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Light In The Dark

Azyumardi Azra's Contribution in Framing Novelty of Nusantara Islam

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Abstract:

Azyumardi Azra significantly contributed to re-framing the Indonesian situation during his lifetime as a scholar. This article works on the literature review of the works of Azra. It aims to perform an analytical article that helps people comprehend that social reality lives in certain identity politics. Azra proposed to look at reality from the "Optimistic Perspective" that has become a distinguished perspective in looking at the present situation of Indonesian Islam. Using the social framing theory by Erving Goffman, this article contributes to performing the social life from a new perspective. In the Catholic perspective of interreligious dialogue, the work of Azyumardi Azra is in line with the contemporary efforts of Pope Francis. As an institution, a religion derives into a certain situation that emerges the complexity of its adherents' way of thinking, however, certain influential figures build new social frameworks that enable people to have a distinctive way from the directed situation.

Keywords:

Social Framing, Azyumardi Azra, Islam Indonesia, Islam Politic, Interreligious Dialogue.

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Introduction

Prof. Dr. Azyumardi Azra, M. Phil., M.A., CBE, who departed to his eternal life on September 18, 2022, was a social actor that worked for the harmonious Indonesia. Prior to and during the transition from Orde Baru to the Reformation era in Indonesia, he proposed the idea applying an "optimistic perspective" in looking at Indonesia, especially on his expertise as an Islamic historian. He published several books and articles that work on this issue: *Konteks Berteologi di Indonesia: Pengalaman Islam*[1]*; Nusantara Islam: Jaringan Global dan Lokal*[2]*; Merawat Kemajemukan, Merawat Indonesia; Menjaga Indonesia*[3]*; Islam Indonesia: Kontribusi pada Peradaban Global*.[4] This article uses his publications and seminars as data resources to find out a new way of looking at identity. In the context of the global struggle to look at one single identity (such as religion) as a personal identity,[5] Azra offered a perspective about various possibilities for looking at the complexity of social identity. It is undeniable that the Indonesian society belongs to a cosmopolitan society with various religious affiliations. The idea to be a people/community that affiliates with multi-identical belongings have proven capable of maintaining peace among its citizens.

In recent decades, several identity conflicts occurred. These conflicts emerged as a result of particular efforts certain social actors in achieving communal imagination. They convinced people that it was impossible to share common grounds with those coming from different religious identities. Amartya Sen, 1998 Nobel Prize winner

[1] Azyumardi Azra, Konteks Berteologi Di Indonesia: Pengalaman Islam (Paramadina, 1999).

[2] Azyumardi Azra, Nusantara Islam, Jaringan Global Dan Lokal (Mizan Pustaka, 2002).

[3] Azyumardi Azra, Merawat Kemajemukan, Merawat Indonesia (Institute for Multiculturalism and Pluralism Studies (Impulse), 2007).

[4] Azyumardi Azra, "Islam Indonesia: Kontribusi Pada Peradaban Global," Prisma 29, no. 04 (2010): 83–92.

[5] Amartya Sen, Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny (Penguin Books India, 2007), 29.

in Economic Sciences describes:

> The conflict between the priorities and demands of different identities can be significant both for contrasting and non-contrasting categories. It is not so much that a person has to deny one identity to give priority to another, but rather that a person with plural identities has to decide, in case of a conflict, on the relative importance of the different identities for the particular decision in question. Reasoning and scrutiny can play a major role both in the specification of identities and in thinking through the relative strength of their respective claims.[6]

This explanation of the conflictual situation on identity becomes one of the main themes in the discussion of Azra in responding to inter-identity conflicts in Indonesia. Indonesia could be the future of civilization, especially in its ability to manage the plurality of identities. In Azra's last article that was supposed to be presented in a seminar *Persidangan Antarbangsa "Kosmopolitan Islam"* organized by Dr. Anwar Ibrahim and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Azra quotes a document entitled, *Voices from Asia: Promoting Political Participation as an Alternative for Extremism*. He underscores the statement that the failure of West Asia and North America (Middle East) in maintaining peace and solidarity in the areas opens new opportunities for other Islamic communities to share their perspectives in dealing with extremism, strengthening collaboration, reformation and political reconciliation, and managing the plurality of Islam. He believes that Indonesia and Malaysia as countries with an Islam majority in South East Asia can be good examples for the international community in managing their multiculturalism and plurality of religion.[7]

[6] Sen, Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny, 30.

[7] Azyumardi Azra, "Kebangkitan Peradaban, Memperkuat Optimisme Muslim Asia Tenggara," Kompas (Indonesia, September 19, 2022).

Azra realizes the complexity of relations among religions in Indonesia, on the other hand, he believes that Indonesia as a nation can manage its plurality of identity. His research on Nusantara Islam, radicalism, cosmopolitan Islam, and several themes of interreligious relations indicate his position as a professor that works for solving several problems in terms of identity. When people worry about social cohesion, Azra comes up with his idea that this is a milestone for Indonesian Islam (*Wasatiyah* Islam) to become a role model for living in a multicultural society.[8] To the end of his life, Azra tried to convince people that accepting Nusantara Islam was a new perspective for many Muslims to living Islam in the modern era and not to the glorify Islam in the past.[9]

As literature research, the data are derived from several books and journals written by Azyumardi Azra. Using the theory of identity in "Frame Analysis" issued by Erving Goffman, this research aims to find a certain understanding of using identity as an instrument to manage communal imagination of social cohesion.

Indonesia and Inter-Identity Conflict

This article focuses on the reformation period in which Indonesia was undergoing several problems with its national unity. Based on his expertise in the History of Islam, Azra contributed to balancing the understanding of Islam in Indonesia. There is a problem with the infiltration of transnational Islam that promotes political Islam with two goals: the exclusive implementation

[8] Prof. Azyumardi Azra: Islam Indonesia Sebagai Masa Depan Umat Islam, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPCoNp6ojfI; Azra, Nusantara Islam, Jaringan Global Dan Lokal.

[9] On Saturday, September 17, 2022, he was supposed to be a speaker at the conference on "Cosmopolitan Islam" organized by Dr. Anwar Ibrahim and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM). Unfortunately, on his flight to Malaysia, he got a heart attack and on September 19, 2022, he passed away. On September 19, 2022, Kompas, a daily newspaper, publishes his article that was supposed to be presented at this conference. Azyumardi Azra, "Kebangkitan Peradaban, Memperkuat Optimisme Muslim Asia Tenggara," kompas.id, September 18, 2022, https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2022/09/19/kebangkitan-peradaban-memperkuat-optimisme-muslim-asia-tenggara-1..

of Islamic law and the establishment of the Islamic state. [10] However, Azra worked in another position. He convinced people that Indonesia has the potential to be a role model of Islamic civilization for the world.

After the fall of President Soeharto in 1998, several conditions allowed the infiltration of radical groups in Indonesia. The first is the euphoria of *a newly found* democracy after more than three decades of dictatorship. Second, President BJ. Habibie lifted the 'anti-subversion law' that had, for decades, supressed any movement on ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations (SARA).[11] This situation opened new opportunities for radicals to articulate their extreme and radical discourse in public space. Azra observed that during these eras, "political Islam," in which some radical groups exist, gained the momentum to express their existence publicly. This is something to worry about since it could endanger the democracy and the diversity of Indonesia.[12]

As the world's largest Muslim country, almost 90 % (out of 260 million) of the Indonesian population adhere Islamic faith. Soon after the Reformation era in 1999, Indonesia has become the third largest democracy country after India and the United States. This double role implies what Azra called as a "war of ideas" between the radical interpretation of Islam and the Islam that works hand in hand with secular values.[13]

[10] Azyumardi Azra, "Revisitasi Islam Politik Dan Islam Kultural Di Indonesia" (2012): 233.

[11] Under the New Order, a challenge to the territorial integrity of Indonesia was dealt with primarily through repression. This, combined with a degree of shared economic growth, an ideology of tolerance and multiculturalism, and a form of corporatism through Golkar, enabled it to stay in power. The New Order's veto on the discussion of racial, ethnic, and religious issues (termed "SARA" issues) combined with pervasive administrative control from the center maintained a veneer of national unity. … Any Public discussion on SARA was taboo during the New Order. "SARA," in Http://Www.Atimes.Com/Atimes/Southeast_Asia/DJ26Ae05.Html, n.d.

[12] Azyumardi Azra, Indonesia, Islam, and Democracy: Dynamics in a Global Context (Equinox Publishing, 2006), 5.

[13] Azra Azyumardi, "Understanding Indonesia's 'Third Way' Islam," in Wars of Ideas: Theology, Interpretation, and Power in the Muslim World. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 73.

To some extent, radical Islam emerged in several ways. First is the establishment of a large number of "Islamic Parties" that aim to replace Pancasila with Islam as their basis of organization. Second is the demand to implement the Shari'ah by several groups. The third is the glorification of several radical groups both in the religious and political fields.[14] These fundamentalists even boldly express their radical activities in public. This is also seen as a consequence of the lack of law enforcement for the sake of democratization. Azra identified several prominent radical groups:

The Laskar Jihad (LJ), formed by the Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wa al-Jamaah (FKAWJ) under the leadership of Ja`far Umar Thalib; the Front Pembela Islam (FPI/Islamic Defence Front) led by Habib Rizq Shihab; the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI/Council of Indonesian Jihad Fighters) led by Abu Bakar Baasyir; the Jamaah Ikhwan al-Muslimin Indonesia (JAMI) led by Habib Husein al-Habsyi; and the Hizb al-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI/Indonesian Party of Liberation).[15]

Azra indicated that radical Muslim groups, both national and transnational raise their roles to public since the beginning of the 1990s.[16] The tragedy of 9/11 fueled these groups to grow bolder, louder, and more militant.[17] This conclusion is in line with a debatable book by Martin van Bruinessen et. all entitled *Contemporary Development in Indonesian Islam, "Explaining the Conservative Turn."* In this book, Bruinessen explains that after the fall of Soeharto in 1998, Indonesian Islam started experiencing a changing process when the tolerant Islam started to compromise. There is a process of leaving modernist Islam with Pancasila as its communal values to embrace the idea of establishing an Islamic state.[18] Several authors

[14] Azra, Indonesia, Islam, and Democracy: Dynamics in a Global Context, 5.

[15] Azyumardi Azra, Islam in Southeast Asia: Tolerance and Radicalism (Centre for the Study of Contemporary Islam, Faculty of Law, University of …, 2005), 15.

[16] Azra, "Revisitasi Islam Politik Dan Islam Kultural Di Indonesia," 233.

[17] Azra, "Understanding Indonesia's 'Third Way' Islam," 74–75.

[18] Martin Van Bruinessen, "Introduction: Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam and the Conservative Turn of the Early Twenty-First Century," Contemporary Developments in

of this book also found the indication that some Muslims prefered to embrace the authentically Muslim as the Middle East rather than the cultural Islam that was, then, popular in Indonesia.[19] Moch Nur Ichwan found this condition in the body of Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Ulema Council), National Council of Islamic Leaders;[20] Ahmad Najib Burhani researched on Muhammadiyah in terms of their struggle to find their position in the reformation of Indonesia;[21] Mujiburrahman focused on the struggle of KPPSI in accommodating the politic of Shariah;[22] and Muhammad Wildan who concluded the map of radical muslims, especially in Solo.[23]

Subsequently, Azra, in the early time of reformation, pointed out that many Indonesian Muslims experienced an identity crisis. It is not merely about political, social, economic, and cultural changes in the local religious community but also in global scope. This situation triggered social violence, social tension, lack of patience, and disrespect towards the law. Moreover, the expansion of the global perspective brought out social conflicts among religious communities.[24] Azra explains that this situation is in line with the

Indonesian Islam: Explaining the Conservative Turn. Singapore: ISEAS (2013): 1.

[19] Van Bruinessen, "Introduction: Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam and the Conservative Turn of the Early Twenty-First Century," 2.

[20] Moch Nur Ichwan, "Towards a Puritanical Moderate Islam: The Majelis Ulama Indonesia and the Politics of Religious Orthodoxy," Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the 'conservative turn (2013): 60–104.

[21] Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Liberal and Conservative Discourses in the Muhammadiyah: The Struggle for the Face of Reformist Islam in Indonesia," in Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam (ISEAS Publishing, 2013), 105–144.

[22] Martin van Bruinessen, "The Politics of Shariah: The Struggle of the KPPSI in South Sulawesi," Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn" (2013): 145–189.

[23] Muhammad Wildan, "Mapping Radical Islam: A Study of the Proliferation of Radical Islam in Solo, Central Java," Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn 213 (2013).

[24] Azyumardi Azra, "Kegalauan Identitas Dan Kekerasan Sosial: Multikulturalisme, Demokrasi Dan Pancasila," EMPATI: Jurnal Ilmu Kesejahteraan Sosial 1, no. 1 (2012): 1.

misled and invalid understanding of Islamic ideas. It also occured in Indonesia since many Indonesian youths are not convinced by the Indonesian ways of living Islam. The notion of victory, among others, encourages intolerance within the Indonesian society.[25] On the topic of Islam, Azra exclusively describes:

> In the context of religion, several Indonesian Muslims prefer to refer to transnational Islamic Identity. They support transnational Islamic Ideas and movements. By implication, the person or group regarded Muslims who emphasize Indonesian Islamic Identity as people who are 'imperfect' in their Islam. Furthermore, the prominence of transnational Islamic identity immediately experiences contestation and conflict with Indonesian national identity.[26]

This explanation indicates that Azra was fully aware of the situation of Islam in Indonesia. Many Indonesian Islam faced a problem related with their religious identity. They are in danger of leaving their local way of living Islam to embrace transnational Islam, exclusively, the Middle East Islam. In his book entitled *Renaisans Islam Asia Tenggara,* it is stated that for decades, orientalists have considered Southeast Asian Islam as *peripheral Islam* or *fringe Islam*. Since Islam in this region is far from its origin in Arabia, the practice of Islam could not be regarded as real Islam especially because it has mixed with the local cultures and belief systems that, in many parts, differ from the original Islamic teachings. Therefore, they regard "the real Islam" as Islam practiced in Arabia.[27] While part of Indonesian Muslims glorified the Middle East Islam, Azra initiated

[25] Azra, "Understanding Indonesia's 'Third Way' Islam," 76.

[26] Azra, "Kegalauan Identitas Dan Kekerasan Sosial: Multikulturalisme, Demokrasi Dan Pancasila," 3; Azyumardi Azra, "The Megawati Presidency: Challenge of Political Islam," in Governance in Indonesia (ISEAS Publishing, 2002), 44–69; Zainuddin Fananie, Atika Sabardila, and Dwi Purnanto, "Radikalisme Agama & Perubahan Sosial [Religious Radicalism and Social Changes], Surakarta" (2002); Chaider S Bamualim, "Laporan Penelitian Radikalisme Agama Dan Perubahan Sosial Di DKI Jakarta [Research Report on Religious Radicalism and Social Change in the Special Region of Capital City Jakarta]," Jakarta: Pusat Bahasa dan Budaya & Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah (2001).

[27] Azyumardi Azra, Renaisans Islam Asia Tenggara: Sejarah Wacana & Kekuasaan (Remaja Rosdakarya, 1999), 5.

in supporting a cultural Islam as the identity of Indonesian Islam. Instead of following the idea that we are in danger and could do nothing, Azra proposes to perform Indonesian Islam as a role model for living as Muslims in the world with the idea of Nusantara Islam as one of the distinguished Islamic civilizations.[28]

Azra consistently promoted this idea even in his final paper supposed to be presented in Malaysia on 17 September 2022. For him, being Islam could live in accordance with the Indonesian cultures. He emphasized the role of mainstream Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah in countering the radical groups that have also become parts of Indonesian Islam.[29] This is in line with the idea of Soekarno when he mentions, *"Kalau jadi Hindu jangan jadi orang India, kalau jadi orang Islam jangan jadi orang Arab, kalau Kristen jangan jadi orang Yahudi, tetaplah jadi orang nusantara dengan adat budaya nusantara yang kaya raya ini"* (To become a Hindu you do not to be an Indian, to become a Muslim you do not to be an Arabic, to become a Christian you do not to be a Jewish, keep being a Nusantara people with its various cultural richness).[30] It means that each religious adherent should regard their national identity as a part of their religious practices.

Azra's contribution is just in time. When the majority shared a common opinion the society shifted from tolerant to intolerant Indonesia that is in line with the post-reformation Indonesia, Azra promoted a new way of thinking especially in his book entitled *Nusantara Islam: Jaringan Global dan Lokal*.[31] It shows that he found a solution that enables Indonesian people to understand that their way of living a religion is compatible with the fact that they stay in Indonesia and live the Indonesian cultures.

[28] Azyumardi Azra and Wayne Hudson, Islam beyond Conflict: Indonesian Islam and Western Political Theory (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008).

[29] Azyumardi Azra, "Indonesian Islam, Mainstream Muslims and Politics," Taiwanese and Indonesian Islamic Leaders Exchange Project (2006): 5.

[30] Ade Budiman, "Arabisme Dalam Pandangan Islam Perspektif Kebinekaan Di Indonesia," Al-Fath 13, no. 1 (2019): 115–131.

[31] Azra, Nusantara Islam, Jaringan Global Dan Lokal.

Once, when radical groups aim to have Indonesian culture and Islam in the face-to-face interaction, Azra promoted that the way Islam and Indonesian culture walked hand in hand for centuries has already proven to keep this country peaceful when living in a plurality. He emphasized that Islam in Malay-Indonesian has already had a long history of living as 'real Islam' even when this place is away from the center of Islam in the Middle East.[32]

Nusantara Islam, the Indonesia's Third Way

In the context of the rigidity of being Islam in Indonesia, especially after the reformation, Azra's ideas enable Indonesian Muslims believe that their identity is as authentic Islam as in Mekkah. The discussion on Nusantara Islam enables Indonesian Islam to believe that Nusantara Islam is an authentic Islam. Moreover, Nusantara Islam could be a living model for living Islam in a multicultural society. Those who support the idea of " Nusantara Islam" warmly welcome this term that reflects the diversity of Muslims in the archipelago from time to time. However, other part of Muslims accused this discourse as an attempt to compartmentalize Islam. They consider this idea will disintegrate the unity of the Muslim *Ummah* (community) due to their belief that the only way of living Islam is the one in Arab.[33]

In terms of the novelty of Nusantara Islam, Azra points out the option of having Indonesia as a non-religious-based nation as a milestone of having moderate Islam in Indonesia as Azra stated:

> The adoption of Pancasila makes Indonesia neither a theocratic state nor a secular one. On the one hand, Indonesia is founded-as stated in the Preamble of its 1945 Constitution-on five principles, the first of which is the belief in God. As a consequence, religion is not fully separated from political and

[32] Azyumardi Azra, The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern'Ulam?' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 2–3.

[33] Faris Maulana Akbar, "Peranan Dan Kontribusi Islam Indonesia Pada Peradaban Global," Jurnal Indo-Islamika 10, no. 1 (2020): 52; Azra, Renaisans Islam Asia Tenggara: Sejarah Wacana & Kekuasaan, 5.

> public life, the way it is in other countries. On the other hand, however, the presence and prevalence of Islamic principles in Indonesian society is precisely the factor that has helped mute the appeal among mainstream Muslims of efforts by more extreme elements to transform Indonesia into an Islamic State.[34]

Azra described the reality that Islam radical Islam is not the only face of Indonesian Islam. Indeed, in the contemporary Indonesia, there are several problems with social cohesion, but at the same time, many Muslims, especially those who refer to NU and Muhamadiyah, work hand in hand to maintain the friendly face of Indonesian Islam. Azra refers to the Megawati Soekarno Putri precidency era when people could see both NU and Muhammadiyah people struggled in maintaining peace among religions. They felt the urgency to fight against radical groups especially soon after the 9/11 tragedy.[35]

When discussing Indonesian Islam in a seminar in Melbourne, Azra criticized the clear-cut distinction of Clifford Geertz on Muslims in Java, especially in terms of Santri and Abangan. Santri which refers to those who are strict in practicing their religion is different from the Abangan commonly known as nominal Islam. Geertz argued that Muslims in Java and also in Indonesia in general mostly were abangan.[36] As a consequence, most Southeast Asian Islam has often been regarded as peripheral compared to Middle Eastern Islam. Dramatically, this dynamic is in line with the fact that the influence of Islam in the area is weaker compared to the symbol brought by the Hindus and Buddhists. Within this imagination, people would not wonder that this Islamic civilization in the Southeast Area (especially in Malaysia and Indonesia where Islam become the religion of the majority number of its citizens) could not represent of the voice of Islam. Another consequence of this understanding is that communal imagination of the continuing process of Islamization.

[34] Azra, "Understanding Indonesia's 'Third Way' Islam," 79.

[35] Azra, "Revisitasi Islam Politik Dan Islam Kultural Di Indonesia," 241.

[36] Clifford Geertz, The Religion of Java (University of Chicago Press, 1976), 51.

Therefore, the purification process in the area is still in progress.[37] Azra indicated that this is one reason why there is a crisis of identity among Islamic adherents in Indonesia on whether or not the Indonesian way of living Islam is in accordance with the authentic Islam.

In exploring Indonesian Islam, Azra studied the political Islam in Indonesia during the colonial era. He took advantage of the orientalism project done by the Dutch government in Indonesia. Azra referred to the work of Snouck Hurgronje, an advisor of the Dutch-Indie government, especially in the late 19th century. Hurgronje divided Islam into two categories: political Islam and ritualist Islam (which is now more popular with cultural Islam). They must make a restriction on Political Islam on one hand, but support ritualist Islam on the other.[38] Azra examined the ritualist Islam that for some extent could serve as the entrance to understanding the present Indonesian Islam. Within this context, Azra promoted a new perspective on looking at Indonesian Islam. Based on his expertise in Islamic history, Azra gave an overview on the particularity of Islam in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia. While other people consider the Southeast Asian Islam as a marginal Islam, Azra argued that Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia is a distinguished Islam that could benefit Islam in other areas, including in the Arab Peninsula.[39]

In his explanation of Indonesian Islam, Azra pointed the existence of wasatiyah organization mostly represented by Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. NU with approximately 79 million members was established in 1926 and is known as a 'traditionalist' Muslim organization, while Muhammadiyah membership, roughly estimated at some 22 million, was founded in 1912 and is better known as a modernist Muslim movement. Several other smaller Islam organizations exist in the area hat Azra described as non-political Muslim, working both as religious organization and a social-cultural-educational one. In Indonesia, the mentioned organizations

[37] Azra, Islam in Southeast Asia: Tolerance and Radicalism, 2.

[38] Azra, "Revisitasi Islam Politik Dan Islam Kultural Di Indonesia," 234.

[39] Azra, "Kebangkitan Peradaban, Memperkuat Optimisme Muslim Asia Tenggara."

run thousands of schools and madrasahs from elementary school to university levels. They also manage healthcare, co-operatives, peoples' credit unions, and environmental preservation within the Indonesian society. In advance, these wasatiyah organizations perfectly represent religious (Islamic)-based society since they are nonpartisan from the government, have their own regulation and financial management, and managing the society to a better way.[40]

In term of social cohesion, this *wasatiyah* organization through their paradigm support the existence of Pancasila among Indonesian people to provide a common platform for the diversity of religions, society, and cultures in Indonesia. He mentioned that Islamic leaders were involved in the nationalist movement such as K.H. Basuni Imran from Sambas (West Kalimantan) that looked for pieces of advice from Egyptian reformist thinkers, Muhammad Rashid Rida, on whether nationalism is accepted in Islamic thinking. He answered that nationalism is acceptable in Islam based on the idea that to love one's country is a part of the belief *(hubb al-watan min al-iman)*.[41]

With this explanation, Azra was able to build such an imagination that Nusantara Nusantara Islamis not a marginal Islam, but the center of Islam in the world. People from other regions should learn the way of living Islam in Indonesia. Therefore, there is no reason for Indonesian to always refer to the Middle East Islam as the only prominent way of living this faith.[42]

Optimistic Social Framing as Legacies of Azyumardi Azra

Erving Goffman, a Canadian Sociologist, classified framing into two broad primary frameworks: natural frameworks and social frameworks. Natural frameworks are undirected, un-oriented,

[40] Azra, "Understanding Indonesia's 'Third Way' Islam," 79–80.

[41] Hamka Siregar, "Dynamics Of Local Islam: Fatwa of Muhammad Basiuni Imran, the Grand Imam of Sambas, on the Friday Prayer Attended by Fewer than Forty Peo-Ple," AL ALBAB-Borneo Journal of Religious Studies (BJRS) 2, no. 2 (2013): 190; Azra, "Understanding Indonesia's 'Third Way' Islam," 80.

[42] *Prof. Azyumardi Azra*.

unguided, and unanimated framing. Goffman addresses it as purely physical. It means that the whole processes from the beginning to the end are unguided. All events occur naturally. The most elegant version of these frameworks happens in physics and biology. Social frameworks operate differently. There is a social actor(s) within this process. This is not 'taken for granted but comes as socially guided by a certain actor. He refers to a certain social agent that bridges a community from a particular social structure to another. Goffman addresses this actor as "an intelligence, and a live agency, in this case, human being." Furthermore, he identifies them as:

> Such an agency is anything but implacable; it can be coaxed, flattered, affronted, and threatened. What it does can be described as "guided doings." These doings subject the doer to "standards," to the social appraisal of his action based on its honesty, efficiency, economy, safety, elegance, tactfulness, good taste, and so forth.

When the agency found something that does not suit his/her idea, a continuous corrective control is taken. Through certain motives and intentions, agencies build and rebuild such social frameworks applicable in a particular situation. Goffman uses the term 'Causality' since he realizes that there is an intended effect that could be seen as a chain of certain social shifting.[43]

Within this theory, people can understand that social frameworks are not value free frameworks. It is intended to perform certain conditions and at the same time influence the way people look at reality and react based on certain perspectives of reality. Social frameworks produce background knowledge for events that organize the goals, will, and efforts to understand. Goffman describes frameworks as "guided doings."[44] Furthermore, Goffman elaborates his idea with the notions of key and keying as follows:

[43] Erving Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience. (Harvard University Press, 1974), 22.

[44] Erving Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience. (Harvard University Press, 1974), 22.

> One can easily turn to a central concept in frame analysis: the key. I refer here to the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else. The process of transcription can be called keying.[45]

Actors recognize that transformation has taken place and that the key "unlocks" what is occurring. Thus, a key might show us that what appears to be a fight is, actually, just a play. These keyings can themselves be rekeyed in a way that requires careful analysis. Goffman offers a perspective in which social life could be key and rekey, their meanings can be transformed into a pattern that is independent in the initial frame.[46] The concept of the key is supported by the basic keys employed in society. These five basics are: make belief; contest, ceremonials, technical redoing, and regroundings.[47] For this article, the discussion will only focus on the first basic: make-believe. According to Goffman, this make-believe could be seen in five ways. First, it is seen as a "transformed" activity. Second, this frame involves "its own logic, its own set of motives, its own meanings, and its own activities, all of which are quite independent of persons." Third, the frame conceives of "reasons" for the activity. Fourth, this frame involves the expectations of participants (without any pressing needs). Fifth, in the frame, there is the engrossment activities of the participant. Within this process of make-believe as part of keying, the frame persuades participants to stay within the frame.[48]

In addition to keys, there are "fabrications." A certain frame is

[45] Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience., 43–44.

[46] Gary Alan Fine and Philip Manning, "Erving Goffman," The Blackwell companion to major contemporary social theorists (2003): 54–56.

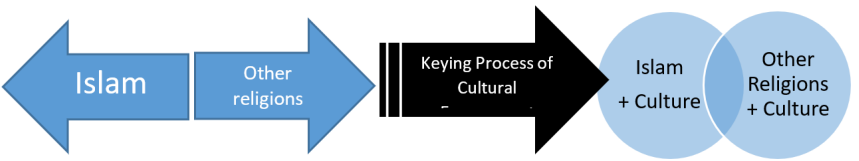
[47] Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience., 47.

[48] Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience., 56; NK Denzin and MC Keller, "Review of Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience by Erving Goffman," Contemporary Sociology 10, no. 1 (1981): 55.

fabricated when it is organized to mislead others.[49] Fabrication is either "benign" (for the benefit the participant) or "exploitative" (for benefit of the fabricator). Both Keys and fabrications disrupt people's sense of social life in case certain frames could be "anchored," and persuade people that what appears to be real is real. These concepts provide us a basis for the construction of interpretations that grounded on, but non-limited to, taken-for-granted meaning.[50]

Looking at the way Azra frameworks on social conditions in Indonesia, in many ways, people could learn from an optimistic perspective. Indeed, as already mentioned, there was a problem of inter-identity cohesion in Indonesia, but Azra stated it as a blessing in disguise. He brought people from a pessimism perspective toward the optimistic one; from Indonesia which is in danger of fundamentalism to Indonesia which could contribute to a new way of living as part of Islamic civilization.

Based on Goffman's theory on social framing and comparing it to the effort of Azra, this is the diagram that summarizes Azra's way of framing social reality:



Azra reminded Indonesian Islam that from the very beginning Islam in Indonesia has already been living in the harmony with others. This harmony is mediated by a culture that relates us to other communities. In his wide understanding of history, Azra could show us that this kind of Islam is even more prominent rather than the one from Arab Peninsula. He exclusively mentioned this pride in his last article, "Many Muslim governments in West and South Asia for a long time have counted on the Muslims of Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia and Malaysia to play a more initiative-taking role in solving

[49] Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience., 83.

[50] Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience., 83.

various problems in the world." The reason comes together with the reality that West Asia and North Africa (commonly referred to as the Middle East) were marked by many prolonged conflicts. This unfortunate situation pushes for another way of living religions in a more tolerant way as in Indonesia and Malaysia.[51]

Goffman mentioned that agency builds and rebuilds such a social framework that could be applied in a particular situation.[52] Azra used some media to emphasize and convinced others that Islam in Indonesia could have a huge contribution both to the Islamic civilization and humanity in common. In a national symposium on *Nusantara Islam* organized by the Postgraduate Program of Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama, Jakarta on February 8 - 9, 2022, he states:

In the high-level conference on '*Umatan Wasatan*' 2019 in Bogor, Grand Syeh from Egypt said, "In Cairo, for a long time we dream to develop *Islamic Wasatiyah,* but it has not been successful because its culture and Islam are not compatible. There is no mutual accommodation. This is different from what happened in Indonesia. The *umatan wasatan* exists in Indonesia, not anywhere else. In Indonesia, the largest part of the *Umatan Wasatan* is Nusantara Islam, which is identical to NU, Nahdiyin, and a slightly smaller one, *Islam berkemajuan,* Muhammadiyah. I call them "Two wings of Indonesian Islam" which complement each other.[53]

Across this explanation of Islam Indonesia as a distinguished Islamic civilization, Azra works from the perspective of social framing. During his works to promote the idea of Nusantara Islam Islam, he did some keying, especially in terms of make-believe. In supporting his idea, Azra uses many kinds of media such as social media, books, seminars, and also his publications in newspapers. He jumps from the idea that Islam in Indonesia is not as authentic as its companion in the Middle East, to the idea that Islam Indonesia has a better solution to create peace among people in supporting social

[51] Azra, "Kebangkitan Peradaban, Memperkuat Optimisme Muslim Asia Tenggara."

[52] Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience.*, 22.

[53] *Prof. Azyumardi Azra*.

cohesion in front of many challenges in a multicultural and pluralist society. He convinced others that the question for Islam in Indonesia is not whether Islam Indonesia is a prominent Islam compared to the Middle East, but how meaningful the way of living Nusantara Islam is to maintain peace among people in Indonesia. At least two keys emerge across his intellectual works on this theme:

a. Living Islam tolerantly is more prominent compared to the concept of living Islam as the one and only true religion.

b. Islam in Indonesia is an authentic Islam as authentic as the one in Arab.

We all Brother-Sisters: A Comparison

Azra doubted on the future of Islam at the hand of those who experienced identity crisis and tended to follow Political Islam which was mostly in line with radicalism and act as a milestone to perform certain social frameworks. It is not merely a common framework since within this framework there is a tool for managing the society. As he mentioned in one of his articles, this is an instrument to remind Indonesian that the Indonesian way of living Islam has already help keep peace for centuries.

This article compares this idea with the idea of Pope Francis on *Fratelli Tutti*. Fratelli Tutti is the second encyclic of Pope Francis that works in the frame of "fraternity and social friendship." Within this encyclical letter, Pope Francis emphasizes the orientation of continuing the common grounds and building a bridge among people from different faiths.[54] Indeed, Pope Francis is also aware of the present context of social cohesion among people from different religions. He explains this situation under the theme of "Dark Cloud over a Closed World."

Our days, however, seem to be showing signs of a certain regression. Ancient conflicts though long buried are breaking out

[54] Pam Nilan and Gregorius Ragil Wibowanto, "Challenging Islamist Populism in Indonesia through Catholic Youth Activism," *Religions* 12, no. 6 (2021): 11.

anew, while instances of myopic, extremist, resentful, and aggressive nationalism are on the rise. In some countries, a concept of popular and national unity influenced by various ideologies is creating new forms of selfishness and a loss of social sense under the guise of defending national interests.[55]

Within this cloud, Pope Francis works in a certain social frame, which is the brotherhood/sisterhood among all. In the middle of conflict and conflictual imagination among people from various religions, he believes that religions can still be an instrument for peace. He emphasizes the contribution of religions to build fraternity and defend justice in the society. In reaching this condition, the dialog among religions and their adherents requires an instrument of diplomacy, tolerance, or consideration. Furthermore, as mentioned by Indian Bishops, "The goal of a dialogue is to establish friendship, peace, and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love."[56]

This social framework does not emerge with no reasons as Pope Francis built communication with people from different religions. One distinguished meeting is his visit to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 3-5 February 2019. He signed a document entitled "Document of Human Fraternity" (that was later known as Document Abu Dhabi) together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azar University, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, as the representative of Suni Islam.[57] Two years later on 5-8 March 2021, he visited a Shiite community in Iraq where he had a courtesy visit to Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Al-Husayni Al-Sistani.[58] He visited Myanmar to have a meeting with Buddhist communities and also a special meeting with the Minority Rohingya community on

[55] Papa Francisco, *Fratelli Tutti* (Le vie della Cristianità, 2020), Art 11.

[56] Francisco, *Fratelli Tutti*, 271.

[57] "Apostolic Journey of the Holy Father to the United Arab Emirates (3-5 February 2019) | Francis," accessed September 24, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco-emiratiarabiuniti-2019.html.

[58] "Apostolic Journey to the Republic of Iraq (5-8 March 2021) | Francis," accessed September 24, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2021/outside/documents/papa-francesco-iraq-2021.html.

26 November – 2 December 2017.[59]

Pope Francis recently works with the idea that religion is a source of peace in the middle of the pessimism about religion's contribution to peace. This is in line with how Azra promoted Indonesian Islam as a role model of keeping peace in the middle of pessimism regarding unauthentic Indonesia Islam. His ability to describe fraternity that comes with social cohesion in the context of *Wasatiyah Islam* that is contained in *Nusantara Islam* and has become a monumental project of peace. An old Chinese proverb says, "Better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."[60] Both Azra and Pope Francis, based on their position as influential figures, realize that their framework could be enlight others. In the middle of a turmoil situation, they enable people to look for a solution. The way they keyed new concepts that persuade others to follow them come along with the new perspective of living together as brothers and sisters among people from different religions.

Conclusion

This analytical concept of Azra's way of framing social conditions is in the context of learning how to relate with others in a certain social imagination. To some extent, Azra worried about the condition of Indonesian Islam soon after the Reformation era. His struggle to promote the 'existence of Indonesian Islam' or 'Nusantara Islam' is a way out of the doubt of a particular number of Indonesian Muslims on whether they practice the authentic Islam.

Azra and Pope Francis' ways of framing the situation of religions practices today encourage people from this era with a new perspective of living together. People need to criticize the way society pictures social realities. The Catholic church in Indonesia needs to build

[59] "Apostolic Journey to Myanmar: Meeting with the Bishops of Myanmar in a Hall of St Mary's Cathedral (Yangon, 29 November 2017) | Francis," accessed September 24, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/november/documents/papa-francesco_20171129_viaggioapostolico-myanmar-vescovi.html.

[60] Marc Van Ranst, "Better to Light a Candle than to Curse the Darkness," *European Rotavirus Journal* 3, no. 1 (2007): 3.

optimism that Indonesia is still our shared family with those from other religions, especially Islam. As has already done by Azra and many other Muslims, people are struggling to maintain peace among Indonesians.

Azra did his intellectual work, placing his position in a difficult position. In the middle of the inclination of leaving Nusantara Islam among Indonesians, he struggled to portray Nusantara Islam as an authentic and prominent Islam because of its tolerance towards religious pluralism and multiculturalism. Moreover, the fact that Nusantara Islam is derived from Arabic Islam through the *dakwa (mission)* process by Arabic preachers as he mentioned in the book entitled *Islam Nusantara, Jaringan Global dan Lokal*, supported the authenticity of Islam in Indonesia.[61] He succeeded to make a transformative frame so that people could re-consider their belief that Arabic Islam is the only authentic Islam. From the perspective of fabrication, Azra practiced a benign fabrication for benefit of the participants. [62] He persuaded people to believe that what is real is real. He did not take for granted the social imagination of Indonesian Islam, since he understood that such a social construction could be "unlocked" so that people could offer a new construction and re-key certain concepts.

He has become an agent of change in how Indonesian Muslims look at themselves. His position is a symbol of the struggle of Indonesian Islam to keep the loyalty to the dream of independency of Indonesia and the Indonesian unity in diversity. This symbol is meaningful for Indonesian Catholics following the concept suggested by Pope Francis that people, from every religion and racial backgrounds, are brothers and sisters.

[61] Azra, *Nusantara Islam, Jaringan Global Dan Lokal*.

[62] Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience.*, 83.

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