Ilham Ramadan Siregar 2017) One of the Islamic thinkers who sought to make Western thought acceptable in the Islamic world was Thaha Hussein. The teachings of Islam, along with the Qur'an, do not necessarily suppress the results of human reason(Rasyid et al. 2020). This paper tries to explain the political thought of Thaha Hussein, which is considered pro and con because it seeks to juxtapose Islamdan Western-style secularism in a country.

Method

This study is a research library where the data used as references and sources of writing are books, journals, and articles that contain thoughts from Thaha Husein or those who write about them. Meanwhile, the method used to process the data that has been collected by the author is the historical factual method by re-analyzing historical relics related to Thaha Husein's thoughts and analyzing how he obtained all his knowledge so that later the author can understand

the pattern of Thaha Husein's political thought and all its scientific manifestations. This paper also uses a descriptive method where the author explains and describes Thaha Husein's political journey and thoughts thoroughly so that the pros and cons of his thinking can be found.

Biography of Thaha Husein

Thaha Hussein was a liberal modern thinker in Islam. He was born on November 14, 1889 in a small village in Egypt that borders   Maghragha with the   Nile.(Syahrin Harahap 1994) (Syahrin Harahap 1994) 13th of 15 children whose mother was the   second wife   of his father.(Abdul Aziz Syarraf 1997) His family made ends meet from farming. When he was two years old, Thaha Husein developed smallpox (opthalmia) which caused blindness in his eyes and at the age of 6 yearshe   experienced complete blindness.(Muhammad Iqbal dan Amin Husein Nasution 2010) Even with the condition of blindness, Thaha Husein's education is not limited to the basic level alone. In the Egyptian tradition, education was the main thing and blindness was not a barrier to continuing education even in higher education.

In studying, he wasmentored by his brothers. (Risan Rusli 2014) In 1902 when he was 13 years old, Thaha Hussein continued his education in Al-Azhar, which at that time became a dream Islamic education place for Egyptian society. In the course of his education, Thaha Hussein apparently didn't really like what he got in it, but it was also in Al-Azhar that he met people who changed his perspective on Islam and the West.(Risan Rusli 2014) In Al-Azhar, he received direct guidance from Sayyid Ali al-Marshafi regarding knowledge of Arabic literature. At that time he also met Muhammad Abduh who was able to attract his attention with his rational ideas. He often exchanged ideas with Abduh and liked to question the problems that were considered standard by the great Muslims of the time.(Muhammad Iqbal dan Amin Husein Nasution 2010)

In 1908 he decided to continue his education at the recently opened University of Cairo, Egypt. The reason is simple, because education in Al-Azhar is less conducive to the development of his thinking. In Cairo he acquired something he had never had so far in al-Azhar, namely knowledge of modern Western methods for historical research and literary criticism. Thaha Husein then became acquainted with the thinkers who became his educators, namely Professor Nallino, Enno Littman, Louis Massignon and Santilana.(Muhammad Iqbal dan Amin Husein Nasution 2010) As a result of his studies at the University, he earned his Doctorate in 1914 with the thesis title Zhikra Abi al-Ala. In the introduction to his thesis, Thaha Hussein criticized the methods oflearning Arabic Literature in Egypt. Then armed with the literary knowledge he got in Cairo, without hesitation he continued his education at the Sorbonne University, France and

was able to obtain a Doctorate in 1918 by writing a thesis entitled "La Philosophie Sociale d'Ibn Khaldun".(Charles C. Adams 1933)

Pada tahun 1919 ia kembali ke Mesir untuk mengabdikan dirinya bagi negara. Diawali menjadi tenaga pendidik di Universitas Kairo sebagai guru besar Sejarah Klasik (Yunani dan Romawi). Kemudian ia dilantik sebagai Dekan Fakultas Sastra Universitas Kairo (1930-1932 dan 1936-1938) di bawah pemerintahan Partai Wafd, Mesir. Pada tahun 1942 ia menjabat sebagai Rektor Universitas Iskandariyah sampai tahun 1944. Tidak hanya itu, pada tahun 1950 ia diangkat oleh pemerintah menjadi Menteri Pendidikan Mesir sampai tahun 1952.(Esposito 1986)

In 1919 he returned to Egypt to devote himself to the country. He began as an educator at Cairo University as a professor of Classical History (Greek and Roman). Later he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Letters of Cairo University (1930-1932 and 1936-1938) under the auspicesof the Wafd Party, Egypt. In 1942 he served as Rector of Iskandariyah University until 1944. Not only that, in 1950 he was appointed by the government to be the Egyptian Minister of Education until 1952.(barsihannor 1997) According to him, jahiliyah verses are written by Islamic scholars themselves to support their opinions in bidang tafsir, hadith and theology. In the end the title of the book was replaced with "*fi al-Adab al-Jahili*" with some changes or revisions.

In 1938 he wrote a book called "*Mustaqbal al-Tsaqafah al- Mishr*", a book that showed his thinking in the style of modernizationwhich the Egyptians had to achieve later after Egypt became independent in the full sense. This book shifted slightly from his habit of writing in the field of literature to the field of education and culture. In addition, he also wrote books including *Falsafah Ibn Khaldun al-Ijtima'iyat, Mustaqbal al-Saqafah fi al-Mishr*, al-Slander al-Kubra, *al-Ayyam, Mir'ah al-Islam* and many other books.

Thaha Hussein Died at the age of 84 (October 28, 1973). After his death, Thaha Husein was named a Nobel laureate in literature in the same year.(Muhammad Iqbal dan Amin Husein Nasution 2010)

Thoughts of Thaha Hussein

Thaha Hussein during his lifetime can be said to have received an intensive Western education. As a result, Thaha Hussein seems to have lost faith in the values of Islamic teachings and the Islamic world. After being highly educated, he also felt that the education of the Islamic world was only limited to the development of the past without thinking about the development of the present and the future. Thaha Hussein proposed a solution to accept all aspects of Western life, including in the political field.

The West, with all the systems and values they had, managed to present an advanced and modern civilization. The West, according to Thaha Hussein, managed to reach the peak of this progress because they dared to abandon religion in world affairs. (Abdul Aziz Syarraf 1997) Therefore, there is nothing wrong with Muslims trying to adopt a civilization that originated in the West.

Since the 19th century AD, political upheaval in Egypt has been intense between secular nationalist think tanks and traditionalist clerics. This upheaval was marked by when Muhammad Ali Pasha put forward the idea of modernizing Egypt by adopting Western science and technology.(Syahrin Harahap 1994) Secular nationalist think tanks support the idea, while traditionalist clerical groups are in opposition. According to the group of scholars, modernisasi derived from foreign belief systems is seen as castration to the development of traditional Islamic thought. In effect, it will certainly pose a threat not only to the clerics themselves, but also toother Islamic institutions.(Muhammad Iqbal dan Amin Husein Nasution 2010)

If according to the clerical group modernization threatens the sustainability of Islamic values, it is precisely for secular nationalist groups that they hinder the desired development of modernization in Egypt. For nationalist groups, the rejection of modernization is the embodiment of backwardness of thought and those who refuse are considered an obstacle to modernization in Egypt.(Syahrin Harahap 1994) It was at the same time that Thaha Hussein lived with all the education he had taken. The idea of secularization raised in Egypt by Thaha Hussein was quite horrendous and caused a strong reaction among Egyptian scholars, especially from traditionalist groups. This idea even spread to all corners of the world to Indonesia. Some Islamic intellectuals support the idea of secularization in the Islamic world, others, reject and oppose it.

Secularization according to Nurcholish Madjid is different from secularism. Secularization is the recognition of the authority of science and its application in fostering earthly life. Meanwhile, secularism is secularism and is contrary to almost all world religions. Secularization is not intended to apply secularism and turn Muslims into secularists, but to globalize something that should be worldly and release Muslims from the tendency to consecrate it.(Albert Hourani 1991)

Thaha Hussein in his political thought sought to release Muslims from their dependence on old opinions that were often considered part of religious teachings. In Thaha Hussein's view religion and politics are two different things hence the regulation of the political system and the formation of the state are not based on syar'i but on the basis of the interestsof society itself.(Syahrin Harahap 1994)

Muhammad Abduh's thinking was very fundamental to Thaha Hussein. Muhammad Abduh said that the head of state is a civilian ruler who is appointed by the people and is accountable to the people. Therefore, the position of head of state must obviously synergize with the interests of the people who have elected and appointed him. This view is much different from the thinking of classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali, who say that the head of state/ruler is the shadow of God on earth,(Munawir Sjadzali 1991) or Ibn Taimiyah(Ibn Taimiyah 1969) (Ibn Taimiyah 1969)said the same thing, even Ibn Taimiyah argued that a society that 60 years lived under the leadership of a zalim head of state was better than not having a meskipun leader overnight.(Ibn Taimiyah 1969) This means that in the context of classical thought, the position of the leader should not be betrayed even if he acts inconsistently with the wishes of the people. Here, Muhammad Abduh gives the new view as if to show that everyone, whether elected ruler of the state or the people as a voter of the ruler, is equal in his political rights in the eyes of the law.

Abduh's understanding, which was a manifestation of Egyptian nationalism, influenced Thaha Hussein's perspective. For him, the feeling of nationality is more important than others because it is a matter of worldly state interests. Therefore, in the political field, Thaha Hussein always voices his aspirations through parties of a moral nature, such as the Ummah party and the al- Ahrar al Dusturiyah party where democratic and modernist ideas can be conveyed.(Muhammad Iqbal dan Amin Husein Nasution 2010)

According to Thaha Hussein, there is no standard form or system of government in Islam. In relation to the state of Medina founded by the Prophet Muhammad, he rejected that the establishment of the country was a command from Allah (revereignally) and then the people had to imitate and had to establish the state as exemplified. Likewise he rejected the view that establishing a caliph was part of the mission of passing on prophetic power based on revelation. According to him, the power of the caliphate was obtained from the results of deliberations with Muslims based on the social contract which then the position was given a number of mandates from the people supported by pembai'atan to the caliph. It was Thaha Hussein's pendapat who desecratedthepattern of government during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions that was a form of secularization of his thinking. Because there is no standard government system in Islam, according to him, Muslims need to find and find a form or system that is able to meet the demands of contemporary and future life. The form or system that was then suitable and worthy of example was the system that had been built by the West.

Thaha Hussein's ideas related to politics he conveyed through a work entitled Mustaqbal al-Syaqafat fi Mishr (The Future of Culture in Egypt). In this book, he explains that Egypt is a Western country within the boundaries of cultural orientation when viewed culturally, not geographically. According to him, Egypt and Europehave a strong intellectual heritage.(Albert Hourani 1991)

Therefore, Egypt is not part of the East and should stop looking at the East. Nevertheless, Egypt actually had its own and significant civilization long before it knew Islamic civilization. Currently, Islamic civilization is slowly receding and of course it is necessary to develop. The power of Muslims cannot be realized if they only look back to the Islam of the past, but Muslims must aggressively pursue liberal and secular reforms oriented towards the West with all its developments. Egypt has long been a bridge for the development of Greek (European) civilization since pre-Christ times. This means that according to Thaha Hussein, Egyptian civilization before the time of Christ had actually been adopted by ancient Greece and developed rapidly in the future. Thus the imitation and adoption of the Western political system in modern times is essentially the retrieval of something that the West once "borrowed" from the Egyptians.(Muhammad Iqbal dan Amin Husein Nasution 2010)

Therefore, according to him, the new Egypt (the future of Egypt) will not emerge only from Ancient Egypt but must take on European civilization, it must even be European in every way, bittersweet bitterly, in what is both liked and hated, in what is praised and hated, and it is easy for Egypt to do, because Western civilization is not based on one religion alone, even regardless of it.(Harun Nasution 1975) The idea of political secularization developed by Thaha Hussein is explicitly more responsible than the opposite attitude where one rejects the West in every utterance but applies it in every deed.(Syahrin Harahap 1994)

Thaha Hussein's obsession with imitating Western forms and systems of government is to prove the absence of standard guidelines and teachings on government and political systems in the Koran and Hadith, while showing that the Western democratic system that is carried out is capable of realizing the enforcement of norms and values that humans must uphold. In fact, in practice, democracy has prevented the worst abusers from power.(Muhammad Iqbal dan Amin Husein Nasution 2010)

Secularization

Until recently Islam has always been juxtaposed with Secularization, Haedar Nashir mentioned that the term secularization means "the liberation of man first from religion and then from the metaphysics that governs his reason and language", which means "the detachment of the world from religious and pseudo-religious notions, the dissolution of all closed worldviews, the breaking of the myth of supranatural and sacred symbols".(Haedar Nashir 2002)

As a social process that occurs with the existence of "contemporary events" of secularization seeks to get rid of the war of religious authority in human life. Therefore, a society becomes secular when religion is marginalized in the lives of individuals as well as societies. In this connection, a secularist is a person who believes that social problems of society should be free from all religious rules and dogmas.(Tomo Parangrangi 2010)

Secularism is the view that religion does not deal with worldly issues, namely political and socio-cultural issues. Religion is quite grappling with religious rituals and sich. By basing ethical and behavioral standards on references to present life and social welfare without reference to religion. On that basis Islam opposes secularization because Islam has no potential at all for the process of secularization. This statement is supported by Islamic scholars who are members of theologians (mutakallim), mufassirin, muhaddisin, Islamic philosophers, historians and others, although they tend to (focus) on the most important areas of Islamic studies.(Harun Nasution 1975)

Thaha Hussein who accepted and proposed the concept of secularization because he considered it different from the idea of secularism that occurred in the West. Thaha Hussein points to secularization in the sense of being the process of detaching the people from the bonds of tradition, including religious teachings that were the predecessors' understanding of the zhanni nash-nash, and ending with a return to the Koran and Hadith (meaning inseparable from both). Meanwhile, secularization that occurs in the West, is dotted with the separation of the world including politics and science from religion.

Nurcholish Madjid said that Secularization without secularism is a process of secularization without worldliness that could have been possible and will continue to occur in history. Secularization without secularism is a "limited secularization" in which the restrictions and corrections to the events of such secularization will be made corrections in reference to the belief in the existence of the Next day and the principles of the Godhead. That is, for Nurcholish Madjid secularization becomes a necessity for religious people if at some point they give reasonable attention to this worldly aspect of life.(Haedar Nashir 2002)

What Thaha Hussein did in Egypt with his secularization was at least a few things that could be studied and to be understood as a condition of the East. First, in terms of the absorption of secularization itself, it turns out that what Thaha Hussein wants is for the state to adopt it raw in the absence of filters about its good and bad effects. Second, the idea of Secularization, which is inseparable from secularism, must be a common concern.

If viewed from the socio-political development of the process of secularization in the Western world, the first impression that arises is that the progress of Western countries is the result of the process of evolution of religious political systems since the middle ages through renaissance and enlightenment. In the Western view, secularization is a universal and inevitable phenomenon (but again feels it in the West), even absolutely necessary as a prerequisite for modernization. Thus, the process of secularization inevitably occurs, because in the modernist processof secularization implications.(Halid Alkaf 2001)

In today's recent developments, the Western world is not really trying too radically to eliminate the existence of religion. They are merely trying to place the role and potential of human thought and the advancement of science to the fullest without being hindered by strict religious doctrines. Therefore, it can be concluded that the problem of religion for Western society is an individual private problem that does not have to enter massively in the circle of problems of human reality, such as the form of government, socio-political structures, and bureaucratic institutions.

Conclusion

Thaha Hussein's Political Thought seems to be trying to adopt the values of secularization without merging or complementing each other with the existing and constructed system in Islam, because indeed he translated secularization not to give up religious identity. But unfortunately the process of secularization itself turns out to be "taking its toll" with the inseparability of secularization with secularism. The experience of the Turkish state is certainly not expected to happen massively in Egypt with the political thinking of Thaha Hussein, let alone happen in the Islamic world. The Western political system through secularization, which is now often called democracy, does not exist "illegitimate" for anyone who wants to refer to it, as long as they are able to choose and sort out which ones are appropriate and do not correspond to the "spirit of the nation" of their respective countries. Even if indeed Islam and secularization have always been pros and cons until now, at least it is hoped that Islam in modern times will now be able to produce thinkers who can develop an adaptive-evaluative approach to the West and a selective approach to Islam. Because Islam wants its people not only to be strong as adherents of its

teachings, but also strong as spreaders of Islam Rahmatan lil Alamin with all the values contained in it.

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