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Islamic Activism and Habermas' Theory of Strategic Action: A Case of *Parade Tauhid* in Jakarta

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Abstract
Capturing the case of *Parade Tauhid* in Indonesia, this paper aims to describe embodied relationship between religion (Islam) and politics. As part of social action, Islamic activism provides variety of contention which is practiced in the name of "Islam": ideologically, structurally, and purposely. Within his explanation of communicative action theory, Habermas acknowledges what so-called as "strategic action" which can be defined as every action oriented to success under the aspect of rational choice and assess the efficacy of influencing decisions or positions of rational opponent. In this context, *Parade Tauhid* is perceived to be conducted for reaching several political and theological purposes based on rational choices, although it is practiced by performing religious event. This paper attempts to describe definition of Islamic activism, explore the event of *Parade Tauhid*, and analyze the parade using Habermas's theory of strategic action.

Keywords
Islamic activism, *Parade Tauhid*, and strategic action.

"In the meantime, the significant of religions used for political ends has increased throughout the world." (Jurgen Habermas 2008, 116)

Introduction

Indonesia is neither secular nor Islamic state. It constitutes its own basic principle renowned as Pancasila (the five pillars) which is based on religiosity, humanity and social justice. The founders of the Republic of Indonesia strove to accommodate plurality and diversity (ethnicity, religion,

culture, etc.) into the very basic norm of nation-state. It was symbolized in the national refrain, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity). However, Indonesia is celebrated as Moslem-majority-state that grasps people to look at Islam as its "religious identity". More than 80 percent of Indonesia's population is Moslems (Suryadinata 2000; Indiyanto 2013). Some Moslem intellectuals, for instance Fazlur Rahman, suppose that Islamic resurgence will rise from this country. Eventually, Moslems—as the majority—tend to propose Islamic values to become practical reason, referring to Pierre Bourdieu (1980), in practicing everyday manners, specifically politics. This effort may be called as "Moslem Politics".

Moslem Politics, according to Eickelmen and Piscatori (1996, 5), is "the competition and contest over both the interpretation and symbols and the control of the institution, both formal and informal that produce and sustain them." It shares and plays what so-called "sacred authority" as main ground for interpreting and legitimating text and context. Moslem politics represents itself through many activities and institutions which "promote" particular understanding of political and social role of Islam. In this context, we can see how Islamic values are being implemented (or say attempt to be applied) within the rational political and social publicness (Habermas 2002, Calhoun 2013).

In his book, *Why Politics Needs Religion: The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public Square*, Sweetman (2006) insists that all religions have a right to involve into social and political considerations. He argues that modern pluralism is not threatened or harmed by allowing religious argumentation. In the contrary, it is reinforced. Sweetman explains that every rationale and worldview has a sincere sphere in the democratic practices. Religious and non-religious positions have same position to promote their unique prepositions. According to him, religion—as a worldview—is a philosophy of life. It deals with the nature of reality, what it means to be human, and how we think about right and wrong.

In line with this rational use of religion in the public, Habermas (2008, 120) says that "the constitutional freedom of conscience and religion is the appropriate political respond to the challenges of religious pluralism." Discussing Rawl's theory of justice, he assumes that secular state is still appropriate and necessary, though not sufficient, to guarantee equal religious freedom for everybody. In addition, Meyer's article, *Private Faith or Public Religion? An Assessment of Habermas's Changing View of Religion*, analyzes Habermas' changing perspective of religion and its relation with the public sphere. Although he insisted that the change in Habermas' view of religion is not significant because he still denies the "publicness" of religion, but it exposed that there is, and will always be, deep connection between religion and public sphere, public policy (Meyer, 1995: 371-391).

This paper aims to analyze the case of Parade Tauhid held in Jakarta, August 16, 2015, using Habermas' theory of *strategic action*. It attempts to explore relationship between politics and religion through what Eickelmen says as "Moslem politics" in Indonesia. It places Parade Tauhid as a case study which may profoundly represent portrait of current Islamic activism in Indonesia. In doing so, this paper will (1) describe Islamic activism, (2) explore the event of Parade Tauhid, and (3) analyze the parade using Habermas's theory of strategic action.

Islamic Activism

In his book, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Quintan Wiktorowicz (2004: 2) elucidates the activities and institutions that might be identified as "Islamic activism" by giving certain example of the Middle East cases: Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Algeria and Iran. He defines Islamic activism as "the mobilization of contention to support Muslim causes." In doing so, he asserts, it accommodates variety of contention which is practiced in the name of "Islam": ideology, structure and goal. The thesis of "Moslem politics"

(Eickelmen and Piscatori, 1996) and "Islamic activism" (Wiktorowicz, 2004) have epistemologically deep connection and strong academic nexus.

Islamic activism mostly stems from imaginary of "Islam" as system of meaning, identity, and basis of collective action. Wiktorowicz (2004, 6) explains that Islamic activism is part of social movement that emerges at least because of two reasons. First is structural and psychological cause. This perspective believes in "linier causal relationship in which structural strains produce psychological discomfort, which, in turn, produce collective action." Second, political strain which assumes that lack of political access mitigates modernization project and alleviate quality of life. It drives pathologically societal frustration and sense of alienation. In some cases, the means of the second condition is natural and cultural struggle of Islamic activism. It uses more religious conciliation against political exclusion (Wiktorowicz 2004, 8).

Like social movement, Islamic activism needs innovation and reinvention, because it deals with social condition which is changing every time. It requires technical and tactical innovation to adapt with political and structural lacks. In his article, *"Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency,"* McAdam (1983, 735-754) asserted that social movement has to develop innovative technique to offset relative powerlessness. This theory has actually been practiced and implemented by Moslem politics, namely Indonesia. Many Moslem activists acknowledge several ways, tactics, and methods, both formal and informal, to aspire their inspirations and ideas. Islamic party is one way, but this paper will focus on cultural, non-structural method, that is represented in *Parade Tauhid*—as the sample.

Writing numerous Islamic activism in Jordan, such as Salafi and Muslim Brotherhood, Wiktorowicz (2001) explored how political context influences patterns of Islamic activism. In his book, *The Management of Islamic Activism*, he concluded that Islamic activism is not only shaped by political (administrative) pressure, but also by the authority which concern

to control and dominate the "interpretation" of Islam. His research displayed some vehicles on conducting Islamic activism throughout political contention in Jordan. He wrote, "the Jordanian case demonstrates that movement decisions are informed by the realities of exogenous factors; and understanding of the full range of Islamic activism, or collective action in general, requires examining both formal and informal modes of organization, and why movement choose one over the other." (Wiktorowicz 2001, 153)

Viewing from another perspective, *the report of The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy* (2006) investigates the dynamics of Islamic activism and questions whether the manifestation of this activism indicates democratization and development of human right. This report scrutinizes the development of Islamic thought, Islamic political movement, and law and legal system. The report finally aims to look at policy perspective from inside and outside Islamic movement, look at interconnectedness between Moslem and non-Moslem society.

Dynamics of Islamic activism influence and are influenced by exogenous features. Globalization widely opens political and social interconnectedness between Moslem and non-Moslem society (interreligious) as well as Moslem and other Moslem society (intrareligious). Demonstration in Paris could generate different demonstration in Jakarta, with totally opposite topic of protest. It is part of political problems. Referring to Minkenberg, in his article, *Religion and Public Policy Institutional, Cultural, and Political Impact on the Shaping of Abortion Policies in Western Democracies* (2002), religion, politics and institutions definitely influence public policy (Minkenberg 2002, 221-247).

The same thing arises here in Indonesia. Islamic activism uses political policies as an instrument to express its goal as well as be used by political goal to initiate policy. To figure out the current issue of politics and Indonesian Islam, we may refer to Anugrah's article, *"Recent Studies on*

Indonesia Islam: A Sign of Intellectual Exhaustion?" In this article, Anugrah describes Moslem Politics in Indonesia by criticizing four books: *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Image and Interpretation* (Amsterdam University Press, 2013), *The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Democracy and Youth in Indonesian Politics* (SUKA Press, 2013), *Democracy and Islam in Indonesia* (Columbia University Press, 2013), and *Contemporary Development of Indonesia Islam: Explaining the Conservative Turn* (ISEAS, 2013). In this article, Anugrah did not directly discuss the Islamic activism in Indonesia, but he deliberated the future of Indonesian Islam which is based on intellectual and activist movement: ideas and actions.

Parade Tauhid

A day before Indonesian people celebrated anniversary of the Independence Day on August 17th, 2015, Moslem association from different groups and affiliations conducted what so-called as *Parade Tauhid*. The committee of this event involved various persons from several organization background, such as MIUMI (the Council of Intellectual and Young Ulama of Indonesia), MMI (*Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia*), FPI (Islamic Defender Front), Muhammadiyah, and NU (Nahdhatul Ulama). Edy Mulyadi, the head of the organizing committee of this event, said that this event was supported by countless Indonesian ulama (http://paradetauhid.id/rilis/2015). In its press release, the committee stated that this parade was conducted to revival the spirit of *tauhid* (monotheism) among Moslem citizen and to recognize Indonesian struggle against the Dutch Colonialism. The moment of the Independent Day was selected to remember patriotism of Indonesian conquerors. In addition, this event aims to be unifying moment for Indonesian Moslem. (http://paradetauhid.id/tujuan/2015).

There are two main activities during this event: speech of the ulama and long march. The route of parade was started from Plasa Utara Gelora

Bung Karno, Senayan, passing over Bundaran HI, and going back to finish in Gelora Bung Karno. During this parade, some ulamas and Moslem intellectuals gave their speech that mostly criticize what they call as Islamic heretical movement and interreligious relationship between Islam and Christianity in Indonesia.

Some Islamic news reported (Arrahmah.com) that the parade was precisely organized and enormous people were attending. More than 200.000 people were reported joining the parade. They were enthusiastic to listen the speech and marching for more than 10 Km. The committee planned to conduct the same parade annually. (http://news.metrotvnews.com/read/2015).

There are two interesting points in this parade: (1) the goal committed and (2) the content of speech presented. No worry that the goals targeted by the committee are very idealistic and compliant. It was stated that the parade aims to revival the spirit of tauhid (monotheism) and unify Moslem society. It was a very virtuous purpose. However, we should worry of this goal for seeing that the committee was ingrained from the same-theological individuals. Political impression emerges and interest-based action occurs. FPI, MMI, and MIUMI are renowned organization affiliated with anti-pluralism and liberalism movement. Some Islamic leaders attended the event are fundamentalist intellectual which often criticize inter-religious dialogue and persist to construct Islamic state of Indonesia. Just to mention few of them, Habib Rizieq, Abu Jibril, Cholil Ridwan, Alfian Tanjung, Misbahul Alam, and others.

This political curiosity was fortified because some individuals, written as a member of the committee, did not present. They are—to mention but a few—Din Syamsuddin, Yusuf Mansyur, Aa Gym, Ahmad Heryawan, Fahira Idris and Adhyaksa Dault. (http://www.madinaonline.id/2015).

The official goal actually differs from reported activities in several news announced by Islamic organization. Arrahmah.com, for instance, obviously leads a report entitled by *"Parade Tauhid Indonesia Sukses Digelar, Syi'i Meradang"* (Parade Tauhid was Conducted Well, Shiite Condemn); news.merahputih.com wrote a news "Parade *Tauhid Tuding Syiah Aliran Berbahaya di Indonesia"* (Parade Tauhid Claimed Shi'a as a Dangerous Sect in Indonesia); and misykatnews presented a headline "Spanduk *Anti Syiah Muncul dalam Parade Tauhid* (There is Anti-Shi'a Banner in Parade Tauhid). The main objective for unifying and consolidating all Moslem societies in Indonesia seems to be only a waffle, because this event inclined to accuse certain group within Moslem society.

The parade did not sincerely use the moment of the Independent Day to respect plurality of Indonesian people. It seems that the committee fostered the moment only for getting wider and broader participants. In fact, this does not succeed. Other news reported that participant of the parade was not more than 100.000 people. (http://www.madinaonline.id).

Another political nuance of this event was exemplified from contents of the parade's speech. Almost every Moslem leader, attending and being in the stage of the parade, organized their own speech which commonly deliberated the topic of Moslem unity and Islamic monotheism. However, they also pointed out the issue of Shi'a, Ahmadiyah, and Moslem-Christian relationship in Indonesia, namely the case of Tolikara. One of the leaders, for instance, criticized the government for being absence and not responding properly to the case. He called Moslem people to look forward decision might be revealed by the government. If it were not satisfied, he called the people to go to Tolikara and do jihad against Christians. He even sarcastically mentioned President Jokowi by Jokodok, several times, in his speech. He intimidated and alerted President Jokowi to solve the case of Tolikara as soon as possible, not to apologize to Indonesian Communist Party, or he will drive coup d'état movement.

Referring to Erving Goffman (1959), this event could be viewed by using "front-stage" and "back-stage" perspective. It has explicitly quantified goals and ideal objectives, but it implicitly conceals political and diplomatic purposes. From the symbols, banners, flags, and speeches occurred in the event, someone can feel a shade of Islamic radicalization. In the name of Islam, the parade appeals some Islamic group into heretical and dissenting sect. It is not merely a purification movement but a political drive undertook by certain radical groups. Moslem politics, referring to Eickelmen and Piscatori, emerges in this context.

However, at glimpse we can witness that this event represented what so-called as Islamic movement in Indonesia. It may be placed into a discussion on how "Moslem Politics" deal with the political manners. It shows us that even the "radical" Moslem movement do not ignore politics (as a tool) to reach their persistence and use "publicness" to grasp it. Using Habermas' theory of strategic action, this parade was directed to reach purposive goal, specifically theological and political ends.

Strategic Action

It is renowned that Habermas (1984, 282) constructed his theory of communicative action based on the action theory of Max Weber. Although he criticized Weber's action theory that it "does not take into account the principled character on the basis of which the Protestant ethic, for example, qualifies as a framework for a methodical conduct of life", he asserts that the theory of communicative action is a persistence of Weber's theory.

Understanding the theory of communicative action requires understanding of Weber's action theory, especially relational concept of action and rationality. Weber wrote:

Like every action, social action too can be determined (1) purposive-rationally-through expectations as to the behavior of objects in the external

world and of other men, using these expectations as "conditions" or as "means" for one's own ends, weighed and pursued rationally in terms of success; (2) value-rationally-through conscious belief in the (ethical, aesthetic, religious or however interpreted) unconditional, intrinsic value of a certain mode of behavior, purely as such and independently of success; (3) affectually, especially emotionally-through present affects and emotional states; (4) traditionally-through the habituation of long practice (Habermas 1984,281).

Habermas simplified this typology to the formal properties of purposive-rational action. The main focus of this typology is acting subject and its consideration. In semiotic tradition on speech act theory, Habermas often mentioned it in the term of "speaker" and "hearer". Habermas (1984:281) asserted that "An actor behaves purposive-rationally when he chooses ends from a clearly articulated horizon of values and organizes suitable means in consideration of alternative consequences. In the series of types of action proposed by Weber, the range of what the acting subject takes into consideration narrows step by step."

Continuing the theory of Weber, Habermas (1984, 282) explored that "social actions can be distinguished according to the mechanisms for coordinating individual actions, for instance according to whether a social relation is based on interest positions alone or on normative agreement as well." Here, we can see that Habermas' focus on theorizing social action is purposive orientation. According to him, social actions can be distinguished according to whether the participants adopt either a success-oriented attitude or one oriented to reaching understanding (Habermas 1984, 286). In doing so, he explains two typology of social action: communicative action and strategic action. Each has its own purpose. Strategic action is based on orientation to success, while communicative action is based on reaching understanding. See the figure below:

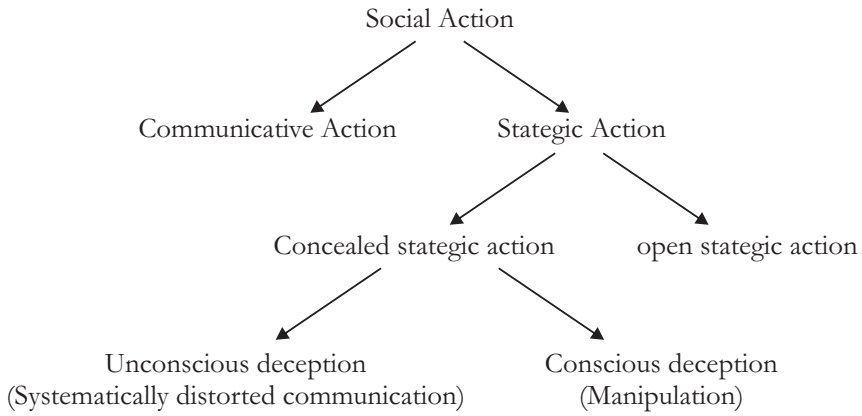
Figure 1

Action Orientation / Action Situation	Oriented to success	Oriented to reaching understanding
Non-social	Instrumental action	----------
Social	Strategic action	Communicative action

(Habermas 1984, 285)

Based on this explanation, we can conclude that strategic action is a rational choice deliberated to influence other's decision or position. As Habermas wrote, "we call an action oriented to success strategic when we consider it under the aspect of following rules of rational choice and assess the efficacy of influencing the decisions of a rational opponent"(Habermas 1984, 285). In more detail, Habermas explains deliberations of strategic action into concealed strategic action and open strategic action, and concealed strategic action can be divided into conscious deception (manipulation) and unconscious deception (systematically distorted communication). See figure 2:

Figure 2



By making such category, Habermas wants to make a decisive disparity between success-oriented action and mutual understanding-oriented action. Seemingly, Habermas intends to connect teleological action with strategic action as the concept that "presupposes one world" (Habermas 1984, 287). Using this perspective to look at relationship between Islam and politics, namely in the case of *Parade Tauhid*, I assume that the event was deliberatively led for reaching political ends. The committee played religious and national symbol to gain Indonesian Moslems' attention from several backgrounds. Religiously, they named this event as "Parade Tauhid" which is very identical with the basic principle of Islam. The parade also used Islamic symbols, such as *takbir, kalimat syahadat*, and what so-called Islamic clothes. They also used the moment of the Independent Day as unifying factor to appeal more participants.

Although the parade was announced as Islamic activism which aims to unite Indonesian Moslem in one spirit of *tauhid*, consolidate them, and celebrate the Independent Day of Republic of Indonesia, in fact this parade was indicated for certain political ends. From the element of the committee formation, we can see that this event was co-opted by certain Moslem groups. Just to mention but few, FPI, MIUMI, and MMI were

deeply engaged in this event.

The genuine purposes of this event emerged in the content of speech and banners during the parade. In addition to official objectives written in the website, some Moslem leaders giving speech in this event criticize Shi'a and Ahmadiyah as heretical group and the case of religious conflict in Tolikara. The nuance of political aims emerged within their speech which showed that actually the end of the event was political. It was to exclude different Islamic group and strengthen their position of identity.

The action is intended to reach some theological and political ends (strategic action) and not to grasp mutual understanding (communicative action). It is to reinforce "one world", the same understanding, and not to make a mutual understanding. Referring to Habermas theory, we can assume it as a concealed strategic action that is proposed to extend a certain goal. The speakers force the readers by using Islamic activism to approve certain understanding and hold same position, such as anti-Shi'a and anti-Ahmadiyah. However, this is not a representative of Indonesian Moslem majority's understanding and position.

Conclusion

Parade Tauhid, as Islamic activism, illustrates relationship between religious activism and political manners. Religious notions tie with political purposes. Parade Tauhid witnesses social action that Habermas called it as *strategic action*. Unlike *communicative action* which is based on mutual understanding orientation, strategic action oriented on success and reaching purposive goal. In this context, Parade Tauhid proves that social action could also become strategic action which fosters rationally-purposive objective, theologically and politically. In other words, religious and national activism can also become a very intended action with very limited aims, for very partial group. []

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