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## Political Islam in Islamism and Post Islamism: A Study on Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF)

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### Abstract

Asef Bayat suggests a new approach for Islamists, called Post-Islamism which is broadly welcomed researchers towards current political Islam. Otherwise, Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) is engaging Post-Islamism approach as a resistance to Islamism and suggested application of secularism and liberalism in Malaysian political arena. The objectives of this paper are to analyze and address clear perceptions that had found in Islamism and post-Islamism discussion. The main methodology for this paper is content analysis for interpreted IRF's printed publications and electronic articles. This study also analyzed based on latest findings on Islamic tenets. The research covers inductive method that explains IRF works. Deductive method is also used for generalization in order to observe essential content of Islamism and post-Islamism. The study also refers to experts on the field of Islamic thought. Three members of Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) were chosen and interviewed so as to be more accurate in Islamic affairs explanation. The results showed that secular and liberal thought is found in the post-Islamism which is the same essence in Islamism critics. Additionally, this article resolves confusion in discourse of political Islam especially within secularism, liberalism and democracy issues. Post-Islamism also used Turkey's Political Model as a collateral argument. However, researchers such as Sengupta have found that Turkey's Political Model carries secularism and liberalism as well. Therefore, Turkey's Political Model is actually secular political concepts. Besides, there are clear IRF calls for Islamist to transform Islamism to post-Islamism approach and to be secular or liberal.

**Keywords:** *Political Islam, Islamism, Post-Islamism, Liberal, Secular.*

### Introduction

West researchers had placed Islamism connotation as an important subject to discuss about political Islam. There are problems frequently discussed whether Islamism had actually based on religion itself or accommodate by current issues. Desai (2007) choose that Islamism is not Islam because Islam and Islamism are different. He argued that Islam is referred to religious entity.

Otherwise, Islamism refers to Islamic political entity which it means Islamism is brought political agenda.

Generally, Islamism has two types that view Islamism approach. First type is moderate Islamism who upholds democracy and nationhood, and second type is extreme Islamism who upholds military and radical approach. Some researchers stress that neither moderate Islamism nor extreme Islamism are success in political arena. Asef Bayat (2007), Gilles Kepel (2003) and Oliver Roy (1994) vowed that both Islamism types had failed to lead nation and bring aspirations of the people. Therefore, there are numerous criticisms and constant rejections towards Islamism approach.

Kepel and Roy critics is connected to Bayat's (2007) proposal, who wrote based on progressive leadership experience against conservative Iranian cleric. In 1996, the progressive experience has been applied and was called as Post-Islamism. Later, this Post-Islamism terminology was popularized and debated in Western discourse. They questioned on validity and actual content of post-Islamism. Especially, Francois Burgat (2003) rejects the term validity and accuses the term as a mistake terminology. Besides, there are many suggestions to make post-Islamism become more moderate and to change Islamist to be West partners.

While the idea of post-Islamism is boosted several inquiries, Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) took advantage in gauging Islamism political thought with critics on Islamism principles and additionally recommends post-Islamism approach. IRF thoughts are showed in it first book titled 'Wacana Pemikiran Reformis Jilid 1' a structured, detailed and well organized Post-Islamism ideas. Then, multiple discourses were organized by the IRF to highlight the post-Islamism and criticize Islamism as well. This paper will analyze IRF ideas about Islamism and post-Islamism, and review Islamic world views towards politic which are not mixed with Secularism and Liberalism ideology. This paper also shared interviews of three Islamic scholars who are also Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) members. They will review IRF thought in Islamic affairs.

### **Background and Literature Review**

Islamism and post-Islamism discourse are initiated by Asef Bayat. He began introducing Post-Islamism in late twentieth century and had been welcomed by Oliver Roy and Gilles Kepel. But, Roy and Kepel views on Islamism and Post-Islamism are criticized by Francois Burgat. He believes Islamism and post-Islamism terminology has been misconstrued. Burgat critical thinking has gained support from Tariq Ramadan in his lecture in Kuala Lumpur.

While the discussion about Islamism and post-Islamism is still in critical discussion amongst scholars, Muslims researchers such as Husnul Amin, Ihsan Yilmaz and Ahmad Farouk Musa has submitted a proposal for post-Islamism with more secular and more liberal. Amin suggested post-secular Islamism shaped by historical and political background of Pakistan. Musa also suggested for Islamism especially PAS to be more secular and accept secularism to be practiced in Malaysia. Otherwise, Yilmaz found that there are no difference between Islamism and post-Islamism because Turkey's historical background shows Islamist is accommodating to modern society and in other hand, post-Islamist probably will be back to its Islamist identity.

Therefore, key feature in political struggle is to gain in power within principles or to be more liberal.

Bayat (1996) was a profound post-Islamism from Iran historical background. He is an Iranian origin who strives for progressive political struggle. Bayat wrote about post-Islamism in 1996 entitled 'The Coming of a Post-Islamist Society'. This book views Bayat experience for gaining political popularity in Iranian democracy and challenge cleric and conservative power. He used post-Islamism terminology to express his new political struggle that would develop Islamist approach. He discussed problems occurred by Islamist failure to uphold people needs and nation's aspiration. Therefore, Bayat suggested a new political approach which will stand for Iranian people by including academicians, activists and social movement. From this book initiative, Bayat began promoting post-Islamism in lectures, seminars, various articles and books such as 'Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn', 'The Post-Islamist Revolutions', 'Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam', 'What is Post-Islamism?'.

Kepel (2003) responds to Bayat's post-Islamism terminology. He wrote a book entitled 'Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam' to overcome radical Muslim political struggle especially militant Islamist. Kepel believes that the post-Islamism is an appropriate approach for dealing with stubborn, radical and extreme Islamist. This paper is a study of Islamism since 1960 which call to jihadist spirit. He explained that Islamist had already used jihad spirit and Salafis doctrine to recruit Muslim to get involve in military scene. Jihad is also misused to encourage Muslims to be more aggressive in democratic activities. Thus, post-Islamism is another movement to keep clear of jihad spirit and Salafis doctrine. Besides, he argued that Islamist has failed to change and topple dictator regime for Islamist rigidity on principles and society isolation attitude. Therefore, post-Islamism is a correct option for Islamist to gain in power by accommodating people trusts and social needs.

Roy (1994) shared Kepel's views on Islamist failure to take advantage in political arena. His work, entitled 'The Failure of Political Islam' explains the failure of fundamentalist Islam and radical Muslim in the current political approach. The failure of political Islam is raised on reality of Islamism that failed to bring change in Muslim country even though there are many Islamic slogans were proposed. For several decades, Islamist groups do not change third world countries situation and do not achieve developed nations. Therefore, Roy asserts that post-Islamism is a new paradigm shift for Islamism to be more advanced in politics and economics. Thus, Islamism time has ended and post-Islamism is becoming for next transformation in political power. However, Roy made a mistake to say that Islamism is an extreme political movement and the radical alone. There are multiple Islamists who are ready for changes and to be more moderate in political shift. While Islamism includes social movements with academicians and activist participations, Islamism is also shared post-Islamism strategy to participate in democracy and civil society.

Bayat (2005) had responded and rejected post-Islamism in Kepel and Roy's perspective. But Bayat had asserted that post-Islamism appearance is Islamism failures factor. In fact, Islamist is not failing. Therefore, Burgat criticized post-Islamism in Bayat, Kepel and Roy's perspectives.

Burgat (2005) wrote in his book entitled 'Face to Face with Political Islam' and telling that Arab world is enjoying political stability, Islamist had adapt changes and moderation, and Arab's perception had liberated themselves from Western influence. Burgat also argue Kepel for his mistakes in Islamist's failure claim that originated from the failure to topple regimes in the Arab lands. Such claims were also cited by Roy who says that Islamist is marginalized from society and make an exclusive approach. Burgat rejects Roy's view because he underestimates the ability of Islamist and he also rejects Islamist as a main political actor in the Muslims' country. The real situation in Muslims' world is Islamist had made a prime role in society, feminism and modernization movements have happened in Algeria and Iran. Islamist group have moved to modernizing society. Kepel and Roy's responses are simplistic and mistaken in punishing Islamist as losers. Thus, the post-Islamism terminology is also blur and unclear and there are no significant change of Islamism.

Amin (2010) doctoral thesis entitled 'From Islamism to Post-Islamism: A Study of a New Intellectual Discourse on Islam and Modernity in Pakistan'. Bayat is a member of doctoral committee and Amin took a full Bayat's Post-Islamism terminology without any critics and discussion. He believes that post-Islamism terminology is a project that has been used by Wasat Party in Egypt and Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. Those parties have changed their approach from Islamism to Post-Islamism. The main focus of Amin's study is post-Islamism's idea and approach throughout Pakistan's history from the time of al-Mawdudi until now. Similar to Bayat's perspective, Amin addresses that post-Islamism is not anti-Islamic, anti-religious and not secular. It emphasizes on human rights and individual liberties. However, his thesis shows in chapter four that he criticizes Islamist principles and in chapter six he proposes to Islamist to abandon Islamic state's struggle and more focus on democratic country. Therefore, Amin suggests that Islamists should have abandoned Islamic State and Islamic Law and to be more moderate. Besides, he focuses on Western values, which partially secular values and liberalism.

In other hand, Yilmaz (2011) took post-Islamism exemplary throughout Turkish history, especially its influence upon Justice and Development Party (AKP). His work entitled 'Beyond Post-Islamism: Transformation of Turkish Islamism toward 'Civil Islam' and Its Potential Influence in the Muslim World' explains role of Fethullah Gulen movement to change the face of Islamist group especially Refah Party to be more modern and AKP to be actually post-Islamist party. Yilmaz indicates that post-Islamist and Islamist have their own strength and respective advantages. Both have their own approaches respectively upholding democracy, loyalty to state and nationalism. It is not strange if post-Islamist will also return to the Islamists identity. Otherwise, Islamist will turn to be post-Islamist as well. Nevertheless, post-Islamism terminology is still blurred and not clearly distinguishes between post-Islamism and Islamism. Therefore, Yilmaz avoids discussion of terminology validity and assert to a new paradigm shift in political struggle that would develop Islamist approach and uphold people's and nation's needs.

As performed by Amin and Yilmaz, Musa (2014 (c)) suggests applications and secular liberalism in Post-Islamism. His work entitled 'Paradigma Baru tentang Politik Islam' (A New Paradigm in Political Islam) is full of secular and liberal ideas. He criticized Islamists approach and suggested to Islamists especially Pan-Malaysia Islamic Party (PAS) to change their Islamic face to



Post-Islamism. AKP would be political model for PAS to transform their party to be more secular and liberal. Musa is suggesting PAS to accommodate to Western values by understanding the work of Bayat. Although Bayat told that post-Islamism is not secular approach, Musa asserts post-Islamism should secularize religion and call to limit the role of religion in politics. Thus, Musa calls is not to transform Islamism to post-Islamism but moreover he calls PAS to transform from Islamism to be secular or liberal party.

### **Methodology**

The main methodology for this paper is content analysis method that will make interpretation on IRF's printed publications and electronic articles. Content analysis is related to documentation method. Documentation is derived from the word 'document' which means any written record or evidence applied. The documentation also means a set of material or document that can be used as the basis for an analysis and produce ideas (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2010). These documents can be divided into primary and secondary references. The primary reference is IRF works that used for basis of this study. The secondary reference is necessary references for analyze the primary reference to achieve objectives of this study.

Therefore, methods of data analysis are applied to understand the precious works (Sarah & Shannon, 2005). This method to answer the question of what, why and how based on direct themes (Cho Ji Young 2014). The aim of this method is to clarify meaning, context and intention in related works (Prasad 2008). This study also analyzed based on the latest findings on Islamic tenets. The research covers inductive method that explains IRF works. Deductive method is also used for generalization in order to observe essential content of Islamism and post-Islamism.

The study also refers to experts on the field of Islamic thought from Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). Main objective for this expert's interview is to explain true understanding of Islam. Three members of Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) were chosen and interviewed and they will be labeled with P1, P2, P3 and P4, which refers to the expertise interviewed. The data obtained will be processed for review and analyzed in depth based on derived themes.

### **Findings**

By using specified methodology, together with the authentic sources, some findings have been identified. We acknowledge detailed IRF's historical background, IRF continuously criticism onto Islamism, uphold secularism and liberalism, and IRF struggles to transform Islamism to post-Islamism. We also receive feedback from three members of the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and their opinions about IRF.

### **Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF)**

Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) was founded by Ahmad Farouk Musa and launched by Prof. Tariq Ramadan on 12 December 2009 at the Auditorium, Securities Commission, Mont Kiara, Kuala Lumpur. Its office is located at 8th Floor, Pavilion KL, 168, Jalan Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur and its official website is 'www.irfront.net'. IRF is a non-government organization that established an intellectual movement to promote intellectual discourse on democracy, freedom and social

justice. Its remarkable voice is liberalization Muslim ideas that confront orthodox and conservative ideas (IRF, n.d. (b)).



**Picture 1: Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) Logo (IRF n.d. (a))**

IRF first director till now is Ahmad Farouk Musa. Its fellow researchers are Imran Mohd Rasid from IRF's branch named Open Terbuka Anak Muda (UTAM), Osman Softic from the University of Sarajevo and Yuenmei Wong from the University of Malaya. The other fellows are Dr. Fuad Sudirman, Hazman Baharom, Suhaib Ar-Rumy and Muhammad Shamil Dzulfida. IRF's analysts are Dr Nur Asyhruff Mohd Noor and Muhammad Adli Musa. IRF's multimedia coordinator is Fakhrul Anwar Hussein. IRF's international relations officer is Ruzehaji Husan. IRF's intern is Ahmad Muziru Murugan. We identified IRF has two branches named UTAM and Abduh Study Group (ASG). ASG is also under the supervision IRF led by Dr Ahmad Nabil Amir. Fellow researcher at ASG is Syazreen Mohd Abdullah (IRF, n.d. (c)).

Official website 'irfront.net' is operated by the Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) has many anti-Islamism articles by criticizing Islamists in Malaysia. Their writers on website are also published in 'Wacana Pemikiran Reformist Jilid 1' and 'Wacana Pemikiran Reformis Jilid 2'. Authors of these books are Ahmad Farouk Musa, Ahmad Fuad Rahmat, Muhammad Nazreen Jaafar, Ahmad Nabil Amir, Edry Faizal Eddy Yusof, Marwan Bukhari, Mohd Shazreen Abdullah and Hazman Bahrom.

Besides, since the beginning of IRF founded in 2009, Musa has collaborated with liberal movement especially Sisters in Islam (SIS), human rights movements such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) movement and strive to gain supports from local academicians and professionals (Manimaran, 2011; Wee, 2012).

IRF also made collaboration with International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) to organize forums and discourses. Also, several PAS leaders use to get involved with the IRF activities such as Dzulkefly Ahmad, Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa and Saari Sungib in publishing 'Wacana Pemikiran Reformis Jilid 1' and 'Wacana Pemikiran Jilid 2'. IRF (2014 (a); 2014 (b)) are also responsible for the invited Turkish Liberal leader especially Mustafa Akyol and Iran Liberal leader to Malaysia.

In fact, IRF has also organized and invited profound figure from Liberal Islam Network of Indonesia (JIL). Dr Ulil Absar Abdall had presented a speech entitled 'Round-table Discussion: A

Challenges of Religious Fundamentalism in Recent Centuries'. This discussion was planned on October 18, 2014 in Global Movement of Moderates Foundation at Level 15, Menara Manulife, Bukit Damansara. The upcoming Ulil Absar to Malaysia are opposed by Clerics Association of Malaysia (PUM) and religious authorities such as JAKIM. Islamic authorities were asked for national action towards IRF as long as Liberal Islam was banned in Malaysia and liberal figures are not welcomed to Malaysia (Harakahdaily, 2014; Malaysiakini, 2014).

### **The Critics of Islamism**

'Islamism' terminology refers to the reformist movement in the Islamic world. This movement is also popularized as 'Islamic fundamentalists' in order to compare to 'Christian Fundamentalist'. The goal of Islamism is compiling government and society based on Islamic law. The most important thing in Islamism is rejecting Western models of governance and economic standpoint such as Capitalism and Socialism. Nowadays, Islamism essentially claimed Islamic community had been poisoned by secularism, consumerism and materialism. Thus, Islamism is an emphasized reforms based on Islamic Law. Basically, Islamism is not violent and could lead to a peaceful movement. However, Islamism is often accused of being a terrorist group such as Hamas, Hezbollah and the Taliban (Britannica, 2006; Britannica, 2010).

Similarly, Musa (2014(d)) criticizes Islamists such as Pan-Islamis Party (PAS) who uses democracy in order to lead country and transform Malaysia to Islamic State. Musa (2014(b)) also asserts that PAS entry in nation democracy is actually damaging the meaning of democracy which is inclusive and not discriminatory. Otherwise, religion is actually exclusive and monopolizes debates on behalf of God because religion and democracy are an interlocking contradictory. Thus, the Islamists who want to participate in democratic politics should choose by abandoning religion or politic. In other word, PAS should neglect religion principles.

IRF had engaged numerous critics to reject Islamism. They criticized Islamist appearance due to current pressure, considered rhetoric and an attempt to monopolize the truth of religion. Musa (2014(a)) and Bahrom (2014) claimed that the main factor of Islamism existence is due to the fall of the Islamic Caliphate that causes Muslims political uncertainty and resistance against Western imperial. Musa (2014(c)) also criticized the Islamist argument based on religion text, Islamic ideology and the sovereignty of God in order to promote political Islam and solve all political and economic problems. He also criticized Islamist slogan that vowed 'Islam as the solution to all problems'. This slogan is considered Islamist rhetoric and an attempt to monopolize the truth of religion in the country. Besides, Islamist focuses on political Islam to raise the implementation of Islamic Laws is a backward idea, religious slogan and still using classic framework in current democracy country.

In fact, the Islamism slogans and the leadership of Divine order were also criticized for unclear and uncertainty offer which should have detailed by what form and how the solutions applied to Muslim nation (Bukhari, 2012(a)). Besides, Islamist theoretical framework is derived from Iran Islamist movement called 'vilayat-i-faqih' which is the first experimental fault from Islamist group and yet doomed to be failure again. Furthermore, Islamists has two obvious failures, the first is the establishment of the religion authority and Divine support for ruler is



occurring more injustice (Bukhari, 2012(a)) and the second is strict religious community will not gain a pious and sincere people (Rahmat, 2012). This means that the Islamists are on faulty stand that carry out a failure experiment and would continuously fail in politic and economic arena.

Hudud that derived from Islamic criminal law is considered a holy grail by the Islamists (Musa, 2014(b)). Similarly, hudud is also disputed as a benchmark for most of Islamism, but it raises a constitutional crisis when implementing Article 8 of the Federal Constitution. This article says that law is equal for all citizens not only for Muslim (Amiri, 2014). Islamists are also criticized for frequently raised issues that are not definitely proven such as apostasy and old issues such as hudud which inexhaustible politicized and stirred up. These issues actually turn our attention to the rights and needs of people (Rahmat, 2012). This implies that they are rejecting Islamist struggle to implement Islamic laws by raising many reasons.

No wonder that Musa (2014(a)) accused the Islamists inciting Islamist's Islamic State as a main agenda and implementation of Islamic law and hudud. This view refers to the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), which gauge an Islamic state and hudud whenever general elections appear. Musa also claimed that these groups fail to address the fundamental issues of the twentieth century and failed to uphold the concept of constitutionalism which supposed to protect human rights, freedom and equality.

Therefore, Musa (2014(b)) recommends Islamists to accept secularism as well as to promote separation of religion. He also recommends that secularism is a current nation requirement that based on compliance of political nature which it represents aspirations of the Malaysian people. In fact, this will undermine the religious secular order which is neutral and not confront any religion. Similarly, Bukhari (2012(b)) criticizes the Islamists have done dumping the people when secularism labelled as Kufr (disbelief). Besides, Islamist should uphold secularism discourse for Islamist leaders and supporters as well as to justify secularism as modern Islamism framework.

IRF critics against Islamism are including the rejection of democracy, Islamist ideology and ideal slogan. IRF also opposed Islamic Law especially hudud and recommended secularism, human rights, freedom and equality as reference for Malaysian Federal Constitution. These critical methods are used to resist current Islamism identity that uphold Islam and Islamic Law in political arena and recommend implementation of Secularism and Liberalism ideology. Furthermore, IRF is gauging a new chapter of Islamism by introduce Post-Islamism to PAS and Malaysian which was compatible with secularism and liberalism.

### **Post Islamism Proposal**

Post-Islamism is an approach of Asef Bayat (1996), based on his experience in Iranian leadership to overcome the Shiite cleric. Actually, the idea of post-Islamism has existed from a progressive movement from 1990 until early 2000. Although it had failed to overthrow Shiite clergy leadership in Iran, he tried to propose a new approach in Islamist movement in Cairo and yet had made popular stand in several international discourse.

When post-Islamism discourse grabs international concerns, Bayat (2005: 5) responded to suggestion of academicians and concluded that Post-Islamism is accurately social trend which views the reality of Iranian politics sphere. He responded to Gilles Kepel who reassumes that Post-Islamism is Salafi's reform requirement to a new progressive Salafi. He also responded to Oliver Roy who reassumes about Muslim nationhood transformation which Islamism ends and changes to a new face of Islamism that called post-Islamism. Bayat asserted that Post-Islamism neither anti-Islam, un-Islamic approach nor secular. He stressed his post-Islamism idea as follows:

1. Iran current situation and progressive projects are trajectory to become new power and strength.
2. The current situation relied on mistakes of Islamism in institutions management that causes continuously criticism as well as there is no mutual agreement between principles and society demand.
3. The progressive project is awareness of concept and strategy in order to be accepted by society, politicians and intellectuals.
4. The main concepts awareness are religious, rights, faith, freedom, democracy and modernization in order to liberate people from religions' rigidity and the truth monopoly.
5. Post-Islamism strategic movements are social and intellectual strategic movements that engage power of youth, students, women and intellectuals.

Meanwhile, Musa (2014 (c): 3-11) utter some ideas about post-Islamism. There are seven ideas as follows:

1. Post-Islamism is transition phase to a new phase of Islamism.
2. Islamism has failed as well as Islamism's slogan; 'Islam solves all problems' has failed and should be replaced with a new approach and more practical solution.
3. Post-Islamism is a project to compete Islamism movement in social, political and intellectual areas.
4. Post-Islamism is a tendency to secularize religion by limiting role of religion and politics.
5. Post-Islamism focused on rights, inclusive, democracy and differs from Islamism approach as well as asserts functional responsibilities, exclusive and authoritarian.
6. Post-Islamism is a phenomenon for raising rights not responsibility, through history not texts and looks to the future not the past.
7. Post-Islamism is emphasizing on religious freedom and civil liberties.

Bayat and Musa share three similar views. First, Islamism has failed. Second, post-Islamism is a project to compete against Islamism. Third, they emphasize the rights, democracy and freedom. However, Bayat and Musa ideas are contradict in two cases. First, Bayat did not mention and reject any phase of Islamism but Musa stressed a new phase of Islamism that called post-Islamism. Second, Bayat did not mention and refuse the need for secular but Musa asserted secular state tendency.

In fact, the idea of post-Islamism is still unclear and need more international discussion either it is really Islamic approach or secular approach. But, Musa had made a constantly example

to post-Islamism which it is Turkey's political models that uphold combine Islamism and secularism approach. Musa (2014(c)) who claimed that Turkey's President named Recep Tayyip Erdogan had removed Islamist party such as Refah (Welfare Party) and Fazilet (Virtue Party), and converted both parties to a Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP). It also indicates that the Islamists have received the so-called secular post-Islamism. The AKP showed that political Islam without struggle for 'Islamic State' but to uphold democracy, justice and freedom, anti-corruption, anti-cronyism and anti-nepotism and denying any kind of oppression. Then, this Turkey's political model that based on Secularism and abandoning Islamic laws is a new face of Islamism called Post-Islamism.

Therefore, Musa had made a call to Islamist especially Malaysia Pan-Islamic Party (PAS) and all reformists' party to receive post-Islamism with secular approach and resist against Muslims cleric who fought for Islamic Law. By doing so, they were urged to follow the Turkish political model in particular Justice and Development Party (AKP) because it is an obvious secular victory that does not require cleric participation (Musa, (2014 (c); Rahmat, 2013). This view is Musa assertiveness against the Islamists to accept the secular system and abandon Islamic State struggle. This is the purpose of new face of post-Islamism to transform Islamism to neo-secularism.

Furthermore, the Western media praised the Turkish model that had chosen Post-Islamism and popularize neo-Secularism Islamist. An article entitled 'In Turkey's Example, Some See Map for Egypt' written by Thomas (2011) had suggested a deal AKP with Secular Turkish Military as a model for political grip in Egypt. Therefore, the Sengupta (2015) finding show the Turkish model is a myth and rhetoric of modern secularism. This finding is not surprising because Turkey has had no significant change under AKP administration. In fact, Burak Ozcetin (2004) had mentions that the AKP is another agenda to highlight international neo-liberal, Postmodernism and multiculturalism in Islamic World.

Although, the AKP' direction is still be a big questioned. The situation in Turkey under the rule of Erdogan is an advantage unto secularist. Mustafa Akyol (2012) revealed a study result in 2006 found that Liberal Turkish claims that Turkish society tendency towards Islamic Law had declined from twenty one percent (21%) to nine percent (9%) only. In fact, the idea of jihad in battlefield has turned into an economic jihad, and novel's genre has moved from Islamic and religious populists writings to secular moral decadence. Moreover, Islamists are also criticized for Islamic culture change, Muslim life to be more individualistic, and obedience characteristic had change to liberal freedom. In this situation, the AKP came to power on Turkey. Therefore, the Islamists could be Secular-Liberal partners by changing their face from Islamism to post-Islamism.

This post-Islamism idea is originally shown as a neutral and not anti-Islamist. Therefore, discussions are pointing intensively at modernization and driving aggressively more progressive Islamist in political arena. This view is illustrated by Bayat (1996) who tried from the beginning of his work. However, there are struggles in inserting Liberalism ideas. Post-Islamism can be manipulated to liberalism through Amin (2010) dissertation which supervised by a supervisory body that include Bayat as a member. This dissertation titled 'From Islamism to Post-Islamism'.

The contents of this thesis show post-Islamism idea brought by Pakistan thinkers that take liberalism discourse as post-Islamism discourse as well. For example, Amin call for al-Quran reinterpretation that used liberal methodology to interpret Bible namely hermeneutics methodology for reinterpretation of Scripture. Amin also discussed post-Islamism in Secularism approach such as liberal democracy, arguing al-Sunnah, rejection of Islamic Law and Islamic Constitution, rejection the Supremacy of Allah and change jihad battlefield terminology to jihad for freedom.

Post-Islamism in Bayat view is still an ambiguity to answer inquiries such as either post-Islamism is really Islamic approach or secular approach. Nevertheless, the post-Islamism idea in Musa thought is not meant except two pillars. First pillar is Islamism should abandon the struggle for an Islamic state and the implementation of Islamic law. Second pillar, Islamists should receive all the West values, especially democracy, secularism and liberalism. In this way, Islamist can change the neo-Islamists to secularists. Or in another words, it can make Islamist as a partner to secularists that shares similar values.

### **Experts Views on Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF)**

Four experts on Islamic thought had been identified. They are from Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). Our focus is explaining true understanding of Islam and getting feedback from expert about IRF ideas and activities. Three of them are members of Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and will be labeled with P1, P2, P3 and P4, which refer to the expertise interviewed.

The experts had identified liberalism outlines in order to relate IRF with liberalism. P4 put ten outlines of liberalism characteristic which are secularism, absolute freedom, individualism, liberal democracy, rationalism, feminism, humanism, hermeneutics, pragmatism and pluralism. P4 said if there was one or all of this ten liberalism outlines in an organization or an individual, experts should be careful to judge them as infidels, but it is reasonable to say they were misled only. P4 said:

“Although they have those characteristics, we must not judge them as evil. Islamic laws protect them even if they had ninety percent (liberalism) characteristics. One percent good behaviour must take into account. There are no perfect men at all. We do not accuse Jamaludid Tahrani as traitor if he collaborated with those people (liberalist). Good services in Islam can be large. So thanks a lot to Malaysians’ attitude who (rejected) 60/70 liberalism (most of them rejected liberalism). So liberalism is a misguided cult”.

P1 believes that IRF can be convicted as a liberalist if there is proven evidence that shows IRF violate Islam’s limitation in Islamic Laws. P1 gave an example that if IRF wants absolute freedom beyond the Islamic Laws in a conscious state and declare something that torn apart from Islamic Syariah; the IRF can be categorized as excluded from Islam (infidel). Similarly, not just IRF but individuals who questioned bank interest which has been banned in Islam, and then the individual has been excluded from Islam. P1 explained that IRF had defended liberalism principles in their organization as another way of disagreement that is protected by Islam. However, P2

rejects this argument because IRF used the concept of disagreement in Islam to escape or stay away from Islamic teachings. Thus, P1 asserts that disagreement is invalid if there are clear texts from al-Qur'an and hadith. The disagreement is only accepted if there are no texts clearly define the matter. According to the P1 and P2:

"It is means, it (liberalism) will expell (him) from Islam. Presumably, if they say in the state of awareness, and what they said was contradict ot Islamic teachings, (it will expell him from Islam). While Islam has limitations in Islamic Laws, everybody should be bound by the Islamic Laws. It is means, everyone who solemnly brace Islam, he must be bound by the Islamic Laws. Whoever reacts extremely over limitations, it will corrupt his faith. It is clear, whoever constantly corrupt (his faith) even if he just extremely hit Islamic issues and religious laws, he is considered as (contradict ot Islamic) Laws. Hence, the problem is the interpretation of Islam (could be judged) into qawlan (words), amalan (practice) or fi'lan (act). So (among) this Shari'a is fi'lan. That we actually practice it. But at the same time, whoever vows what he did is right it means (something faith). If wearing of (hijab) issues, one did say that she does not want to wear hijab, it is ok (not expelled from Islam). But when one says, hijab is not compulsory, it is complete (expelled from Islam)" (P1).

"He just said we differed. It was just different on the disagreement (issues). We say Islam had three (elements): oral, heart, practice. If they separate (Islam) in SIS (Sister in Islam which is well known liberal thought), I saw in JAKIM or departments religious post (that they argue Islamic teachings). Not jealous with their (activities). (They) just want to loosen what God had taught us to do. Similarly, (they) get away from that (Islamic teachings). That's all I saw. (They) want to get away from the Islamic Sharia" (P2).

P3 was also outlined several liberalisme items, namely, agendas, principles and values brought by an organization whom wants to associate with liberalism. In fact, P3 also expressed some common terms related to liberalism as well as represented by P4, namely freedom of expression, human rights, secularism and religious pluralism. In fact, they struggle for liberalism as a policy. Thus, P3 believes IRF has some of liberalism principles. However, IRF is not a hardcore thinkers but rather the actuator for the spreading the of Islamic Liberal thinking. Only Institute for Policy Research (IKD) brought a lot of liberal principles. Similarly, Institute of Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) are liberal organisations but they only focus on economic and political arenas. However, P3 believes that all these organizations are same with those who struggle for liberalism as a national policy.

"IRF has all that (liberalism principles). It opposes (JAKIM actions) for example actions against Shiite, human rights, and secularism. He (IRF) fought for religious pluralism and the values of liberalism. Including when he called Ulil Absar Abdalla is considered horrible. Ulil Absar is clearly (among liberalist). Indeed, he is liberalist famous figures and most vocal (towards Islamic principles) but he's not a (liberalist) thinker. (Liberalist) thinker is Nurcholish Madjid. There are not many thinkers in Indonesia. People in IRF are not thinkers. There are only actuators . IKD is a lot (more liberal). IDEAS also, obviously in terms of economics and politics. He (IRF) did not follow (Islam) religion. But he (IRF) struggled for liberalism as a basis" (P3).



P2 also criticized IRF for confronting religious authority such as JAKIM. JAKIM did seize Irshad Manji and Faisal Tehrani books. In fact, the books seizure's issues is similar to seizure of Salam Rushdi books not referred to freedom principles. In sum, JAKIM members are well known about IRF roles in promoting liberalism, secularism and West values. Thus, JAKIM has clear views about IRF activities and there are no doubt about IRF movement is a liberal movement in Malaysia.

### Discussion

In Islamic political perspective, the al-Quran and al-Sunnah are the highest legislative answer to Muslim political approach. Contrary, reason knowledge which involves any isms and theories is does not reach the highest level in Islamic Law. In fact, reason is a must to interpret Muslim daily life and social needs in the guidance of the al-Quran and al-Sunnah. Thus, the overall political Islam and Islamic law including hudud and religious obligation are compulsory and engage Muslim participation in politics and democracy. But, Islam does not accept secularism because it is contradict to religion itself. Secularism terminologically means separating our life as humane from a holy religion. Holyoake (2012) states the purpose of 'secularism' term is to explain and promote the social legislation which separated from the influence of religious doctrine without insulting or criticizing religious beliefs.

Therefore, secularism is rejected because it denies Islamic Law by abandoning religion in political, economy and social area. Thus, Al-Qaradawi (1993) warns the most dangerous and the worst effects of the Secular is to separate Islam from public life and leadership by saying religion is for Allah and the State is for all. In fact, secularist's rejection of implementation of Islamic Law would deny the people's right of statehood. This is an obvious fraud. Al-Qaradawi (1993(a)) also rejected the term separation between State leaders and religious leaders. His argument stresses that the prophet Muhammad himself was a religious leader and a political leader at the same time.

Khalif Muammar also listed the verses in al-Qur'an about politics such as sovereignty of Sharia (al-Qur'an, Surah Yusuf 12: 40, 4: 65 :, 5: 44), the principle of Shura (al-Qur'an Surah al-Nisa 4: 159, 42: 38), the principle of justice (al-Qur'an, Surah al-Nisa 4: 58, 5: 8, 57: 25), principles of expression and opinion freedom (al-Qur 'an, Surah al-Naml 27: 64, 16: 125, 10: 99), the principle of equality (al-Qur'an, Surah al-Hujurat 49: 13) and responsibilities of the leader (al-Qur'an, Surah Ali Imran 3 : 104) (Muammar, 2009). This list of al-Qur'an verses shows that politics is part of religion and definitely there are political based on Shariah.

Ismail (2012) also states Secularization is the basic characteristics of Liberal Islam. Liberal groups say the existence of the Secular is a reality and had been acknowledged by Islam. So, there is no contradiction between the secular and the original text but the contradiction raised misunderstanding the text. Therefore, the main road to accept Secularism is reinterpreting religious texts with hermeneutics methodology and reconstructs Sharia Laws. Similarly, Majid (2012) and Muammar (2009) claimed that Secularism is an agenda of Liberal Islam Network in Indonesia. The secularization of Islam allegedly compounded to the concept of secularization.

Musa's claims on secular neutrality which means not anti-Islam is not new. It just a claim but in reality secularism rejects Muslim daily life in politics, economy and social. Many Muslim scholars are aware of the existence of Secularism is separating life from the influence of religion. Al-Qaradawi (1993(a)) rejects secular neutrality by pointing at Secular emptying the religious spirit which is forgetting the role of faith in human life. Secularism view is only dictates the West without a deep awareness of the role of religion and secularist was influenced by Western society.

Secular neutrality claim is also a conceptual of religion liberalization to liberate the human being from the control and influence of religion (Ismail, 2012). Such secular movement has a tendency to protest manipulation of religious groups and secularist believes freedom for human rights (Majid, 2012). Consequently, this movement asserts only two options for humankind either modern Western or conservative religious views (Muammar, 2009). This indicates neutral toward religion is merely assertion. In fact, the Secular propaganda to separate religion from life is their agendas and priority.

Unlike democracy, many scholars praised democracy but with certain conditions. Muammar (2009) states that Muslim scholars are not against democracy but they refused to waive the concept of political Islam and Islamic Law. Therefore, al-Qaradawi (1993(a)) praised the Liberal democratic as an election should be conducted freely and can return a good effect to nation and ummah's affairs. But democracy is failing if general election competition requires more financial support, society has no political will, no trust to election results, the nation constitution is not clear, only the rich can obtain votes and political party monopolizing its position.

Nevertheless, Democracy is not fully accepted by Islamic scholars but democracy is accepted with awareness of two edges which it is both good and bad, honey and poison, beauty and beast. Islamic scholars are aware of Islamic Liberal group who takes advantages from Democracy to implement Western values in Muslim societies (Umar, 2012). Furthermore, the Islam Liberal objective is to strengthen the position of Democracy through understanding Pluralism, Inclusivism and Humanism (Zakaria, 2012). They are using Democracy to implement Western values and promote Secular ideology. Liberal Muslims believe that democracy is the state affairs and not religious affairs. This believe is makes democracy is a part of secularism which it is the separation politic affair from religious affair (Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan JAKIM, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

Discourse about Islamism and post-Islamism is a main issue to current political struggle of Islam. Meanwhile, IRF is continuously criticizing Islamist approach; constantly propose for Islamist to be more secular and abandoning religion by rejecting Islamic State and Islamic Laws. Otherwise, Islamic teaching based on al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah are supporting political Islam, and reject secularism and liberalism that separating religion from human life.

Secularism and liberalism approach are also emerged in post-Islamism approach. Although Bayat declines post-Islamism as anti-Islamist secular, but he proposes secularism concepts by rejecting Islamic Laws and Muslims clergy. In fact, IRF ideas on post-Islamism are more secular than Bayat. IRF was intentionally to mislead secularism and liberalism in post-Islamism by making a paradigm shift to develop understanding secularism and liberalism. Therefore, IRF activities in promoting liberalism, secularism and West values are well known by religious authorities such as JAKIM.

Justifying political Islam must stand on Islamic texts that lead to awareness and more consciousness. It is a must because Islam is based on divine scripture to lead Muslim to happiness in world and hereafter. Otherwise, secular politic conceptions are based on Western values; there are not having tangible stand and principle. Also, liberalism does not have absolute truth and not absolute wrong. Therefore, Islam principles and Western values are not in similar and contrary stand. Some Western values can be adapted into political Islam but neither accepted nor rejected. For example, democracy is studied and applied with full awareness and consciousness into political Islam. However, secularism is fully rejected.

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