

ISLAMIC-BASED DEVELOPMENT FOR POST-TSUNAMI ACEH: A THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

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Abstrak

Artikel sederhana ini bertujuan memberikan sebuah konsep pembangunan pasca-tsunami di Aceh berdasarkan konsep Islam, yang merupakan keyakinan mayoritas rakyat Aceh. Dalam penulisan artikel ini, penulis membagi ke dalam tiga bagian. Bagian pertama menjelaskan tentang keyakinan bahwa pembangunan setelah bencana tsunami harus berdasarkan konsep Islam, dimana Islam bukan hanya sekedar keyakinan masyarakat, tapi juga telah membuktikan bahwa Islam sudah pernah sukses dalam sejarah peradaban Aceh. Kedua untuk melihat strategi pembangunan yang dilakukan oleh Negara pasca-Tsunami yang berhadapan dengan keyakinan kesuksesan masa lalu. Serta yang ketiga atau terakhir adalah mengajukan suatu teori/gagasan suatu strategi pembangunan pasca-tsunami berdasarkan konsep Islam.

Kata Kunci: *pembangunan berbasis Islam, prinsip-prinsip pembangunan Islam, Aceh pascatsunami.*

Abstract

This is a simple paper with a straight forward aim. It attempts to suggest a development design for post-tsunami Aceh based on Islam, the very faith of the majority of indigenous people in Aceh. In so doing, the paper is divided into three sections. The first is to express a conviction that the development of post-tsunami Aceh should be based on Islam as it is not only the religion of the majority of the indigenous, but also has proven to be workable and successful in the history of Aceh civilization. The second is to overview the state of the present development strategy of post-tsunami Aceh vis-à-vis the above conviction. And the third, finally, is to propose a theoretical construct of Islamic-based development strategy for the post-tsunami Aceh.

Keywords: *Islamic-based development; Principles of Islamic development; Post-tsunami Aceh.*

A. Introduction

Redeveloping a nation after a vast disastrous event such as the tsunami in Aceh undeniably would not be an easy task, let alone to reconstruct into the development strategy the religious faith of its people that have been in a loose state for quite some time¹.

However, as this religious faith has been the belief and practice of the majority of its people, and moreover in the past were proven to be a dynamic force in bringing a strong happy civilization, it could not be simply ignored in formulating the development strategy in post-tsunami Aceh. With this conviction, this paper attempts to put forward a theoretical construct of an Islamic-based development for the post-tsunami Aceh, based on the religious faith of its people that is Islam.

For this purpose, this paper is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the conviction that post-tsunami Aceh needs Islamic-based development to redevelop itself. This is followed by the second which looks at the present approaches to development that have been adopted by Aceh so far. Finally, the third section presents the theoretical construct of the Islamic-based development which should have been adopted by the post-tsunami Aceh.

B. Post-Tsunami Aceh: The Need for Islamic-Based Development

It is my conviction that in redeveloping post-tsunami Aceh, Islamic-based development has to be the strategy, not only because it is the best, but more importantly, it is indeed obligatory. There are four factors why I hold firmly to this conviction.

Firstly, majority of Aceh population are Muslims and their development therefore has to be based on Islam². It is indeed illogical for a province with dominant Muslim population like Aceh, so is with other Muslim provinces and moreover states, to adopt exogenous development approach other than Islam. It would not only mean that Islam is not being holistically adopted in the life of their population as it should earnestly be, but their obligation to their Creator in the realization of their faith is seriously in question. One may perhaps wonder, could an exogenous development approach be adopted as long as it is not in contrary with Islam? The simplified answer is, it is acceptable. But a more contemplated thinking would entail with a gist of unacceptability. The reason is as follows.

Exogenous development approach irrespective of its philosophical framework be it from within the framework of the Neo-Classical philosophy or from within the framework of Radical development philosophy, all come with its own philosophical and epistemological underpinnings. These philosophical and epistemological underpinnings are indeed not in line with Islam, if not visibly in conflict. The Neo-Classical philosophy has given birth to the Growth and subsequently the Growth-With-Redistribution theories, while the Radical philosophy to the Structuralist and subsequently the Dependency theories. The development systems that emerged from the theories of the Neo-Classical philosophy is capitalism while from the Radical philosophy is socialism/communism. However, both share similar pivotal stance, in spite of their seemingly contradictory ideologies. Firstly, the rules of progress involve elimination of traditional or primitive society as was embedded in the Stages of Growth Theory formulated by W.W. Rostow (1960)³ and the social transformation process introduced by Karl Marx⁴. The climax of Rostow's development may be seemed to be mass consumption while Marx's to be socialist/communist society. Both advocate the elimination of traditional society (as was termed by Rostow) or primitive society (as was termed by Marx). Secondly, both philosophies also share similar assumptions, viz. resources are scarce while wants are unlimited, and religion, culture, jurisprudence, development, economy, social, politic, et. cetera (which the radicals termed as super-structure) have to be determined by economy (or termed as sub-structure). Thirdly, their techniques are confined to scientific method and rationality, as the bases for observable facts that define the truth. Fourthly, both are loaded with eurocentric and western ethno-centric features, in line with their origins in Europe and the western world (Saleh, 2003)⁵.

All the above reflect the philosophical loaded characteristics of the exogenous development approach, all of which are in fact contradictory to Islam. Eliminating the traditional or primitive society would mean abolishing the Islamic society, particularly the Muslims in the case of post-tsunami Aceh. Assuming that the resources are scarce and the wants are unlimited would respectively mean a denial of the concepts of *rizq* (provision from Allah) and *barakah* (the blessings of Allah swt)

and the existence of stages of desires (*nafs*) as well as the possibility to improve them and limit the wants. Taking the economy as the determinant of other aspects of life, in particular religion, would mean discounting Islam as the mould that shapes a way of life. Concentrating on the scientific method, rationality and observable facts alone would mean ignoring the invisible world (*alam ghaib*) and the intangibles. And adopting eurocentric and western ethno-centric features would mean abolition of indigenous belief and cultures.

Secondly, my conviction that Islamic-based development should be the development strategy for post-tsunami Aceh is based on the fact that Islam has its deep roots in Aceh, in particular in Aceh Utara Perlak since way back to the 13th century (Abdullah, et. al., 2002:12). Aceh too has proved to have become an outstanding Islamic government since 16th-17th century (Ahmad Daudy, 1983:6). The government of Aceh has implemented a holistic (*kaffah*) Islamic civilization and has been successful especially during the Aceh Sultanate in 1514 – 1912. In the early 17th century, the Sultanate of Aceh was the most wealthy, powerful and cultivated state in the Malacca Straits region. The factors attributable to the success were not other than Islam. The leaders then have been able to develop a pious and faithful society within a clear Islamic structure of governance, with a harmonious integration of Islam and the local cultures (Abdullah 2002:219-220). Aceh has been blessed with great Islamic scholars such as Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin as-Sumaterani, Syeikh Nuruddin Ar-Raniry, and Syeikh Abdul Rauf Syiah Kuala. Intellectually, during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda, there was quality education developed from within 17 universities teaching all sorts of disciplines (Jihad, 2000:2). All the above have proven that Aceh people are originally people with ability. There is therefore no reason why such an Islamic civilization could not be revived again in post-tsunami Aceh.

Thirdly, Aceh people are people of struggle, with dignity. They have defended Islam and the sovereignty of their province not only against the Dutch colonialism but also from the intervention of the central government of Indonesia (Mahmud, 1988:vi). All along its history, Aceh has witnessed the emergence of excellent Islamic rulers such as Sultan Ali Mughaiyat Syah, Sultan Alaidin Sayyid Maulana Abdul Aziz Syah, Sultan Malikus Saleh, and Sultan Iskandar Muda as well as patriotic Islamic fighters such as Teungku Nyak Ariff, Teungku Muhammad Ali Panglima Polem, Teungku Husen Trumon Gedung, Hasan Basri, Teungku Wahab and Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueh. The spirit that has been inculcated by these great Islamic rulers and fighters, I firmly believe, has not been diminished amongst the hearts of their present descendants and could become the seed to redevelop Aceh through an Islamic-based development.

Fourthly, challenges that are faced by post-tsunami Aceh are various and huge, especially those from the exogenous systems and cultures. Tsunami seems to become the opening of a big gate for the penetration of exogenous systems and cultures into Aceh, through various avenues such as aids, technologies, commercialization, migration, et. cetera. If the penetration and consequently the shaping of the exogenous systems and cultures continuously to prevail unchecked, the Aceh local systems and cultures would unsurprisingly apparently diminished. Islamic-based development is believed to be able to face and overcome such a challenge.

C. The State of Development Approach of Post-Tsunami Aceh

After the shocking destructive tsunami that battered Aceh on 26 December 2004, its people witnessed a rush of aids into Aceh from all over the world. In a rather unstable socio-economic and political atmosphere, plus desperateness for assistance to rebuild and return to their normal life, Aceh people have to face and in most cases accept the aids, with little concern of the background of

the aiders and sources. So are the approaches to development. They have been designed by the Aceh authority according to its conviction, with a view of rebuilding the life of Aceh people to their best as soon as possible.

All in all, there are at least five approaches to development emerging from the endeavour. They are firstly, the National Development Planning Programmes (PROPERNAS)⁶; secondly, the Aceh jurisprudence-based (*Qanun-Qanun Aceh*) approach; thirdly, the Aceh Development Blueprint; fourthly, the Mid-Term Development Plan of the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam 2007-2012; and fifthly, the development approach designed by Aceh Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Board⁷. An in-depth research from Islamic perspective on all the five approaches however shows that they are being characterized by deficiencies and facing some implementation difficulties.

Firstly, the situation in post-tsunami Aceh is still abnormal for an effective realization of the approaches; secondly, the approaches are too ideal and overlapping each other, entailing with wastage of energy and finance; and thirdly, their emphasis is more on physical and material development for the sake of merely this world. On the whole, the approaches are difficult to be said as Islamic-based development approaches (Sukiman, 2010). For instance, as rightly argued by Sukiman (2010), PROPERNAS that has been introduced in Aceh before the tsunami is just a reiteration of the Indonesian national development strategy. It does not touch anything on Islamic development. The Aceh jurisprudence-based (*Qanun-Qanun Aceh*) approach too does not indicate any interest in developing Aceh in an Islamic way. So is the Aceh Development Blueprint. Because of its 'comprehensiveness' as is reflected by the inclusion of almost all aspects of development - from land usage to environment, human capital, infrastructure, economy, employment, education, socio-culture, health, law, peace, reconciliation, accountability and governance - the Aceh Development Blueprint needs a rather huge amount of money to realize. In consequence, acceptance of foreign aids is inevitable and the penetration of foreign values and culture that possibly erode Islamic faith is widely opened. The absence of a clear formulation of Islamic development also being suffered by the Mid-Term Development Plan of the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam 2007-2012. Moreover such a phenomenon is apparently obvious in the development approach of the Aceh Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Board. Undeniably the approach of Aceh Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Board seems to be the most current of all, but its horizon of operation is limited to only development rehabilitation of physical beings, such as sources of living, housing, land and its usage, as well as the development of infrastructure.

It is for all the above reasons that an Islamic-based development approach has to be introduced and implemented in the post-tsunami Aceh. Initial undertaking should include the development of its theoretical construct as is attempted below.

D. Proposal of A Theoretical Construct Of Islamic-Based Development For Post-Tsunami Aceh

In formulating a development construct, seven aspects have to be taken into account. They are the mould, actors, time-scale, framework, methodology, means and the ultimate aim of the development. All these aspects are the pillars of a comprehensive development construct, an absence of any of which would entail with deficiencies and defects.

In an Islamic development construct, the mould is the Islamic world-view (*tasawwur*), the actors are man that fulfill their original functions as servants (*'abd*) and vicegerent (*khalifah*) of Allah; the time-scale stretches from the pre-birth world (*roh*) to the current world and the Hereafter; the

framework lies on the obligatory knowledge (*fard `ain*); the methodology is worship (*ibadah*); the means are the natural resources; and the ultimate aim is the pleasure of Allah swt (*mardhatillah*).

The Islamic world-view is considered as the mould as it is the world-view that shapes the way of life, including in the realm of development. This would include the way one perceives his life, the methods to accomplish the aims of his living, and the attitudes that are conformed to his religion. The man is considered as the development actor, but as opposed to the meaning of the man in the conventional development theories, he is the man that serves his God (*`abd-ul-Allah*) and becomes the representative (*khalifatullah*) of God in this world. The time scale of development is said to have stretched back to the pre-birth world (*roh*) as it was in this world that a contract with God has been embarked on and became the blueprint for the life of man in this world, of which rewards will be given accordingly in the Hereafter. The obligatory knowledge consisting of *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* is considered as the Islamic-based development framework as without them, the development would not have an Islamic roots that mend them to Islamic *`aqidah*, *shari`ah* and *akhlaq*. *Ibadah* (worshipping God) is regarded as the method of an Islamic-based development as men are servants of God, thus at all times and places in every deed, including in development efforts, *ibadah* becomes an obligation for every man. The natural resources are perceived as the means for development as they are indeed God-creations that are meant for man to prove his obedience to God, according to the blueprint that has been designed in the pre-birth world. Lastly, the pleasure of Allah swt (*mardhatillah*) is viewed as the ultimate aim of development as it is the pleasure of Allah swt that entails with *al-falah*, the happiness in this world and the Hereafter⁸.

With these seven aspects, a comprehensive Islamic-based development construct would emerge and its practical aspects could be designed nicely to fit into the framework of a harmonious development for post-tsunami Aceh.

E. Conclusion

As a Muslim majority province that has witnessed the existence of outstanding Islamic scholar and fighters as well as the development of excellent Islamic civilization before, post-tsunami Aceh does not have any other options other than reviving the history by formulating and realizing an Islamic-based development approach. It is through such an endeavour that, this paper stresses, post-tsunami Aceh could reemerge as a harmonious developed province.

Endnote

¹ The full name of Aceh has evolved from Daerah Istimewa Aceh in 1959–2001, to Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam in 2001–2009, and now Aceh since 2009. The term post-tsunami Aceh is my own term to refer to Aceh after 26 December 2004, the day the huge tsunami stroke on Aceh.

² According to 2010 census, there is a total of 4,486,570 people in Aceh, of which 2,243,578 are male and 2,242,992 are female (<http://twitter.com/Aceh/status/21824468937>). More than 80% is believed to be Muslims.

³ This theory tries to describe five ideal types of stages through which all societies should have passed in order to develop: (1) The 'traditional society' (2) The 'transitional stage' (preconditions for take-off) (3) The 'take-off stage' (4) The 'drive to maturity', and (5) The 'stage of high mass consumption'. See Rostow, 1960.

⁴ Karl Marx advocated four stages of social transformation, vis. (1) Primitive society [feudal and Asiatic mode of production] (2) Pre-Capitalist society (3) Capitalist Society and (4) Communist/Socilaist society.

⁵ For a detailed discussion on this, see Muhammad Syukri Salleh 2003.

⁶ In actuality, PROPERNAS has been designed by the central government of Indonesia before the tsunami but has not been taken into practice fully. Subsequently, it has been interrupted by the tsunami.

⁷ For a detailed discussion on all the five development approaches, see Sukiman, 2010:191-250.

⁸ For a detailed explanation on this development construct, see Muhammad Syukri Salleh 2003.

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