

Variations of Islam and democracy in Muslim countries: From Islamic countries to secular Muslim countries and its relevance to the discourse of Islam and democracy

Variasi Islam dan demokrasi di negara Muslim: Dari negara Islam hingga negara Muslim sekuler serta relevansi terhadap diskursus Islam dan demokrasi

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Abstract

The phenomenon of Islam and democracy in Muslim countries is practiced differently between Muslim countries with an Islamic state and Muslim countries with a secular pattern. This article wants to examine and reassess the view of Islamic exceptions or “Islamic exceptionalism” on the scarcity of democracy in Muslim countries with case studies of regime variations found in Muslim countries. This article analyzes the variation of Islam and democracy in Muslim countries, with a comparative method using data from the democracy indexing agency. There are four variations of Muslim countries: Islamic countries, semi-Islamic countries, secular countries, and semi-secular countries. This study shows that, from the four variations of the Islamic world, none of the Islamic countries has succeeded in achieving full democracy (full democracy). Three Muslim countries have a flawed democracy (flawed democracy), namely Malaysia, Indonesia, and Tunisia. The rest of the Muslim countries are under a political system controlled by the military (hybrid democracy) and authoritarianism. In addition, this article finds that social, political, cultural, and agency tools and support in supporting democratic values are still the main problems that harm the scarcity of democracy in Muslim societies.

Keywords: democracy challenges; Islamic democracy; Muslim countries

Abstrak

Fenomena Islam dan demokrasi di negara Muslim dipraktikkan dengan cara yang berbeda antara negara Muslim yang bercorak negara Islam hingga negara Muslim yang bercorak sekuler. Artikel ini ingin menguji dan menilai ulang pandangan pengecualiaan Islam atau “Islamic exceptionalism” terhadap kelangkaan demokrasi yang terdapat di negara Muslim dengan studi kasus variasi rezim yang terdapat di negara Muslim. Artikel ini menganalisis variasi Islam dan demokrasi di negara Muslim, dengan metode komparatif dengan menggunakan data dari lembaga pengindex demokrasi. Ada empat variasi negara Muslim yaitu, negara Islam, semi negara Islam, negara sekuler, semi negara sekuler. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan dari empat variasi dunia Islam, tidak satupun negara Islam yang berhasil mencapai demokrasi penuh (full democracy), ada tiga negara Muslim yang memperoleh demokrasi cacat (flawed democracy) yaitu Malaysia, Tunisia dan Indonesia. Selebihnya negara-negara Muslim berada dibawah sistem politik yang dikendalikan oleh militer (hybrid democracy) dan otoritarianisme. Selain itu artikel ini menemukan bahwa perangkat dan dukungan sosial, politik, budaya serta agensi dalam mendukung nilai demokrasi masih menjadi masalah utama berdampak buruk terhadap kelangkaan demokrasi dalam masyarakat Muslim.

Kata kunci: tantangan demokrasi; demokrasi Islam; negara Muslim

Introduction

The variations of Islam and democracy in Muslim countries have attracted scholars to examine more deeply what factors obstruct or support the practice of democracy in the Muslim world in the

development of an increasingly globalized world. Democracy in the Islamic world is predicted to undergo a transformation toward democratization and freedom in the future. This assumption is not a utopia and a necessity in shifting from an undemocratic Muslim country to a democratic Muslim country in creating a peaceful world civilization by prioritizing egalitarian principles, equality, freedom, independence, justice, and transparency (Ali 2020). In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, as quoted by Ali (2020), the Muslim population will be the largest in the world by 2070. On that basis, if a Muslim country transforms democracy, the Muslim community will contribute positively to the administration of democratic governance at the global level. This prediction is not impossible for the Islamic world when compared to the experiences of the former Soviet Union and Eastern European Bloc countries in accepting and embracing democracy. In addition, acceptance of democratic governance systems in some regions of the world, both in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, shows a significant increase (Huntington 2001). On the other hand, democracy is scarce in the Muslim world because most governments are authoritarian, and less than 11% are democratic. Democracy practiced in the Muslim world tends to be unstable and not well-consolidated (Mujani 2007).

Although scholars have often discussed the relationship between Islam and democracy, it is still a hot topic among researchers and observers of the Islamic world. Scholars have more attention to how the contextualization of democracy is practiced in Islamic countries and the Muslim world. Islamic State refers to a country that uses Islamic values to manage its politics and government. At the same time, the Muslim world refers to a more general Muslim community that lives under a particular government that interacts with other communities. The issues analyzed include the context and intellectual response to Islam and democracy, the contemporary ideology of Islamic political movements, the interaction of Islam and the politics of the Muslim world, and the development of contemporary Islamic politics, both mainstream and extremist (Esposito & Shahin 2013). Although, at the global political level, it is marked by the third wave of democratization, which was followed by the Arab Spring revolution (2011), democracy is still challenging to find in Muslim countries. The scarcity of democracy that occurs in Muslim countries has resulted in the Islamic world being dubbed the exception to Islam in terms of democracy (Huntington 1991, Esposito 2016).

Democracy in the Muslim world tends to experience obstacles and difficulties compared to the Western world. Meanwhile, in the West, democracy is relatively able to develop significantly. If we compare the two civilizations, there has been a transformation gap toward democratization between the Islamic world and the West. This gap is quite significant from 47 Muslim-majority countries; only 11 countries (23%) have democratic governments. Furthermore, none of the 11 countries with electoral democracies came from Arab countries. Meanwhile, in non-Muslim countries, 110 out of 145 countries (76%) are countries with electoral democracies. This shows that non-Muslim countries are almost three times more likely to be democratic than Islamic countries (Karatnycky 2002). In the latest survey in 2019 conducted by Freedom House, the highest score of the democracy index of Muslim countries only reached a flawed democracy (flawed democracy). No Muslim country has been able to achieve full democracy. Ironically, although no Muslim country gets a total democracy score, a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2012) shows that most people living in Muslim countries want a democratic system (Pew Research Center 2012, Robbins 2015). Thus, there has been a considerable paradox between the authoritarian government regime in a Muslim country and the desire of the majority of society and its citizens who want a democratic system.

The study of the relationship between Islam and democracy has developed from early studies that raised the issue that Islam is not compatible with democracy. The characteristic differences between Western culture and the Muslim world are distinct entities that cannot be integrated (Huntington 1996). From the issue of incompatibility, the study of Islam and democracy has expanded to the topic of Islam versus the West and modernity. This view has strengthened since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center building in 2001, confirming that Islam is considered unable to adapt to modern times (Lewis 2002). The absence of democracy in several Muslim countries and the Middle East is due to the democratic culture not growing well (Kedeourie 2013). In addition, authoritarian governments and regimes in

power in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) can adapt to existing changes, including the ability to oversee radical political system transformations without losing their authoritarian power (Cavatorta et al. 2012). Meanwhile, recent studies discussing Islam and democracy after the Arab Spring events show the influence of economic globalization and the emergence of social liberalization, and political fragmentation in opposing authoritarian regimes in the Middle East (Salamey 2015). After a decade of the Arab Spring revolution in the Middle East, new problems remain, such as falling into conflict and being trapped in a civil war. The idealized transition has not gone well; on the contrary, what has happened is that sectarian interests are held hostages, such as ethnicity, religion, sect, and political groups. This factor causes political instability in the Middle East to continue to this day (Yasmine 2015, Rahman 2019).

In response to studies that assess the incompatibility of Islam with democracy, critical studies have emerged, both among Muslim and Western scholars, who dispute the view that Islam is incompatible with democracy. According to this group's view, it is necessary to distinguish between Islam as a doctrine or teaching and Islam as a historical-empirical phenomenon developed in Muslim society. Blaming the dimension of religion as the main factor that hinders the development of democracy in the world tends to simplify social, political, and cultural issues that develop in Muslim societies. There are Muslim countries where Islam and democracy can work well, and vice versa; however, democracy is difficult to practice in some Muslim countries (Ehteshami 2004). Studies on Islam and democracy can run in a compatible manner as evidenced by Indonesia, Turkey, and Mali (Mujani 2007).

In addition, there are also objections to the incompatibility of Islam with democracy by prioritizing the doctrinal approach contained in the teachings of Islam itself. The doctrines contained in Islamic teachings are very much in line with democratic values, such as there are verses in the Qur'an relating to the management of a fair and transparent government, deliberation, freedom, equality (Sirry 2002). Recent studies explain the features of political institutions in a country that affect democratization in the Islamic world. In addition, from fifty Muslim countries, in the future, they will become the largest population in the world in 2070. Thus, the need to transform into a democratic government is important to do. Indonesia can be used as a reference as a model for a Muslim country that puts forward the principles of democracy (Hasyim 2013, Ali 2020). Based on the tendency of existing studies to focus more on the discussion of the compatibility and incompatibility between Islam and democracy, the topic of the relationship between Islam and democracy in the Islamic world under various government regimes, namely Islam and democracy under an Islamic state, semi-Islamic state, secular state, and the semi-secular state, has not been well mapped.

This paper responds to the limitations of existing studies regarding Islam and democracy. This study refers to the typology of Muslim countries according to Luthfi Assyaukanie (2020), which divides the variations of Muslim countries into four forms. (1) Countries that use Islam as the basis of the state and make Shari'ah their source of legislation, namely Islamic countries, (2) Countries that make Islam the official religion and make Shari'ah as the primary source of law and their legislative system, (3) A country that explicitly mentions secular in its constitution, and (4) Countries that do not mention Islam as the basis of the state or the state's official religion in their constitutions and do not assert themselves as secular states (Assyaukanie 2020). This article seeks explicitly to map the relationship between Islam and democracy in Muslim countries under the variations of the above system of government. In addition to mapping the relationship between Islam and democracy under each government, this paper also shows the factors that cause Islam and democracy to be compatible and incompatible in the Muslim world. The relationship between Islam and democracy cannot be seen only from the views of scholars but also from the direct experience of the Islamic world in practicing Islam and democracy. This article examines how Islam and democracy are practiced under the regimes of Islamic countries, semi-Islamic states, secular states, and semi-secular states.

Existing studies showing whether Islam and democracy are compatible or incompatible have attracted the attention of scholars using various scientific disciplines. Studies related to Islam and democracy

have increased in discussion after September 11, 2001. The Islamic world in general and the Middle East, in particular, have been in the international spotlight. Why can't the Islamic world adapt to global developments, including democracy (Ehteshami 2004). Scholars examine the relationship between Islam and democracy from a confrontational approach which tends to have a negative and harmonious relationship which tends to have a positive relationship (Barker 2011). So far, the existing studies in analyzing the relationship between Islam and democracy depart from the main question, whether Islam is suitable or not compatible with democracy (Hoveyda 2004). Experts and theorists divide the response of the Muslim community to democracy into three (Esposito 1996): First, groups that reject democracy, such as Sayyid Qutb and Thabathabai. The second who accepts but admits the difference is Al-Maududi and Theo-Democracy. The third one who accepts full democracy is like Fahmi Huwaidi. Why is democracy acceptable in some Muslim countries while other Muslim countries experience challenges and difficulties. Muslim countries' acceptance of democracy varies from one country to another (Esposito 1999). Previous studies have at least two tendencies related to Islam and democracy. Namely the negative relationship and the incompatibility between Islam and democracy. Moreover, the relationship between Islam and democracy is positive; Islamic principles and democracy are compatible. According to Hilmy (2009), there are two approaches to understanding the relationship between Islam and democracy: (1) Essentialist/exceptionalist cultural approach, (2) Structuralist-instrumentalist approach.

This paper is based on the argument that whatever the form of variation in Muslim countries in the world, whether Islamic countries, semi-Islamic countries, secular systems or semi-secular systems, until 2019, the relationship between Islam and democracy tends to be negative (incompatibility) and there is a contradictory relationship (antagonistic) between Islam and democracy. This study shows that, from the four variations of the Islamic world, none of the Islamic countries has succeeded in achieving full democracy (full democracy). Three Muslim countries have a flawed democracy (flawed democracy), namely Malaysia, Indonesia, and Tunisia. The rest of the Muslim countries are under a hybrid democracy and authoritarian political system. Thus democracy is still a rare item in the Islamic world.

Research Method

This article uses a type of literature study research by collecting data related to the variations of Islam and democracy found in Muslim countries from well-known democracy indexing institutions, such as Freedom House, The Economist Intelligence Unit, and the Pew Research Center. The data taken from the indexing agency is from the period 2019-2021.

The data collected were analyzed using the variations of Islam and democracy found in Muslim countries, divided into four categories. (1) Islamic State Countries that make Islam the basis of the state and make Shari'ah the source of their legislation. Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, (2) Semi-Islamic countries Algeria, Malaysia, Morocco, that make Islam the official state religion, (3) The secular state countries whose constitutions explicitly mention secularization or its equivalent term, namely the separation of religion and state. Turkey Uzbekistan, Nigeria, and (4) Semi-secular state. Indonesia, Nigeria, and Sudan are countries that do not mention Islam or secularization in their constitutions. After being grouped by country type, the indicators used to assess democracy in Muslim countries are divided into four groups: (1) Full democracies, (2) Flawed democracies, (3) Hybrid regimes, and (4) Authoritarian regimes.

Results and Discussion

Islam and democracy in an essentialist-exceptionalist cultural approach

Scientists and observers of democracy in Muslim countries label it as "Islamic Exceptionalism," i.e., Muslim countries must be excluded in any discussion about democracy. The term Islamic exceptionalism was popular among scholars until the 1990s, so Muslim countries were always sidelined in discussions about democracy (Hamid 2016). This view is based on the argument that no Muslim country has successfully implemented a democratic system. On the other hand, Muslim countries run an authoritarian

political system. Even if there is democracy implemented in Muslim countries, in practice, democracy is only procedural democracy. However, toward the end of 1992, the term Islamic exclusion began to waver along with the emergence of a Muslim country running a democracy, namely Mali in Africa. The thesis of the exclusion of Islam began to be refuted because what happened was the exception of Arabs (Stepan & Robertson 2004). At least three factors contributed to the emergence of the thesis on the exclusion of Islam in the Middle East. (1) The perspective of Western orientalism, especially America, is due to its foreign policy in intervening in the Middle East region, (2) Political violence of local authoritarian regimes such as the Shah of Iran, Saddam in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, and (3) The emergence and expansion of the conservative Islamism movement with an undemocratic character (Bayat 2007). However, the thesis of the exclusion of Islam has become increasingly irrelevant since the outbreak of the Arab Spring (2011), where many Muslim countries in the Middle East want a democratic government (Robbins 2015).

Supporters of the Islamic exclusion thesis are mainly put forward by scholars who tend to be skeptical in seeing the compatibility between democracy and Islam, such as Fukuyama (1992), Lipset (1994), Huntington (1997), Lewis (2002), and Elie Kedourie (2013) in Mujani (2007). Because they believe that Islam is a natural religion that governs all people's lives, including the state, this view is also supported by the direct experience of the Muslim world, which is challenging to find democratic practices in Muslim countries. A number of Muslim countries stretching from the Middle East and North Africa (the Middle East and North Africa, MENA), Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, and Southeast Asia do not organize their governments democratically (Schneider 2015). Some of these Muslim countries consider democracy as something foreign in their historical experience, moreover, making democracy a political system of a modern Muslim country. Because Muslim countries inherit the political system of history by implementing a political system of dynasties and monarchies, Islam does not have sufficient empirical experience of democracy. The practical experience of democracy in Islamic history is minimal. As a result, every effort to foster democracy is always faced with deeply rooted conservative forces who are pro-status quo, anti-change, and reject democracy (Esposito 1999).

The views of scholars who view that Islam is not compatible with democracy have developed and become hegemony because they depart from an essentialist-culturalist approach. The assumption of this approach tends to see religious-based cultural factors as supporting or hindering the democratization process in a country. The political culture approach is that a cultural process shapes political behavior, political institutions, and political performance. So the conclusion that is drawn is the "incompatibility thesis" between Islam and democracy which tends to give negative stereotypes to Islam (Hilmy 2009).

In general, the scarcity of democracy in the Islamic world is mainly due to (1) Islam is a total view of life-based on Shari'ah which regulates all aspects of individual life and Islamic society because most Muslims tend to understand democracy as something contrary to Islam, (2) This view of life is not a symptom of the periphery but rather a symptom of the mainstream, and (3) Islam is antagonistic to democracy, so democracy cannot develop properly. Such a view is also known as the political culture approach, namely that a cultural process shapes political behavior, political institutions, and political performance. Democracy has been tried in Muslim countries since the first half of the twentieth century but failed. It is predicted that it will not be successful in the future. Because the cultural heritage of the Muslim community is used to autocracy and monarchy systems, this cultural factor is also supported by the interpretation of Islam, which places women in second-class status. Women becoming second-class citizens, as happened in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf countries, is a significant obstacle to their participation in public life (Sirry 2002, Mujani 2007).

Islam and democracy structuralism-instrumentalist approach

The structuralist-instrumentalist approach is a response to the culturalist-exceptionalist perspective. If the culturalist-exceptionalist view argues that a culture based on religion, especially Islam, will hinder the development of a country's democracy, then, according to the structuralism-instrumental approach,

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religion, culture, and democracy can have a dialectic in a positive relationship. The determinant of religion is not the main factor in determining the scarcity of democracy in the Muslim world. Religion is only secondary legitimacy in constructing political culture in authoritarian political regimes, as is common in the Middle East and northern Africa (Hilmy 2009).

This school thinks that the more significant role in determining the development of democracy in a country is played by agency. In both democratic and authoritarian countries, the development of democratization is primarily determined by agency factors. This view is based on testing the democratic culture that developed in the West and Islam as to if it is associated with the religious, cultural factors of the community. This thesis has significant differences in religious culture, both from Western and Muslim cultures, in supporting democratic ideals and creating a strong government. Countries in the Middle East and the North African peninsula are not democratic on account of factors outside their religion, namely the state structure and authoritarian regime that is too despotic (Norris & Inglehart 2011).

The doctrine in Islam relating to the administration of good and democratic governance is in line with democratic principles. In Islamic doctrine, it is known that there is an order to conduct deliberation as contained in the Qur'an, administering a fair government, choosing leaders, and realizing community welfare (Abou El Fadl 2015). Islamic doctrine also teaches the principles of democracy in Islam. In principle, the Islamic doctrine in *siyasa fiqh* relating to democracy is a universal political doctrine, such as justice, good governance, deliberation (*al-Shura*), brotherhood (*al-Ukhuwah*), equality (*al-Musawwamah*), and freedom (*al-hurriyah*) (Mulia 2001). Like the majority and largest Muslim country, Indonesia, Indonesian intellectuals accept democracy and even support it as a system that must be practiced in an Islamic society. In Indonesia, the compatibility between Islam and democracy runs positively both doctrinally and politically (Abdillah 2004). Support for democracy is based on the following reasons: (1) The democratic values align with Islamic values in social life, especially the principle of deliberation, (2) The democratic system is the right way to articulate Islamic aspirations because Muslims in Indonesia are the majority, (3) Trust and support for a democratic system of government-the Muslim community has relatively high support for the democratic system, (4) Institutional and institutional support, whether a country is democratic or undemocratic, is not determined by religious factors but is influenced by the extent to which institutional and institutional support supports democracy. Some Muslim countries show social capital such as trust in supporting democracy (Al-Braizat 2002, Mujani 2007).

The structuralist-instrumentalist school also believes that, although the word democracy is not used directly, Islamic doctrine supports democratic principles such as the concept of *shura* (consultation), *Ijma'* (consensus), and *ijtihad*, which shows that democracy already exists in the Muslim world. Meanwhile, Muslim intellectuals themselves also have quite varied views on the relationship between Islam and democracy. The views of Muslim scholars such as Sayyid Qutb, Al-Maududi, Ibn Tai-miyah, and Al-Mawardi Modern Islamic thinkers, from Tahtawi (1801-1873) and Mawdudi (1903-1979) to Qutb (1906-1966) and Khomeini (1902-1989) judged that Islam was not compatible with democracy. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the views of contemporary Muslim scholars such as John L Esposito (1991), Khaled Abou el Fadle (2004), Fatima Menissi (1994), and Asef Bayat (2007) consider that Islam is compatible with democracy (Hilmy 2009).

Variations of Islam and democracy in Muslim countries

Countries with a Muslim majority population practice Islamic relations and democracy differently from one another. The difference is more due to the typology of government found in Muslim countries accepting or rejecting the democratic system (Karatnycky 2002). Based on the form of government found in Muslim countries, out of 47 countries with Muslim majority populations, ten countries implement presidential-parliamentary democracy, one parliamentary democracy, nine countries with authoritarian presidents, seven dominant party countries where the opposition parties are nominal, six presidential-parliamentary systems with authoritarian government features, nine traditional monarchies, and three

Muslim countries with one dominant ruling political party. Moreover, there is one fundamentalist theocratic country, like Afghanistan, under the rule of the Taliban. This phenomenon is inversely proportional to what happened in the Islamic world, in non-Islamic countries; what happened was that 110 out of 145 non-Islamic countries (76%) were democracies. Thus, non-Islamic countries are almost three times more likely to convert to democracy than in the Islamic world.

The absence of democracy in Muslim countries such as in the Middle East and North Africa occurs because of the paradox between the ruling regime and the wishes of its people. A survey was conducted by the Pew Research Center in six Muslim countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Turkey. The main question asked was: do you want a democratic political system? In Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and Tunisia, a majority or more than 50% answered that they would vote for democracy. The percentage is around 61% to 84%. In Pakistan, 42% voted for democracy. Democracy is still the highest choice compared to other political systems. Moreover, in the future, according to Pew Research Center starting from 2070, Muslims will become the largest group in the world. The quality of life in the world would be much better if the Muslim World were in a democratic government that guarantees freedom (Pew Research Center 2012).

Islam and democracy in an Islamic state

The Islamic State is a country that makes Islam the basis of the country’s primary state and makes Shari’ah laws its main source of legislation. Countries that mention Islam explicitly in their constitutions as “Arab Islamic State” (Arab Islamic State) are Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Yemen. While the state of Bahrain calls itself the “Islamic Arab State.” The Maldives state calls itself: “A democratic republic based on Islamic principles.” In addition, the Islamic State is known as the “Islamic Republic,” such as Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Mauritania (Assyaukanie 2020). Whatever the form of the state, the most basic of an Islamic state is the phrase, Islam, as the basis of the state and its constitution.

Table 1 shows that democracy does not grow well in Islamic countries because of the authoritarian system of government. Based on The Economist Intelligence Unit (Unit 2021) report, the highest type of Islamic state government regime is Pakistan with a hybrid regime type regime. At the same time, other Islamic countries are under authoritarian governments.

Table 1.
Islam and democracy in an Islamic state

Countries	Score	Regime type
Pakistan	4.31	Hybrid regime
Iran	1.95	Authoritarian
Afghanistan	0.32	Authoritarian
Saudi Arabia	2.08	Authoritarian
Yemen	1.95	Authoritarian
Oman	3.06	Authoritarian
Mauritania	4.03	Hybrid regime
Bahrain	2.52	Authoritarian
Maldives	-	-

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021 (Unit 2021)

Authoritarian countries in the Middle East and North Africa continued to suppress dissent in politics during 2018 so that their democratic transitions tended not to be well-consolidated. Meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia, despite getting praise for allowing women to drive, the Saudi authorities arrested several progressive women’s rights activists and suppressed the movement’s activities. In addition, the incident of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Arabian consulate in Turkey, which allegedly involves the Saudi Arabian royal family, shows the authoritarianism of the ruling regime (Middleeasteye 2020). In contrast to these two, the elections held in Iraq and Lebanon could stabilize those countries and experience fairly good democratic progress.

Islam and democracy in semi-Islamic countries

Table 2 show that semi-Islamic countries refer to countries that make Islam the official religion and make Shari'ah the primary source of law and its legislative system. Countries that fall into this category are Bangladesh, Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, Malaysia, Tunisia, Somalia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Libya, Palestine, Kuwait, Qatar, Djibouti, Comoros, Syria, Sahrawi or Western Sahara, and Brunei. Darussalam. Tunisia and Malaysia make Islam the official religion and get the highest score compared to the others.

Table 2.
Islam and democracy in semi-Islamic countries

Countries	Score	Regime type
Tunisia	5.99	Hybrid regime
Malaysia	7.24	Flawed democracy
Bangladesh	5.99	Hybrid regime
Algeria/Aljazair	3.77	Authoritarian
Morocco/Maroko	5.04	Hybrid regime
Mesir	2.93	Authoritarian
Iraq	3.51	Authoritarian
United Arab Emirates	2.90	Authoritarian
Libya	1.95	Authoritarian
Palestina	3.94	Authoritarian
Kuwait	3.91	Authoritarian
Qatar	3.65	Authoritarian
Djibouti	2.74	Authoritarian
Comoros	3.20	Authoritarian
Syiria	1.43	Authoritarian

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021 (Unit 2021)

Even though Tunisia experienced the Arab Spring in 2011, it managed to show its democratic development toward a better direction. In a relatively short time, less than a decade, the political transition in Tunisia showed a political change from an authoritarian regime to a flawed democracy. This achievement encourages development amid other Middle East regions that experienced a similar political transition (Arab Spring) which failed to transform their country into a democratic one. In addition, the political consolidation in Tunisia succeeded in creating an agreement between the government and the opposition in creating a progressive state constitution by prioritizing democratic principles (Kartini 2016).

Malaysia is one of the Muslim countries with an official religion, and Islamic law is Shari'ah as a source of legislation. Based on the report above, the development of democracy is also quite encouraging. Malaysia is a multiethnic and multiconfessional country that combines elements of Islam with a Malay identity. The development of democracy in Malaysia cannot be separated from the solid democratic institutions that they inherited from Britain since 1957. The parliamentary democracy system and constitutional monarchy in Malaysia are running well.

Islam and democracy in a secular state

A secular state is a state that explicitly states its state identity as a secular state in its constitution. Thirteen countries whose constitutions clearly state themselves as secular countries are Turkey, Burkina Faso, Kazakhstan, Mali, Chad, Senegal, Guinea, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Gambia, and Kosovo. Two other countries, namely Uzbekistan and Niger, do not mention the word "secular" but use the phrase "separation of religion and state." Although constitutionally secular, some religious affairs in these countries are regulated by the government (Assyaukanie 2020). The following are secular Muslim countries and their democracy scores. As show in Table 3.

Table 3.
Islam and democracy in a secular state

Countries	Score	Regime type
Turkey	4.35	Hybrid regime
Burkina Faso	3.84	Authoritarian
Mali	3.48	Authoritarian
Senegal	5.51	Hybrid regime
Kyrgyz Republic	3.62	Authoritarian
Gambia	4.41	Hybrid regime
Uzbekistan	2.12	Authoritarian
Nigeria	4.11	Hybrid regime
Kazakhstan	3.08	Authoritarian
Chad	1.67	Authoritarian
Guinea	3.14	Authoritarian
Azerbaijan	2.68	Authoritarian
Tajikistan	1.94	Authoritarian
Turkmenistan	1.66	Authoritarian
Kosovo	-	-

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021 (Unit 2021)

Secular countries such as Turkey, once excluded from undemocratic Muslim countries, scored democracy with a hybrid regime type regime. Whereas Turkey, as a Muslim country with a secular system was a democratic Muslim country in the 1990s. However, recent political developments and the strengthening of Islamic populism in Turkey, both at the state and community level, have resulted in a lower democracy score (Hadiz 2019). Even secular Muslim countries do not guarantee that democracy can develop well.

Islam and democracy in semi-secular countries

Table 4 shows that Muslim countries which are semi-secular countries are states. The constitutions of these countries do not mention Islam as the basis of the state or the state's official religion. However, they do not assert themselves as a secular state or its equivalent phrase. Religion is mentioned neutrally. In Indonesia, Albania, Bosnia, and Sierra Leone, the constitutions do not mention any specific religion, but the word "religion" is mentioned several times. Furthermore, seven countries can be included in the Semi-Secular State group. Indonesia, Nigeria, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Albania (Assyaukanie 2020).

Table 4.
Islam and democracy in semi-secular countries

Countries	Score	Regime type
Indonesia	6.71	Flawed democracy
Nigeria	4.11	Hybrid regime
Sierra Leon	4.97	Hybrid regime
Lebanon	3.84	Authoritarian
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5.04	Hybrid regime
Sudan	2.47	Authoritarian

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021 (Unit 2021)

Based on the variation of the Muslim countries mentioned in Table 4, the top three Muslim countries that have the highest democratic values are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5.
The top three Muslim countries with the highest democracy scores

Countries	Score	Regime type	Regime
Malaysia	7.34	Flawed democracy	Semi Islamic countries
Indonesia	6.71	Flawed democracy	Semi secular state
Tunisia	5.99	Hybrid regime	Semi secular state

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021 (Unit 2021)

Malaysia and Tunisia are under a semi-Islamic state regime type with a semi-Islamic state regime that makes Islam the official state religion and uses Shari'ah law as a source of legislation. Meanwhile, Indonesia is under the type of semi-secular state regime because it does not affirm Islam as the basis of the state in its constitution and the official religion of the state on the one hand and does not affirm it as a secular state on the other. Tunisia shows positive developments in terms of the democratic development of the country, even though the country experienced the Arab Spring of political transition in 2011. The phenomenon of Islam and democracy that occurred in the Middle East did not grow democracy well except for Tunisia and, instead, became a countercurrent to the emergence of new authoritarianism in the Middle East. This is known as the "backward bending of the Arab Spring." The practices of authoritarian political power cannot be changed using revolution or regime change. In the context of Tunisia, the constitution of the state agreed upon in Tunisia includes a progressive constitution in promoting political democratization in guaranteeing equal rights between men and women (Wahyudi et al. 2020).

Democracy is still a rare item found in Muslim countries. Of the fifty Muslim countries globally, not a single Muslim country achieved full democracy in 2019. In the political context, the Middle East as the main base of the Islamic world has long been known as an area far from democratic values. Almost all countries (governments) in the Middle East (and other Islamic regions) are absolute empires or totalitarian states wrapped in democracy. Even if an election is held in the Islamic world, it usually occurs in four possibilities. (1) Under the threat of military power, which is always ready to annul election results that are less favorable to the army's interests, as seen in the cases of Turkey and Algeria, (2) Under the shadow of the mullahs or wilayat faqih as in the case of Iran, (3) Elections take place under semi-authoritarian and repressive political powers such as in Malaysia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, Malaysia is an example of an Islamic-based country that applies the concept of "pseudo-democracy", and (4) Elections that are held "substantially" are to meet Western demands such as the UAE and Bahrain. (Al-Qurtuby 2019).

In general, the scarcity of democracy in Muslim countries or the Middle East is primarily due to the cultural factors of democracy that are not growing well. Democracy as values and ideas will grow well if democratic cultural instruments support it. Such as social capital, there is trust, networks, good political participation, solid democratic institutions, and the existence of civil society organizations in controlling government performance. Social capital is also defined as a capability that arises from general trust in a society or certain parts of that society. In addition, this concept is also defined as a set of informal values or norms that are shared among members of a group that enable collaboration (Norris 2002).

Although none of the Muslim countries mentioned above have achieved full democracy, religious factors cannot be used as a scapegoat for the scarcity of democracy in these Muslim countries. Because even if looking at secular countries, there is no correlation between secularism as a prerequisite for accepting democracy, ensuring that secular countries can accept democracy well. A country, whether an Islamic state or a secular state with a particular form of government in order to accept democracy as an ideal political system, is not determined by religious determinants on the one hand, and the other hand, must abandon religion (secularism) as a prerequisite for accepting democracy (Ali 2013). Stepan (2000) and Kuru (2009b) conducted a study in formulating an index of religious regimes based on their country's constitution with a report on religious freedom. The index classifies religious state regimes into four types: (1) Religious states, which institute religious laws and courts as the basis of their legal and judicial systems (Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan), (2) States with established religions, which recognize an official religion without making it the center of their legal and judicial systems (England, Denmark, and Greece), (3) Secular states, which (a) have secular legal and judicial systems in the sense of being out of institutional religious control, and (b) do not establish an official religion (the United States, France, and Turkey), and (4) Antireligious states (Kuru 2009a), which show an official hostility toward religion, generally by establishing atheism (China, North Korea, and Cuba). They saw a correlation between democracy in secular countries and democracy in countries with official religions, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6.

Democracy in secular countries and democracy in countries with official religions		
Regime type	Democratic	Authoritarian
Secular	79 (66%)	38 (66%)
Official religions	40 (34%)	20 (34%)
Total	119 (100%)	58 (100%)

Source: Kuru (2009b)

As Table 6 shows, democracy can work well in secular countries and countries with certain official religions. In addition, the correlation of secularism with democracy and authoritarianism is illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7.

Secularism correlation with democracy and authoritarianism		
Regime type	Secular	Official religions
Democratic	79 (68%)	40 (67%)
Authoritarian	38 (32%)	20 (33%)
Total	117 (100%)	60 %

Source: Kuru (2009b)

Based on Table 7, secularism can also develop under democratic and authoritarian systems. Whether Islam is compatible with democracy is no longer a relevant question today. Instead, it is under what conditions can Muslim society accept and conform to Islam and democracy. In short, the compatibility or incompatibility of religions, including Islam, with democracy is not just a matter of philosophical speculation but a political struggle. The incompatibility of Islam and democracy is not a problem of the Islamic text but rather is related to the social, political, and cultural conditions of the people who can accept democracy or reject democracy. This is not a matter of text regarding the balance of power between those who want a democratic religion and those who want an undemocratic religion. Religion has an interpretation that can support a regime to be democratic or to become authoritarian (Stepan 2000).

The compatibility of Islam and democracy has been going well in the socio-political history of Islam. There are variations of countries with a Muslim majority population, such as a democratic country with a Muslim majority population in the social and political fields. Besides that, there are also countries with a majority population of authoritarian and underdeveloped mules. In the course of history, from the 6th century to the 9th century, the Islamic world experienced rapid progress because it was supported by progressive scholars in various fields of science and technology (Kuru 2020). The Muslim community does not need to be afraid to accept democracy because of the rejection of democracy in Muslim countries so far because democracy is synonymous with secularism. At the same time, democracy does not have to go hand in hand with secularism in a limited sense, namely the separation between religion and the state. Secularism is not an absolute requirement in supporting a democratic political system. In addition, secularization has long been going on in Muslim societies in carrying out democratic government under neutral religious secularism.

Based on the discussion mentioned above, the variations of Islam and democracy that exist in Muslim countries it can be understood that the political reality in the Middle East shows that the stigmatization of Islamic exceptionalism or the incompatibility of Islam and democracy is not proven. In the political context in the Middle East, what is happening is Arab exceptionalism or the undemocracy of some Arab countries and not the Islamic world. The absence of democracy in the Islamic world is not caused by the incompatibility of democracy with Islam, but by historical, sociological, cultural, and political factors that developed in the Middle East so that democracy cannot develop properly. The reality of the relationship between religion and politics in the Middle East does not necessarily reject democracy but instead contributes to the growth of democracy.

Democracy can develop well if supported by a legal foundation or a constitution that promotes democratic values. If the constitution of a Muslim country does not support democratic values, democracy cannot develop properly. It can be concluded from the variation of Muslim countries mentioned above that, in Islamic countries or semi-Islamic countries where religion plays a dominant role in government, it is unlikely that democracy can develop properly. On the other hand, a country with a constitution that accommodates democratic principles such as freedom, equality, independence, and secularization, as found in the variations of secular and semi-secular countries, has the potential to become a democratic Muslim country (Assyaukanie 2020).

Conclusion

This study contributes to mapping the variations of Islam and democracy in countries ranging from Islamic countries, semi-Islamic countries, secular countries, and semi-secular countries. However, Muslim countries are not homogeneous. Differences in geography, demographics and political experience make these countries unique. Mapping the variation of Muslim countries is very important because, so far, scholars have divided Muslim countries into three categories, namely the Islamic State, the religious state, and the secular state. With the variety of Muslim countries, the challenges and obstacles to the practice of Islam and democracy can be seen. Is the problem based on the constitution, which seems to be the unification of religion and state in the Islamic state, Islam as the official religion, where the application of Islamic law becomes part of state law (semi-Islamic state), and separation of religion and state in a secular Muslim state, or does the constitution not emphasize between states? In the constitutions of secular and Islamic countries, there is a neutrally described phrase about religion that recognizes the state's official religions.

Based on the four variations of the Islamic world, none of the Islamic countries has succeeded in achieving full democracy. Three Muslim countries have a flawed democracy, namely Malaysia, Indonesia and Tunisia. The rest of the Muslim countries are under a political system controlled by the military (hybrid democracy) and authoritarianism. Thus democracy is still a rare item in the Islamic world. Even though there has been the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to overthrow the authoritarian regime, the authoritarian government is still trying to maintain its power firmly. Changes toward political democratization are still very far away in the Middle East because of the dominant group sectarianism. The relationship between Islam and democracy in the Muslim world depends on specific contexts (peculiarities contexts), so the positive or negative relationship between the two is highly dependent on the context. The future challenge for Muslim countries is to properly organize the consolidation of democracy, whether the consolidation of the constitution, the consolidation of democratic institutions, the consolidation of parliament, or the consolidation of civil society in promoting democratic principles.

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