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BOOK REVIEW

John L. Esposito *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*

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Islam is one of the main religions believed by millions of people around the world. This religion has brought significant impacts to the other religion and philosophical theory which then leads to the change of world in terms of many aspects including politic, economy, social and socio-economy. The author of this book is desire bring readers to understand deeply on the Islamic principles and rules, how this religion spread around the globe and the challenges to the Islamic countries which regarded by the author as Islamic threat. The author is trying to prove the Islamic threat is really exist or just a myth by identify the factor that challenge Muslim people and the response to the westernization which regarded as the effort of world's modernization and the changes occurred after western colonization. In addition, this book reviews several example of political issues encountered by certain Islamic countries like Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the conflicts and changes brought by the western colonization to the political policy and other source that bring threat to the Islam. Moreover, the author also put an effort to elucidate the significant factors that forces western to spread their power to Muslim countries. In short, generally the book is trying to show that the Islamic threat is not a myth, but is a reality experienced by many Islamic countries after the influence of westernization and colonial activities which bring highly impacts to the society structure in perspective of the author.

In process to make readers more understand the Islamic threat, the author has introduces few subtopics that covers on how the Muslim people was regarded as Islamic fundamentalist at the beginning of the first chapter. Reassertion of religion in politics and society has been subsumed under the term Islamic fundamentalism, where fundamentals is called fundamentalist who accept the Quran as the literal word of God and the

Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad as a normative model for living. Fundamentalism often has been regarded popularly as referring to those who are literalists and wish to return to and replicate the past. However fundamentalism is too laden with Christian presuppositions and Western stereotypes it is also implying a monolithic threat that does not exist. Besides that, the author also discuss about Islamic contemporary where includes reformation and revolution of the Islamic principle and rules. This leads to many related issues in the country. The suggestion of that situation given by the book's author to a more fitting general term are "Islamic revivalism" or "Islamic activism", which are less value-laden and have roots within the Islamic tradition. Islam possesses a long tradition of revival (*tajdid*) and reform (*islah*) which includes notions of political and activism dating from the early Islamic centuries to the present day. Definition given by the author for 'revival' terms is it is a reawakening of religious fervour, whilst reform meant the the action or process of reforming/changing. Islam's resurgence in Muslim politics reflected a growing religious revivalism in both personal and public life that would sweep across much of the Muslim world and have a substantial impact on the West in world politics. Islam's reassertion in public life: an increase in Islamically oriented governments, organizations, laws, banks, social welfare services and educational institutions. In shortly, the author discuss in sufficient understanding about the Islam experienced by many people.

Islamic threat is discussed more deep by the author in next chapter. This book discussed the roots of conflicts as well as cooperation and confrontation between Islam and the west. The contents basically touch on theological roots and centuries long interaction. Islam relationship to the west as often been marked by mutual ignorance stereotyping contempt and conflict. The author is trying to ask readers to illustrate the conflicts encountered by Islamic principles towards the modernization time by time. On his opinion, the rapid rise and expansion of the Islamic empire and flourishing of Islamic civilization posed direct danger to Christendom place in the world both theologically and politically. The theological similarities of Christendom and Islam put the two on a collision. Each community believe that its covenant with God was the fulfilment of God's earlier revelation to a previous community that had gone a stream. In addition, the author said that though the Islamic and Christian worlds take enormous pride, the historical dynamics of Christian-Muslim relations often found the two communities in competition, and locked at times in deadly combat, for power, land, and souls. They were often enemies. The writer states that Islam proved a double threat, religious and political which

often threatened to overrun Europe. A Christian Church convinced of its possession of truth and its preordained mission to save the world. It fostered a sense of superiority and righteousness which provided a rationale for the denigration of the infidel religiously, intellectually, and culturally. The writer states that these same attitudes made the successes of Muslim armies and the rapid spread of Islam by soldiers, traders, and missionaries that much more of a challenge to Christian faith and power.

In chapter three, the author explains his perspectives on colonization as one of the Islamic threats. In this book, it is explained the activities of the Muslims and their interaction with the rest of the world during the nineteenth century. By the nineteenth century, a clear shift of power had occurred and European colonization and the large scale spread of western power were on its way. The author believed that the Muslim world reacted differently to the challenge of colonialism. Some Muslims resorted to complete rejection and withdrawal with western education and foreign languages boycotted. Others adopted the path of secularism and westernization which resulted in a class of highly educated Muslim elites modernized and western in thought. In between the two extremes, fell the people who took the middle path of Islamic modernism. The author summarizes the role of people like Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1838-97), Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), Iqbal, Taha Husain and many others in developing a better Muslim attitude towards the west.

In chapter four, the author state that Islamic threat is come from the perspectives of most Westerners towards the Muslim. They are still has bad perceptions about Islam religion and always associate this religion with fundamentalism and terrorism. Their images for the religion always been about mobs shouting death to America, embassies in flames, assassins and hijackers threatening innocent lives, hands lopped off, and women oppressed. Conversely, the revival of Islam and Muslim politics truly have gone beyond and much more significant than these impressions. In the mid-twentieth century, Islamic region has had achieved political independence but received great influence from the West. There exist three significant orientations differentiating the all the Islamic state which were Islamic, secular and Muslim. Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan, Egypt and Pakistan was Islamic nation that used the Quran and Islamic law to govern the country and depends on their “Ulama” as advisors in legal and educational matter. In order to give advice in the legal and educational matter and used Islamic concept to conduct the domestic and foreign policies. Same goes for countries like Libya, Sudan, Egypt and Pakistan. Meanwhile, Turkey used more secular options in ruling their state and

undergone process of Turkification and Westernization where they uses Western influences to transform their language, history, religion and politics. The countries of Tunisia and Iran pursued more secular path as well. On the other hand, majority of countries in Muslim world, fall into the middle position. They are Muslim state, but they implemented more moderate secular path in order to develop their own. By means, they used the Western system for government, law and education but still considered using the Islamic provisions for instance requiring the head of the state to be a Muslim or that Islamic law should be recognize as another source of law. Ideologically, these countries tend to follow Western ways, in order to foster and nurture secular form to be their national identities and limit the religion to private rather than public life. This secular trend began to take control in the Islamic state in the sixties and became more developed and significant in the seventies and eighties. The most important characteristic of Islamic revivalism in Egypt in the nineties is the extent to which revivalism has become part and parcel of moderate mainstream life and society, rather than a marginal phenomenon limited to small groups or organizations, and the ulama and the mosques have also taken on a prominent role.

Subsequently, the author gives an example to explained one of the Islamic country that has face the threat and the author has interpret the response of Republic of Iran towards the Islamic threats. The author states that Iran was called the embodiment of Islamic threat for many decades and Ayatollah Khomeini is the living symbols of revolutionary Islam whom became the man many American hate. To avoid bias, the author should state Islamic perspective on Ayatollah Khomeini. Based on western view, religion in Iran has been intertwined during Safavid Dynasty. The tobacco issue with the West has caused the protest among the religious leaders and merchants. The westernization of Iranian's rules and governments system has eroded the Ulama status and revenues during Pahlavi's Dynasty. The beginning of the nationalization of Iran's oil started by the Shahs has brought to the Iranian's reformations which act as the government's opposition. This author emphasized that they feared the westernization of Iranian education and society. New idea is brought by the reformist suggest that Ulama should start to get involved in the politics sector to bring about the renewal of Islamic Society in Iran. Both Western and Muslim governments voiced concerns of the dangers of radical fundamentalism; fearing of spread of revolution not just in Muslim world but also throughout third World countries. Despite that, heterogeneous group in the political spectrum joined together under the umbrella of Islam

but not without substantial ideological and policy differences which resulted from interpretation of conflicting class interest. Confusion and indecision characterized much of the attempt to institute substantive social reform. The majority in parliament attempted to implement social revolution but the committee of clerical experts in Islamic law vetoed much of the reform legislation. Hence the Islamic republic was formed based upon a clerical-lay alliance committed to the Imam and the revolution though with differences of vision and policy.

Moreover, the next chapter in this book discussed about the Modern Islamic Organisation which have been the driving force behind Islamic revivalism and have been playing a pivotal role in the politics in Muslim countries. These organisations were not simply replicating the past Islamic ideology, but to respond to a new age in order to adapt to modern society. Muslim Brotherhood; founded by Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb and Jamaat-i-Islami which founded by Mawlana Abul Ala Mawdudi are the initiator of contemporary Islamic revivalism which disseminated their interpretation of Islam through schools, publications, preaching, social services, and student organisations. They addressed the problems of modernity, analysing the relationship of Islam to nationalism, capitalism, Marxism, modern banking, education, law, women, work Zionism, and international relations.

After that, the next chapter is thoroughly discussed about the Islamic movements from certain countries to cope with the effort of westernization in political institution which then affects the other aspect including economy and social interaction. The author emphasize on the Islamic movement happened in Tunisia and Algeria where Islam played an important role in political development in these countries as well as Islamic reformation which then blended with the nationalism of the citizen. In view of the author, Islamic influence the country especially including the decision to select national language, religion, national identity and authenticity continued to be an issue. It was true that the author mentioned about the monopoly of Western neo-colonialism and imperialism on their natural sources such as oil market that badly affects the economy of the country. Due to this scenario, some conflicts and significant change has occurred including the opposition to electoral politics by a particular party in Algeria, military intervention and reconciliation to eradication. Obviously, the disruption of electoral process by military and subsequent wave of repression gives signal the continued impact and legacy. Therefore, western threat is clear here clarified by the author compare to Islamic threat and the western claimed this as civilisation clash.

In this last chapter, the author lets us to rethink either true or not that Islam and the west is a clash of civilisation. By historical explanation between Iran and the west, he deeply tried to revise back what was happened to Iran that leads to the clash of civilisation. From his point of view, Saddam is subjected to this clash. Clash of civilisations were raised by Saddam in the name of Islam. They were rejected with equal force by other Muslim countries and religious leaders such as the official ulama of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The author compares Islam to the west and explains the western viewpoint on Islam. Even though Islam and Christianity share the same roots, the two have always been in a state of struggle against each other. The author also explains that the Muslims settled in the west are constantly being “othered” unlike other minorities present in the same region. The reason explained is that the Muslims are considered to be a threat for the west. The author quotes several examples that prove this as incorrect. Islamic fundamentalism identified as threat and has reinforced a tendency to equate violence with Islam. This belief has been informed by the impact of the Iranian Revolution. The nineties have challenged this assumption. There have been no any radical groups. Now they called as Islamic revivalism. At the end, the author concludes that Islamic threat is a reality and comprehensive action should be taken by both Islam and west parties to make the world peace and avoid terrorism or extremism in religion practise. However, this statement is not true since the author is American, he possibly not truly understand deeply Islamic religion from the whole perspectives. Islam is not a threat to everybody. Islam has proved that Islamic principles and knowledge is able to attract more positive impacts to the society and a country in the context of economy, politics, social and socio-economy as well.

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