

# CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC SOCIALISM: CONCEPTUAL DEBATE AND PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION



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**Abstract**

Socialism and Islam, or Islamic socialism, are two streams of thought that have continued to develop in Middle Eastern and North African societies for centuries. These two streams frequently reinforce each other. This article examines the debate and practical implementation of Islamic socialism in the thought of contemporary Muslim philosophers such as Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghanī, Salamah Mūsa, Muṣṭafa al-Sibaṭī, and 'Ali Sharī'atī. This study used a comparative approach by exploring primary sources from contemporary Muslim thinkers who are the subject of the study. The findings showed that socialist Islamic thinkers have creative and original thought patterns. They intensively and comprehensively explored Islamic teachings and traditions to explain and build a complete 'Islamic Socialism', not just a patchwork between 'Socialism' and 'Islam'. In addition, some intellectuals from the modern Muslim world created theoretical ideas and showed how Islamic socialism was implemented and realized in the form of institutions.

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**Abstrak**

Selama berabad-abad, sosialisme dan Islam atau sosialisme Islam, adalah dua aliran pemikiran yang terus mengalir dalam masyarakat Timur Tengah dan Afrika Utara. Seringkali, kedua aliran ini saling menguatkan. Namun, tidak jarang keduanya bertemu. Artikel ini mengkaji perdebatan dan implementasi praktis sosialisme Islam dalam pemikiran filsuf Muslim kontemporer seperti Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghanī, Salamah Mūsa, Muṣṭafa al-Sibaṭī, dan 'Ali Sharī'atī. Artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan komparatif dengan menelusuri sumber-sumber primer dari para pemikir Muslim kontemporer yang jadi subjek kajian. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa para pemikir Islam sosialis memiliki corak dan warna pemikiran yang kreatif dan orisinal. Secara intensif dan komprehensif mereka menggali ajaran dan tradisi Islam untuk menjelaskan dan membangun 'Sosialisme Islam' yang utuh, dan bukan hanya tempelan antara 'Sosialisme' dan 'Islam'. Selain itu, sejumlah intelektual dari dunia Muslim modern menciptakan ide-ide teoretis dan menunjukkan cara sosialisme Islam diterapkan dan diwujudkan dalam bentuk institusi dan lembaga.

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## INTRODUCTION

For centuries, socialism and Islam have been two streams of thought that have persisted in Middle Eastern and North African societies (Esposito, 1995). The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World provides two separate entries, "Socialism and Islam" and "Arab Socialism", although the explanations of the two overlap. These two streams of thought frequently reinforce each other. However, sometimes there are collisions between the two. One perspective of discussion in Islamic Socialism is to answer the question: Does 'socialism' have original roots in the culture of Arab and Middle Eastern societies? (Botman, 1995, p. 81).

Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghanī (1838 – 1897) was an influential reformer and a reference figure in this topic discussion. He traced and proved that the thought of *ishtirakīyah* (socialism) existed in the pre-Islamic Bedouin Arab tradition. It is reflected in the structure of the early Islamic state in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The struggle of the early Muslim



community to build prosperity became part of the original doctrine of the Arab nation (Botman, 1995, p. 81).

Social justice is the most important message –in addition to the teachings of monotheism – from the earliest teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW (571 – 632) (F. Rahman, 1979a, p. 15). Apart from correcting traditional beliefs of polytheism, the Prophet also criticized people's lousy business habits, condemning usury and interest money. On the contrary, he promotes zakat and encourages compassion for others in need and suffering by sharing some of their wealth (Nasr, 2002). The recommendation to support the poor is a command for every Muslim wherever they are. This practice is mandatory and part of the pillars of Islam.

A key concept of the Qur'an and Islam is to explain the concept of *ummah*. Islam aims to build a just community by enforcing the law of God. Islam takes an integrative path in the tension between 'individual' and 'communal/shared' priorities. In *ummah*, there is no society without individuals, and there are no individuals without society (Nasr, 2002, p. 191). The Prophet Muhammad did not know socialism as understood today, but he implemented socialist principles, minus class struggle and conflict. The social principles are Islamic teachings that break down the boundaries of ethnicities, colors and beliefs. With his reformist teachings, he was accused of various very bad predicates by the people around him (Armstrong, n.d., p. 23). The name frequently mentioned in the early Muslim community is Abū Dharr al – Ghifārī (d. 652/657). Abū Dharr was a friend of the Prophet who became a symbol of Islamic resistance to injustice. His ascetic lifestyle, withdrawing from the world, was an embodiment of moral responsibility. He was the actor who realized social *Taşawwuf* from the earliest Muslim generations (F. Rahman, 1979b, p. 129).

A similar opinion was expressed by Shaykh Khalid Muḥammad Khalid (1920 – ), who wrote the book *Min huna nabda'* (From Here We Go). In this book, he explores and proves that socialism exists and is preserved in Islamic teachings. This teaching is needed to correct the economic system of capitalism (Botman, 1995: 82). Muṣṭafa al – Sibaṭī (1915 – 1964) launched *Ishtirakīyat al-Islam* (1959) which emphasized that socialism and Islam textually match, and contextually both become the goals of social life of the Muslims (Botman, 1995, p. 83). In this book, he arranges his arguments step by step on how Islam conveys the teachings of socialism which are unique and different from Western materialistic teachings which emphasize class struggle. He explains five fundamental human rights in Islamic Socialism: life, freedom, knowledge, dignity, and ownership (Dekmejian, 1995, p. 71).

One of the messages in Ḥasan al – Banna's preaching (1906 – 1946) was 'social justice'. Starting from the context of his society, he thought about alternatives to social, economic, and political systems for Muslims towards Western ideology and colonization. However, Al – Banna' reflects an activist who faced ambiguity in his Islamic socialist thinking. On the one hand, he believes that Muslims do not need to refer to Western ideologies such as capitalism or socialism. The Qur'an has answered all the socio – economic problems of the *ummah*. On the other hand, he still wants to accept elements of socialism and capitalism as long as they are Islamic (Sufri, 1999, p. 127). His ambiguous position is also visible when he shows that the people experiencing poverty get significant attention in the Qur'an and Islam, but he disagrees when individual rights are abolished. In short, Al – Banna' proposed an Islamic economic system that integrates the positive elements of socialism and capitalism. This concept, of course, is not clear (Sufri, 1999).

Not all Islamic thinkers follow the way of thinking and exploring the ideas above. Sayyid Qutb (1906 – 1966) did not follow their thought, which he considered impure and unradical. Qutb, one of the most significant and essential ideologues of *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimūn* in Egypt during the Nasser era, rejected the terminology and substance of Islamic Socialism. Islam is self – sufficient. It does not need another ideology to perfect it. Islam offers solutions to all social, economic, and moral problems caused by the ideologies of capitalism and communism (Qutb, 2010).

As a political activist, the most important work of Qutb is *Ma'alim fi al-Ṭarīq* (*Milestones*). The core message of his writing is a correction against the *jahilīyah*, characterized by the pervasiveness of contemporary culture in the Islamic world and undermining Islamic values. An uncompromising commitment to sacred texts and verses represents his writing style. It never came to his mind that a Muslim needs to reinterpret the Qur'an and Tradition to face the challenges of an era. The Qur'an is *self-evident*. Likewise, Islam is an eternal reality. It will always be suitable for all times (Akhavi, 1995a, p. 402).

According to Qutb, there are only two references and ways to explain what should not be embraced and avoided by a society. The first way that should not be taken is the era of *Jahilīyah* or the pre – Islamic era of ignorance. Capitalism, socialism, and communism can be equated with this age of ignorance. The second way is the Islamic way, which is the path of justice that can fulfill all human needs. An Islamic state based on *sharī'ah* is the ideals of society and governance for Qutb. He considers all forms of society outside of Islam illegitimate (Botman, 1995).

Islamic socialism is sometimes not distinguished from Arab Socialism because it is embedded in Middle Eastern and North African countries such as Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iraq, Iran, Tunisia, Algeria, and South Yemen. Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918 – 1970) began and practiced it systematically and comprehensively for the Egyptian nation. Initially, Arab socialism referred to the socio – economic ideals of Nasserism and Ba'thism. Each is the Egyptian state ideology of the late 1950s and 1960s, and the Iraqi and Syrian state ideologies from the 1960s to the 1980s (traces of which still remain in the following years) (Sluglett, 1995).

Some observers argue that the most precise explanation of 'Arab Socialism' was outlined by Michel 'Aflaq (1910 – 1989), one of the founders and ideologues of Ba'thism. He wrote the principles of socialism, which were non – Marxist and anti – Marxist in the 1950s. As it is described, socialism is an emanation of the deepest Arab nationalism. In the future, if the Arab nations are liberated and united, all forms of class conflict will disappear.

In the Arab world, 'socialism' is a less accurate terminology. In these countries, the ideology of socialist revolution is unknown, nor is the practice of exclusive control of the means of production by the state. It can only be said that Arab socialism in the practice of economic growth is run by the sponsors of the state, not by dominating everything (Sluglett, 1995).

## CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC SOCIALISM: CONCEPTS IN THE DEBATE

Several thinkers from the contemporary Muslim world explain Islamic socialism from a conceptual point of view. The following description presents each thinkers and the contents of their thoughts: Jamal al – Dīn al – Afghānī (1838 – 1897), Salamah Mūsa (1887 – 1958), Muṣṭafa al – Siba'ī (1915 – 1964), and 'Ali Sharī 'atī (1933 – 1977).

## 1. Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghanī

Jamal al – Dīn al – Afghanī is a political activist and *Pan-Islamist* who conveys his ideas and ideology through writing. Having an essential position on the map of Islamic renewal and an extensive influence in the Muslim world, al – Afghanī is a 'mysterious' figure whose lifetime has generated discussion and debate. His influence in this century can be explained through three dimensions of his life and thought. First, the ideology campaigned in the 19th century was nationalism, *Pan-Islamism*, and various experiments to synthesize new ideas with Islam. Second, his influence through his direct presence in multiple places across countries as a charismatic speaker and teacher. Third, his very high mobility in various parts of the Islamic world has had a direct impact on Muslim communities in many places (Keddie, 1995).

Although many people claim that he was from Afghanistan, as his name suggests, more convincing evidence shows that al – Afghanī was born and raised in Iran to a Shī'ī family. Having family in that country, speaking Persian without an accent like other native Iranians, and using an Iranian passport are some proofs that he is genuinely Iranian. He tended to hide his identity as a Shī'ī in order to maintain his influence among Sunnis. His books and writings emphasize the impact of rationalist Islamic thinkers, especially from Iran, such as Avicenna (Ibn Sīna; 980 – 1037) and Naṣīr al – Dīn Ṭūsī (1201 – 1274). Al – Afghanī's visit to India when he was almost 20 years old significantly determined the paradigm of his later political thinking. Almost certainly, his visit coincided with the years of the Indian Mutiny (1857). The anger at the British who colonized many countries that colored his entire life emerged in direct encounters and contact in India (Keddie, 1995, pp. 24 – 25).

During his second visit to India (early 1880s), living among the Muslim community in Hyderabad, al – Afghanī wrote a series of thoughts that became widely known in the English – speaking intellectual community, *The Refutation of the Materialists*. The substance of this article rejects any form of compromise with the British colonial government that carries materialist ideas. The topic of nationalism has already emerged in this article. Meanwhile, the call for Pan – Islamism only appeared later. Pan – Islamism is a continuation of the ideals of the caliphate at the end of the 19th century, when European colonialists increasingly controlled the Muslim world. Al – Afghanī was one of the initiators (Azra, 2014).

In every presence in Muslim communities, through his persona of intelligence and personality, al – Afghanī was always able to sneak in and be accepted among local elite circles. His contribution to modern Islamic thought is undoubted. However, he was basically an activist who had no interest in building complex theoretical systems. He took existing themes, combined and developed them into a completely new thought. From traditional Islamic philosophy, al – Afghanī took elements of reason and nature. His strong understanding of philosophy became a solid foundation in his experiment to modernize Islamic teachings.

Al – Afghanī's political thought, which was accompanied by his anger at the British colonial government (France and Russia) that occupied Muslim countries, was based on two movements. The first is nationalism, which refers to symbols of the glory of Ancient Egypt or Ancient Hinduism in India. The second is Pan – Islamism, which refers to the Ottoman Sultans of the 19th century as a starting point and then continued more progressively in the Young Ottoman anti – imperialist movement whose concept of thought was formed mainly by Namik Kemal (1840 – 1888) (Guida, 2011).

The focus of his movement on anti-imperialism and his ideals about independence for Muslim countries led al-Afghanī to take a pragmatic approach in the form of improving scientific-technical education. To realize this, he regularly collaborates with the government in power. It was only later that he realized the necessity of the resurrection of the people and the ordinary people as a condition for actual change (Keddie, 1995).

The pan-Islamism invoked by al-Afghanī, both at the theological level and through political action, is capable of halting the pace and expansion of European nations. The appeal of Muslim solidarity and the anti-British attitude propagated by al-Afghanī make the Pan-Islamic movement continue to resonate today. As mentioned earlier, Pan-Islamism is an al-Afghanī translation of both theoretically and practically problematic khilafatism (Azra, 2014).

In short, al-Afghanī's socialism is reflected in his modern political Islamic thought. His writings on Pan-Islamism imply Islamic social principles and values. His Islamic socialism was translated into his reinterpretation of Islam and expressed in anti-imperialist political activities (Kohn, 2009).

## 2. Salamah Mūsa

The first and most important systematic social thinker in contemporary Egyptian history was Salamah Mūsa. He first worked in the journal owned by the nationalist Mustafa Kamil *al-Liwa' (Brigade)* and in several other journals before finally managing his journals: *al-Mustaqbal (The Future, 1914)* and *al-Majallah al-Jadidah (New Journal, 1929)*. His intellectual-social spirit has existed since he was a student in England in the early 1900s.

After returning to Egypt in 1913, he published a very important essay, namely "Al-ishtirakīyah" (Socialism). This writing is fundamental and has become a guide for many generations of Islamic intellectuals and activists afterward. This work provides direction and strategic guidance on the Islamic journey toward modernity. Throughout his life, Mūsa, who was greatly influenced by the thoughts of Fabian Socialism, published fifty books on philosophy, social and economics that were widely read and invited admiration and impression from many people who followed his social thoughts (Botman, 1995, p. 82).

Mūsa was also involved in practical politics. In 1920, he joined the founding of the Marxist Egyptian Socialist Party. Then, he left the Party because he was disappointed with the Party that did not fight for Fabian Socialism. He admitted that his educational background, namely his socio-political and intellectual awareness, had been radicalized because of the thoughts of national leaders and pioneers of the Arab Renaissance (*ruwwad al-nahdah*) (Sheehi, 2005).

In his memoirs, comparing the social phenomena of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries while anticipating the presence of modern capitalism and globalization, Mūsa wrote: "As a very young child, I saw the 19<sup>th</sup> century as clear of complexities, without various discoveries that appeared in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, tradition seemed completely static. I still ride the donkey from Cairo train station to 'Aabin. My village, Zaqaziq, does not have street lights yet" (Sheehi, 2005). With the disappearance of the donkeys around Cairo station, new forms of communication, transportation, and economics emerged throughout Egypt at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As part of the generation of Egyptian intellectuals who witnessed the transition due to the influence of Westernization, Mūsa's theoretical experiment was to try to reconcile the New and the Old, between tradition and modernity. He was a secular reformist who

believed that Egypt would overcome its backwardness only through a complete break with the Old and total liberalization of all aspects of life: cultural, political, and ethical (Ibrahim, 1979).

### 3. Muṣṭafa al-Sibaṭ

Muṣṭafa al-Sibaṭ lives in Damascus, Syria. He is a teacher of Fiqh at Damascus University and an activist for *Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*. He is known as the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. The critical and political attitude of Muṣṭafa al-Sibaṭ (1915 – 1964) flowed from the environment and origins of the '*ulama*' family in Homs, Syria, where he was born. This atmosphere provides a passion for deepening Islamic knowledge and encourages growing political involvement.

Al-Sibaṭ has lived in Egypt since he was 18 years old. The history of his life in Egypt led him to meet with Ḥasan al-Banna', founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and become a member of this movement. Upon his return to Syria (1943), he was in feeble health due to French military torture (Esposito, 1995: 71). He lived a very dynamic life for the next two decades as an Islamic activist and intellectual. In 1946, al-Sibaṭ made a breakthrough by combining various existing *jam'iyat Islami* and putting them all into one Muslim Brotherhood (Pierret, 2012). He was elected as *al-muraqib 'amm* (general supervisor). In the following years, he developed this organization not only into a political party (*jam'iyyah*) but especially into a spirit-giver (*rūḥ*) that aroused public awareness in order to achieve comprehensive Islamic reform.

Allah owns everything, and humans are His deputies to utilize everything. Furthermore, al-Sibaṭ explained that the state has a role as a regulator of society, that is, by nationalizing (*ta'mīm*) natural resources that affect many people's lives, implementing Islamic law in shared social responsibility, and providing sanctions for those who violate the regulations made. His anti-capitalist thought, instead of bringing Islam closer to socialism, has aroused a revolutionary flush in many Muslims (Dekmejian, 1995).

Al-Sibaṭ explains that socialism is more than just nationalizing property rights. It is not just a matter of limiting individual property rights. Socialism as a development path provides steps on how society grows to maturity. He said that socialism is a formula to overcome poverty and encourage individuals to develop their potential (Botman, 1995).

The explanation above means that al-Sibaṭ's socialism is a correction of secular socialism and communism. The rights of private ownership as a means of production are guaranteed. What al-Sibaṭ wanted to correct was ownership being used as a tool of exploitation. In this way, Islamic Socialism creatively encourages the public sector to live harmoniously with the private sector. When an Islamic socialist society has achieved its goals, there will be no more conflict because life will flow based on moral principles and collectivism.

Al-Sibaṭ states that the broad framework of socialism is supported by five pillars; the right to a healthy and safe life, the right to freedom, the right of knowledge, the right to live with dignity and the right to proper ownership. Unlike conventional socialism, he adds and proves that Islam recognizes people's right to create, utilize, and develop their wealth.

Developing socialism in a society includes a complex system and structure. Al-Sibaṭ argues that the principle of *zakat* is insufficient to explain and realize the principles of Islamic socialism. This pillar is inadequate to overcome hunger, social disease, and

injustice. These issues can only be solved if there is a backup of national law and state authorities (Botman, 1995, p. 83).

Nasser later adopted Al-Siba'i's thoughts to establish Egypt's social-political government. In 1962, Nasser decided at the national level to integrate nationalism, socialism, and Islam. There is no doubt that al-Siba'i played a profound role in the intellectual justification for Islamic socialism (Hopwood, 1995, p. 231).

#### 4. 'Ali Sharī'atī

Ali Sharī'atī was one of Iran's most influential Islamic social thinkers of the 20th century (Akhavi, 1995: 46). Raised in an educated family, his father was an Islamic modernist with a library of books. Sharī'atī grew up in an environment that gradually made him a formidable intellectual. He and his father were involved in the socio-political movement, which led to his arrest and imprisonment at a very young age (1958). At the age of 27 (1960), he completed his studies in French and Persian Literature, which immediately encouraged him to continue his studies in Paris and make many contacts with world-class intellectual celebrities such as Louis Massignon, Jacques Berque, and Jean-Paul Sartre. His socio-political activities continued in Paris and intensified when he returned and lived in Iran since 1964 (Abrahamian, 1982).

Sharī'atī's lectures with a new approach to understanding Islam soon became a magnet for young people but instead provoked the anger of the orthodox. The methodology is to bring Islam relevant to the changing times (Akhavi, 1995b). Getting in and out of prison is an experience to go through as a consequence of his critical and revolutionary attitude. During a visit to England on June 19th, 1977, in his brother's apartment, he was found dead at the age of 44. The ruling regime claims he died of a heart attack, while many believe Iranian secret agents killed him.

Besides being a socio-political activist, Sharī'atī is also a scholar and thinker. One of his early works was *Maktab-i va-saṭah* (Mahzab of the Middle Thought), which proposed Islam as the right and moderate way between capitalism and communism. He was very impressed by the biographical writings of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī by Jawdah al-Saḥḥar (1913–1974). Abū Dharr (d. 652/657) was a companion of the Prophet, a symbol of Islamic resistance to injustice. His followers, after his death, referred to Sharī'atī as "Abū Dharr-i Zaman" (Abū Dharr Our Age) (Akhavi, 1995b).

Like many great thinkers, Sharī'atī's intellectual position also reflects a paradox. On the one hand, he is a very intense thinker who seeks truth through an intuitive mystical (sufistic) approach to the world and God. On the other hand, he is a public man who never stops proclaiming a massive revolution of social justice and freedom for the oppressed. Behind this paradox lies his theological attitude, which states that religion must transform the private ethical space into a revolutionary program that changes the world (Moin, 1995).

Sharī'atī describes his social actions using the symbol of Imam Ḥusayn, who he considers brave enough to risk his life for the socio-political liberation of his *ummah* (Campanini, 2005). His ideological position in interpreting Imam Ḥusayn has raised controversy among traditionalists. Sharī'atī criticized Marxism, which considers religion to be nothing more than the 'opium of society'. On the contrary, he had the same thought as Ḥassan Ḥanafī, who sees religion as containing the capacity to emancipate humans from all oppression (Akhavi, 1995b). His historical philosophy emphasizes the progressive idea of humanity towards liberation from all forms of superstition and obscurantism. The

human ratio has emancipatory capabilities. Shari'atī's attention is directed and devoted to the experience of injustice that afflicts humans, accompanied by the struggle to eradicate it (Akhavi, 1995b, p. 48).

Shari'atī draws on the concepts of dialectics and historical determinism in Marxism. From Western liberal thought, he took ideas from the Age of Enlightenment regarding the role of ratio in correcting various tragedies that have affected humans, including those caused by institutional religion. Despite his appreciation of Western thought, Shari'atī believed that Western imperialism would lead to human slavery. To face the dilemma of the intersection between the ideologies of Marxism and capitalism, he placed Islam as an alternative answer to both (Shariati, 1980).

Shari'atī recommends that every Muslim must carry out *ijtihad*, which is an implication of his existentialist philosophy. This philosophy explains substantive points, what justice is, what and who has the authority to lead society, and why the masses have the right and obligation to make movements and protest. Although Shari'atī uses various Shi'i (Shia) symbols, his very humanistic approach raises problems, especially among scripturalists. However, there is no doubt that his thought is rich and unique (Ahmed & Subhani, 2019; Taufik, 2015).

## CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC SOCIALISM: APPLICATIONS IN THE DEBATE

Several thinkers from the contemporary Muslim world formulated theoretical concepts and explained how Islamic socialism was applied and realized in the form of institutions. The following description will explain successively the Islamic socialists who were pioneers in realizing theoretical concepts into institutional systems such as Ḥasan al-Banna' (1906–1949), Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966), Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970), and the debate of several practitioners and ideologues of Ba'athism.

### 1. Ḥasan al-Banna'

The Islamic social reformers appeared prolifically at the same time as the emergence of *Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (1928). These figures articulate religious social justice by adhering firmly to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Embracing the vision and movement of the 19<sup>th</sup>- century revivalists, *Al-Ikhwān* againts all forms of Western penetration into the Islamic world, including actual social thought and other forms of Western ideology (Botman, 1995).

The life and work of Ḥasan al-Banna' (1906 – 1949) are one of the most important sources of reference in the early emergence of *Al-Ikhwān*. He became the figure to whom a new generation must turn. A loss of confidence in the ideas of Western-style liberal economic development characterizes this new generation. They direct themselves to the ideology of nationalism on the one hand and refer to the Holy Book and the living example of the Prophet Muhammad on the other hand. This religious doctrine states how a society is organized and how humans are managed. *Al-Ikhwān* ideologues referred to the time of the Prophet and his companions as a reference for finding the right social paradigm for this modern era (Botman, 1995, p. 82).

Like other influential figures in general, Ḥasan al-Banna's life history was shaped by the environment, and gained luck due to intensive encounters with other important figures (Carre, 1978) (Carre, 1995). As a thinker and activist whose readings reached Western thought, he was also a writer and journalist for the magazine for young Muslims *Al-fath* (Beginning), the scientific journal *Al-manar* (Lighthouse), and publications related



to the movement pioneered by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍa (1865 – 1935), *Maktabah Salafiyah* (Salafiyah Literature).

As an activist, al – Banna's career began in March 1928, when he and six colleagues founded an Islamic organization that campaigned for goodness and truth, and eradicated instability. A year later (1929), this association introduced itself as *Jamīyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimūn* (Muslim Brotherhood). Al – Banna' transformed the al – Ikhwan movement into a political campaign operated by an executive committee and equipped with a military wing organization.

The figure of Ḥasan al – Banna' was very influential, so the political history of Egypt 1940 – 1952 is mainly the history of this man's political activities. It means even after secret military agents murdered him on February 12th, 1949, his actions and thoughts remained present and alive. In the 1930s and 1940s, Banna' established many Islamic schools. Likewise, he pioneered publications of Al – Ikhwan al – Muslimūn (1933 – 1938; 1942 – 1948), Al – ta'aruf (Knowledge; 1940 – 1942) and Al – manar (1939 – 1942). Four vocabularies dominate the discourse of his thought: nation, state, social justice and society. If 'Islam' is added to each of these vocabulary words, then that is the substance of the idea he continues struggling with.

Islam is a comprehensive system of life. Based on this belief, the Muslim Brotherhood is also defined and hopefully can face Western ideology. Al – Banna' formulated the cry of the *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimūn*'s struggle as follows: 'The Qur'an is our Constitution', 'There is no other constitution except the Qur'an', and 'The Prophet Muhammad is our role model'. All the secularization movements that have emerged since the 19<sup>th</sup> century were not included in al – Banna's political thoughts. He did not accept the idea and also disagreed with the struggle for secular Arab nationalism conceived by Saṭī' al – Ḥuṣrī (1882 – 1968), which was later described in detail and systematically by Michel 'Aflaq (1910 – 1989). He took a different line of thought from 'Aflaq, who founded the Arab Ba'th ('Renaissance; Rebirth') party.

Al – Banna' conveyed his idea, "Arabs are the backbone of Islam, the strong guardians of its existence. The Muslim Brotherhood uses the language used by the Prophet, namely Arabic. Therefore, since Islam is a faith and religion, it is also the home of the nation and state that transcends all human differences. All Muslims are brothers. Islam does not recognize geographical barriers, or chains and ties of race and nationality". Al – Banna' discussed the 'War for Allah' argument. However, his text does not give the impression that he was agitating and encouraging his followers to engage in violence and terrorism. He affirmed that war was a legal obligation at a time when the Egyptians were oppressed by British colonialism. Jihad is realized as a present individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*) for all, not a collective obligation (*fard kifayah*) in which a few people wish to represent all.

Banna outlined the concept of social justice. The idea he had created in the 1950s was detailed and expanded by his students and followers with social leanings after he died. The outline made by Banna' was to radicalize Egypt's socio – economics using the basis of Islamic teachings. He also wrote about the construct of the fiscal system, "Islam consecrates, sanctifies zakat, for the sake of social interests. Easing the burden of people experiencing poverty is a trait that cannot be realized in this world. With all capabilities, step by step, social taxes are built to prosper society. Taxes are taken from the rich and used to raise living standards." He rejected interest in the banking system, as did usury. An Islamic society is a society characterized by justice. However, al – Banna' explained

that this is not only written through the right ideas or good work but must be through institutional breakthroughs, actual state intervention, and effective and efficient implementation of income and wealth taxes.

The reflection on social theory above cannot fail to be produced by someone who has experienced and been directly involved in society for decades. Banna' confronts his direct knowledge of the community with his reflections and readings from the Qur'an and ḥadīths. "A letter about Yesterday to Today" that he wrote implies all that. "Remember, brothers, that more than sixty percent of the Egyptian population lives worse than animals. They can eat only after toiling hard and sweating. Egypt is threatened by famine. The solution to this economic problem can only be given by God."

Al-Banna's economic concept is the practice of resistance to the capitalist system brought by the colonialists. The Islamic State is concretely outlined in the form of the availability of jobs, adequate wages, health insurance, and regulations prohibiting child labour. The home industry is being intensified to reduce unemployment, so that women and children can participate in economic life. All of these ideals will be realized through the *Al-Ikhwan* social movement. As al-Banna' envisioned, *Al-Ikhwan* wants to provide and build social facilities, such as schools, hospitals, orphanages and mosques. Likewise, this movement contributes to educating and shaping the mentality of Muslims with a charitable attitude, rejecting bad habits such as consuming alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and gambling (Hatta, 2001).

One of the nationalisms of Muslim societies and countries described by al-Banna' is breaking ties with foreign (colonialist) currencies and issuing their own currency. If currency management is carried out independently, the inflation rate can be controlled, and the national economy becomes stable. According to al-Banna', nationalism is the reduction of private companies, transportation and all economic activities involving the public interest.

## 2. Sayyid Quṭb

Several titles that were given to Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966) or Sayyid Quṭb Ibrahīm Ḥusayn Shadhilī included literary critic, novelist, poet, and Islamic thinker. His influence as an Islamic political activist in Egypt even surpassed his predecessor, the founder of *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimūn*, Ḥasan al-Banna' (1906–1949). His passionate writings are written in solid colors that convey the suffering of the Muslim community during the time. He describes ideal faith through words from holy verses (A. H. A. Rahman, 2011).

As a literary writer and poet, Quṭb took his political position. He refused to follow the current and even opposed and left the people he respected because of his political differences. At the age of 30, he enjoyed his political adventure by joining Sa'd Zaghlūl's Wafd Party, but then leaving this party and joining its splinter, the Sa'dist Party (Akhavi, 1995a).

The defining period of Quṭb occurred in 1948. As an official in the Ministry of Education, he went to the United States to study Western educational methods at the government's expense at several universities. He earned a Master of Arts at Stanford University. In the summer of 1950, he left the US, visiting various European countries (England, Switzerland, Italy) before finally landing in Egypt in 1951.

The tour to the West, mainly to the US, changed the intellectual and religious course of Quṭb. This journey proved to be a transition of his career from the literature and education field to religious socio-political commitment to its roots. Economic and scientific progress in America did not dazzle him. Instead, he felt disappointed and angry

with US society's political attitudes, which were racist, sexually promiscuous and pro-Zionism (Qutb, 2010).

Qutb began a new career as he refused to be promoted as an advisor to the Ministry of Education. As a writer and analyst of socio-political topics and issues, his writings are distributed and published in various newspapers. In 1953, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood and became editor of the weekly newspaper *Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*. His involvement is becoming more intense in this movement. His position also became increasingly important and influential in Egyptian national politics.

*Al-Ikhwān* formed a coalition after the monarchical government coup (1952) and collaborated with the newly ruling regime. These two fortresses soon diverged quickly and took two different agendas. *Al-Ikhwān* prepared a plan to create a new constitution that prompted the formation of an Egyptian government based on Islamic law. The difference in vision between the two makes the situation even tense (Al-Khalidi, 2001).

Since 1954, Qutb's life has passed through prison by prison year after year. Despite his illness, he endured various tortures in prison. In July 1955, the court sentenced him to 15 years in prison. In prison, he witnessed *Al-Ikhwān* colleagues being tortured and killed. He spent years in a prison hospital because of his serious illness. This traumatic scene and experience convinced him to conceptualize and explain the moral basis for the formation of a secret 'para-military' cadre. He believed that violent resistance was justified against an authoritarian, ruthless and unfair regime (Akhavi, 1995a). After several months of freedom (May 1964), he was arrested again on charges of instigation and terrorism (August 1965). Despite pressure from the international community, Gamal Abdel Nasser's government executed this revolutionary figure by hanging (29 August 1966).

Sayyid Qutb was an Islamic activist and thinker who was more prominent than others after World War II. He singled out the 'most militant' guerrillas against the West and Muslim leaders who were deemed to deviate from the path of Allah. This situation is analogous to the resistance to Jahiliyah, namely everything that erodes and destroys Islam. Qutb's work that best explains his theological position is *Khaṣa'is al-taṣawwur al-Islamī wa-muqawwimatuh* (1962; Characteristics and Constitutive Elements in the Islamic Concept), which contains an explanation of the unity of Allah, the divine nature of Allah, the permanence of Allah's commands. By explaining what can be known and what remains unknown, he explains Islam in terms of his activities and social commitments.

Qutb rejected Greek thought and Neoplatonic Islamic philosophy for being considered to melt the understanding of organic societies. Muslims are basically aligned with *al-tajammu' al-ḥarakī* ("growing together dynamically"). It is the character of the ummah as a living organism which are different but growing together dynamically (Hussin & Solihin, 2013).

Overthrowing a government that does not implement Allah's revelation, for Qutb, is not only permissible but mandatory. Muslim communities that are actively involved in social society not only to implement the laws of Allah that have been revealed to them but also to be obliged to replace leaders who do not observe Allah's laws. Many radical Islamic groups in other parts of the country have been inspired by the ideas of *jahiliyah*, *ḥakimiyah*, and *jihad* described by Qutb. Throughout the past half century, its influence on socio-political-economic movements in the Islamic world has never been doubted (Akhavi, 1995a).

The theological perspective of Qutb is embedded in 'ahistorical' philosophy. He was not interested in studying the historical development of law in Islam. According to him,

interpretation over the centuries has distorted the understanding of the verses of the Qur'an. The method is always based on the Holy Qur'an without the mediation of history. His background as an educator influenced the intonation of the way Quṭb spoke and his writing techniques. He identified threats that would destroy Islamic identity. He rejected Marxism, which he considered to harbour the ideology of human slavery. He acknowledged the West's progress regarding science and technology, but he thought the West to be heading towards spiritual bankruptcy and spreading anti-Islamic values (Nasution, 1972, pp. 49 – 50).

Despite firmly rejecting of Western thought, Quṭb often cited important terms rooted in Western concepts. He explained that Western concepts, such as democracy or *al-dimuqrāṭīyah*, already existed in early Islamic history. Similarly, Quṭb explained the concept of social justice. The vocabulary of *al-'is al-ijtima'īyah* only emerged and was used by Islamic law judges in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The medieval writers and thinkers talked about justice and injustice by focusing on rulers and government politics, namely the state's need to pursue justice to ensure the public interest (*maṣlahah*). He found verses in the Qur'an that Allah brings justice to his people. People think that the concept of justice developed by Quṭb is still at the level of *divine justice* and has not reached social justice (Loboda, 2014).

Social justice in the West has its roots in Natural Law and legal philosophy, both of which are highly anthropocentric. Social justice contains human struggle and conveys equality throughout society. This concept immediately sounded 'subversive' for Quṭb, who understood that the truth in understanding social justice was obtained directly from revelation, not the efforts of humans in history. Even though Quṭb's thought was considered only at an ideal and abstract level, he continued to inspire various protests against those called 'enemies of Islam' until the 21st century (Akhavi, 1995a).

### 3. Gamal Abdel Nasser

A supporter of Arab nationalism, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918 – 1970), who had a military education background, led the overthrow of King Farouk (1952) and was later elected as President of the Republic of Egypt (1956 – 1970) until his death. He became one of the leaders of a Third World country in an era marked by the political demands of post-colonialism. This era was under the shadow of a few powerful nations, covered by the Cold War, and an explosion of population exacerbated society's socio-economic life. Under the leadership of Nasser, Egypt was the center of the Arab world. It is also a reference point for the Arab nationalist movement. It is a symbol that can unite Arab countries against imperialism in the Middle East and against Israel, a conspirator of the West (Hopwood, 1995, p. 231).

Nasser believed socialism was the best alternative among various ideologies. He used the Arab Socialist Union as a medium to realize his socialist ideas. He was not a thinker with a smooth ideology, so he wrote 'the 1962 Charter' to express his central ideas about Egypt's future. Marxism, which was becoming the idol of many political leaders at that time, colored the direction and content of the Charter. Although religion and Islam are rarely mentioned in it, Nasser was not an atheist or secular leader. He argues that Islam is an essential part of every Egyptian's life which is included in the country's political system in the future if the social revolution has been achieved. He also gives a more general message that all religions contain a progressive message, namely the fundamental rights for humans to live in freedom.

Nasser's conversion to Islam occurred when the Arabs were defeated in the 1967 Arab – Israel Six – Day War. This defeat created an atmosphere in which Arab nationalism and socialism seemed to collapse. After this incident, Nasser became a militant advocating Islamic values. Islamic topics and symbols were explicitly voiced and evoked. Before he died in 1970, he had devised a different Egyptian ideological structure, becoming less socialist and more accommodative, in which Islam played a more significant role (Hopwood, 1995, p. 231).

Gamal Abdel Nasser had extensive political influence beyond Egypt. Nasserism is a legacy of Nasser's socio – political practices that can be traced back to the mid – 1950s when he was at the peak of his political career. The revolutionary philosophy of Nasserism influenced similar movements in countries such as Libya, Lebanon, and Yemen. Nasserism is identical to the Pan – Arab movement, which proclaims the independence of Arab nations and Asian – African countries. The ideological creed that is frequently cited is that "democracy is just 'nonsense' without socialism" (Mansfield, 1995).

Moving alongside the euphoria of the significant changes in the Arab world that took place in the 1950s and 1960s, Libya also experienced dramatic upheavals. In 1969, a group of young soldiers led by Mu'ammār al – Qadhafī (1942 – 2011) overthrew King Idrīs's monarchical government. Then, he replaced a new society based on the ideologies of Pan – Arabism, socialism, and Islam. Qadhafī surpassed Nasser, his mentor, by placing Islamic teachings more radically in the social life of Libyan people. This Islamization is embedded in the prohibition of gambling, alcohol consumption, and nightlife, as well as the implementation of literal Islamic law against thieves, corruptors and slanderers.

While criticizing Western colonialism and Soviet domination which had ruined Islamic morals and teachings, Qadhafī wrote the three – volume work *Al-Kitāb al-Aḥḍar* (*The Green Book*). His teachings which are based on the Qur'an, show the Third Way which is an alternative path to capitalism and communism. Solutions to all human problems from personal problems to international relations can be found in the Qur'an. Experts argue that *Al-Kitāb al-Aḥḍar* is not a religious – theological text, but a pamphlet and provocation to mobilize the masses. This book has influenced several places in the Middle East, North Africa and other Third World countries.

The Islamic social movements also took place in many places, for example, the countries known as the Maghrib (West Arabia and North Africa). During colonialism, the main enemy of the countries in this region was France. Algeria underwent the longest and bloodiest struggle since 1847 until its independence in 1962. Likewise, Tunisia, which was occupied and exploited by France in 1881, received formal recognition of its independence in 1956. Under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba (1903 – 2000), this nation struggled to regain its identity under the Socialist Party flag until he was eliminated from the presidency (1987) (Botman, 1995).

In Iran, socio – political resistance happened in the 1960s and 1970s to overthrow Muhammad Reza Shah. 'Change' became the cry of the struggle of intellectuals and activists such as Mehdi Bazargan (1907 – 1995), 'Alī Sharī'atī (1933 – 1977), Ayatullah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902 – 1989) and Jalal Al Aḥmad (1923 – 1969). Jalal Al Aḥmad, an intellectual oriented towards communism (Korany, 1995), later believed that Islam could play an important role and be critical towards the Shah's government. His concerns were to curb the Westernization of Iranian society, correct the pathological glorification of foreign culture, and overcome the breakdown of national identity.

#### 4. Ba'athisme

Ba'athism or *al-ba'ath*, which means renaissance or resurrection, is an Arab nationalist ideology. This ideology calls for the development and formation of the unification of Arab states. The theoretical concept of this movement was developed by intellectuals, such as Zakī al – Arsūzī (1899 – 1968), Michel Aflaq (1910 – 1989) and Salah al – Din al – Bitar (1912 – 1980). The principles of Arab Socialism underlie this ideological belief with the aim of improving society. Freedom and unity are the ultimate goals of Ba'athism (Kerr, 1973; Morrison, n.d.).

Aflaq took several points of Marxist thought. He agreed with Marx, who considered material economic conditions a crucial element in human life. However, he disagreed with Marxist 'dialectical materialism'. He assumed that Karl Marx forgot the inherent spiritual aspects of humans. Ba'athism considers that in Arab nationalism, not just the worker class but all classes want to correct and fight the domination of foreign capitalism. Socialism, inevitably, is the system of life that must be chosen to achieve Arab modernization (Arabic Renaissance). This situation is characterized by the formation of the unity of the Arab World, in which people enjoy freedom. The primary current of this ideology is the establishment of a secular government with the foundations of Arab nationalism, freedom, and morality (Kerr, 1973; Morrison, n.d.).

Although Ba'athism essentially took a secular stance, in the context of Arab culture and thought, Islam is recognized as having made a creative spiritual contribution to this ideology. Islam and his teachings have made socialism authentically unique to the Arab World, in which socialism is characterized by 'justice'. The ideology of Ba'thist, which is applied in Syria and Iraq, adopted anti – colonialist Islamic socialism. Besides legislating health, education and labor rights, this political system also nationalized industries controlling people's livelihoods, banking and foreign trade (Springborg, 1982). However, these two countries rejected the criticism of this ideology by implementing authoritarian governments. In these two areas, the applied Ba'athism had different principles from the philosophy developed by Aflaq and al – Bitar.

Taking the example of the Prophet's life and the political life of his time, Ba'thism appreciates religious tolerance and upholds individual and social freedom (Botman, 1995). Ba'athism ideology recognizes all religions equally. During the chaos by the Shia group in the late 1970s, ideologues warned Vice President Saddam Hussein (1937 – 2006) not to compromise. Although the Ba'ath recognizes religion, it is not a religious party.

Saddam's attitude changed before, during, and after the Gulf War on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1990 till February 28<sup>th</sup> 1991 (Isakhan, 2011). He rendered his government to become Islamic. In the early 1990s, Saddam proclaimed the Ba'ath Party as a party based on Arabism and Islam. Saddam's influence was so strong that his ideology of power was often called *Saddamist Ba'athism (Al-Ba'athiyya Al-Saddamiyya)*, which was a variation of Ba'athism, with characteristics of Iraqi Nationalism, placing Iraq as the center of the Arab World, and campaigning for Saddam's political discourse to the other Arab countries.

#### CONCLUSION

The socialist Islamic thinkers have creative and original patterns of thought. They intensively and comprehensively explored Islamic teachings and traditions to explain and build a complete 'Islamic Socialism', not just a patchwork between 'Socialism' and 'Islam'. Some of the leading figures of contemporary Islamic socialism are Jamal al – Dīn al – Afghani (1838 – 1897), Salamah Mūsa (1887 – 1958), Muṣṭafa al – Siba'ī (1915 – 1964), and

'Ali Shari'atī (1933–1977). Moreover, several contemporary Islamic socialism thinkers formulated theoretical concepts and explained how Islamic socialism was applied and realized in the form of institutions; for example, Ḥasan al-Banna' (1906 – 1949), Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966), Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918 – 1970), and the debates of several practitioners and ideologues of Ba'athism.

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