

**SPEECH BY
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"ISLAM, MODERNIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION"

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honour for me to stand before you today, after receiving from the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University its Honorary Doctorate in Islamic Thought. I feel very touched by the magnanimity of the university for having organized this special ceremony to confer upon me the prestigious award. I wish, furthermore, to thank the Rector for according me the privilege of delivering an address on this occasion.

2. I met Professor Azyumardi for the first time a few years ago when I hosted a conference of Islamic scholars in Kuala Lumpur. He impressed me then with the breadth of his knowledge on Islamic movements and I am truly grateful that we have been able to continue to exchange ideas in order to more meaningfully understand developments regarding Islam in the modern world. I hope Professor Azyumardi will continue with his important academic research and visit Malaysia more regularly so that our scholars can also learn from him and share their ideas with him.

3. Professor Azyumardi, I humbly accept the honours that you and your University have decided to bestow upon me as an expression of your regard not only for me but also for my country. The relations between Malaysia and Indonesia are indeed very close and brotherly.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to speak to you on a subject which I know is very close to the hearts of both the people of Indonesia and the people of Malaysia. I am referring to the state of international affairs affecting the Islamic world, in particular the deteriorating state of its relations with the Christian West. In this regard, we cannot but single out those who propagate the view that Islam is inherently antagonistic towards modernization and thereby incapable of partaking constructively in the process of modernization and globalization. These opinion

makers have been persuasive, and in many instances, they have succeeded in influencing their governments into accepting their thesis as fact. As a result, many western countries have absorbed this misperception about Islam to become part of their national strategic thinking that the Islamic world is an adversary, rather than a partner for peace and progress. Their world view has been clouded by something which is nothing more than a myth.

5. Regretfully, many western countries have even allowed their foreign policies and the conduct of their international relations to be flawed by this misrepresentation of Islam. It is this state of affairs which has caused much of the antagonism which prevails today between the west and the Islamic world. Its negative ramifications on international peace and security are easy to illustrate in real life and in real time, just as they account for much of the injustices against the Palestinian people, the unbridled invasion of Afghanistan, the illegal occupation of Iraq, the threats against Iran and now in progress, the assault on Lebanon. The provocative caricature episode, earlier this year, had brought new heights to the tensions between the world's two great civilizations.

5a. The case of Lebanon is indeed a very sad commentary on the issue of morality in the conduct of international affairs. In the face of callous disregard for the sanctity of human life and sovereignty of nation states, the international community is unable to react. Even the United Nations, our best hope for international peace and security, is in apparent paralysis and unable to act. Quite clearly, the power of "the veto" is at work not only in corridors of the United Nations but also on the ground in the Middle East.

5b. As we speak about Lebanon, the people of that unfortunate country suffers more with every passing hour. Clearly we Muslims cannot prevent an invasion of Lebanon on our own. Our own internal sectarian conflicts have weakened us and these have been the major cause of Muslim disunity. Nevertheless, let us search our hearts and summon our inner strengths and decide to do something about Lebanon. We must continue to demand that the United Nations declare a ceasefire, deploy a United Nations Peace-Keeping Force to implement the ceasefire and prevent an invasion of Lebanon by Israel.

5c. In times like this, the need to strengthen the Ummah and the Muslim countries has become even more urgent than before. Muslim countries need to use reliable guidelines for a comprehensive development of the Ummah which should include the development of quality human capital through education. A comprehensive development of the economy must also be undertaken. I believe, Islam Hadhari, about which I will be elaborating later in this Lecture, has become relevant to our times.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Islamic countries must take concerted action to establish the truth that Islam is entirely compatible with modernization and definitely capable of making effective contributions to modernization and globalization. I say this not for purposes of appeasing or accommodating the West. We must do so in order to establish the Islamic world's equality with the West. We must do so in order to secure reciprocity from the West. This is the best way of gaining the respect of the West for Islam.

Equality, reciprocity and mutual respect is the only basis upon which real understanding and harmony can be established between the Islamic world and the West, together with all the attendant benefits for global peace and international stability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Modernization, in the material sense, is the process of bringing economic development and creating opportunities for the people to enjoy the benefits of scientific and technological advancements. It is very possible, not only in the material sense but also in the intellectual sense, to shape for ourselves modernizing concepts and practices which are consonant with the teachings of Islam. It is possible to achieve a synthesis between what is modern and what is Islamic. No doubt, the linkage between modernity and western domination, especially in the form of hundreds of years of western colonialism, will be hard to break but break them we must. We must believe and accept that it is entirely conceivable to be modern without being western. Or we do not need to be western in order to be modern. Science and technology, creativity, innovation and renewal - the fundamental ingredients for modernization - are not the monopoly of any particular race or civilization.

8. The concept of creativity, innovation, rationalization and renewal is in fact central to the teachings of Islam. The text of the holy Qur'an contains many verses which request humans to use his or her intellect, to ponder, to think and to know. Critical and analytical thinking is encouraged and exhorted in Islam. The concept of ijtihad teaches Muslims to make efforts to interpret the religious texts in accordance with the realities of the existing times. For instance, a great Islamic scholar, Muhammad Abduh grappled with the issue of modernity and the need for change from the perspective of Islam. He concluded that the enlightened Muslims are those who are able to harmonize the revelations of the holy Qur'an and the traditions of the holy Prophet Muhammad on the one hand, and human reasoning and science on the other hand. The truth is that Islam is neither monolithic nor impervious to change. There should be no doubt that Islam and modernity are compatible, not inherently incompatible.

9. As true believers, Muslims must be firm in their conviction that Islam is a religion which is relevant for all times and for all places. Indeed, Islam is more than just a religion. It is a civilization, a cultural entity and a way of life all at once. Islam provided a proper order for societies in ancient times. Islam provides for good governance in these modern times. Of course, as Muhammad Abduh had said, Muslims must constantly adjust themselves to suit the times and places. It is in this context that all modern Muslims are required to immerse themselves in the true, higher jihad of elevating themselves, to improve themselves, to become better human beings. The often misunderstood and overused term "jihad" literally means "struggle", not "holy war". In fact, "holy war" is a term not found anywhere in the Qur'an.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. The process of globalization, in particular the advances in communications technology, have brought peoples of the world so close to each other. But, this increasing global integration has also brought about some unintended consequences. People have become defensive and protective of their identities. It has made people feel an even greater need to conserve and champion their particular belief-systems, values and principles at all costs. Identity entrepreneurs have come to the fore, many of them promoting hatred and rejection.

11. There are many ways of describing the process of globalization. In substance, however, it involves the spread of people and the exchange of goods and ideas across the globe. It is also associated with change, transformation and an increasingly interdependent relationship between countries and different regions of the world. Globalization today has also brought about a challenge to the roles of sovereign nation states which traditionally claim exclusive authority within their own national borders. The proponents advocate globalization as a highway to modernity. The detractors oppose globalization because they see it as a lever for westernization. The extremists demonize globalization as an invasion of traditional cultures and societies. The overriding fact remains, however, that globalization and modernization are processes which cannot be stopped.

12. The inexorable advance of globalization has led the critics of Islam to suggest that Muslims have no option but to embrace the system by reconciling the Islamic religion, culture, and way of life with the benefits of globalization. The truth is that Muslims can easily partake in the processes of globalization yet remain faithful to the teachings and traditions of Islam. It is of course the duty not only of Muslims but also of all peoples of goodwill to ensure that the processes of globalization bring about the eradication of inequities within societies, greater justice all round, more egalitarianism and a more caring and responsive political and economic system.

13. But then then there are those who are bent on sowing the seeds of discord between the Islamic world and the west. They spread the propaganda that Islamic extremists are plotting to replace the system with an alternative guided by Islam as a political ideology which would be integrated into all aspects of society, including politics, law, economy, foreign policy and so on. First of all, we must recognize that these are equally extreme views propagated by the enemies of Islam. Secondly, extremists cannot be taken as speaking for Islam even if they claim to be Muslims. The truth is that Islam permits and encourages peaceful co-existence between peoples and nations. In fact, Muslims believe that God has commanded them to accept and tolerate diversity. The holy Qur'an has so stated. Let me quote Surah al-Hujurat (49:13), which says:

That translates into English as follows:

“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)”
End of quote.

14. Historically, it was true that Islam was the leading civilization in the world for over one thousand years. It is also true that there has been a dramatic decline of the Islamic world over the period of just a few centuries. However, we Muslims should not despair over this fact of history and allow ourselves to be embroiled in a state of anguish and frustration. We must strive to restore the glory of Islam in a peaceful and enlightened way. We need to do it as the Islamic contribution to the process of globalization and modernization. This is the peaceful and constructive jihad I have spoken about earlier in this Lecture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. The Islamic contribution to globalization and modernization needed to be done, of course, in tandem with the west. There is thus a critical need for an organized and sustained process to enable the Islamic world and the west to engage in dialogue. Many forums have been held but a concerted international effort has yet to come into being. Most of the forums have taken place at the level of private individuals or non-governmental organizations. Perhaps, this has been useful in bringing forth openness and frankness. However, dialogue will be fruitless unless followed by concrete action. Only Governments can initiate and sustain tangible action both domestically and internationally. Therefore a point has to be reached where the dialogue involves governments in conference. Scholars, experts and non governmental activists can participate as resource persons. Collectively, they can contribute through second-track forums. The United Nations is the ideal place where this question of instituting a formal dialogue between civilizations can be addressed.

16. One of the primary purposes of such a dialogue conference is to instill an appreciation in the western mind of the true nature of Islam. In fact, such a dialogue will only achieve success if the west would accept, and I repeat what I have stated earlier, that Islam is not merely a religion but a whole way of life for its believers. The west needs to recognize this fact and adopt the attitude towards Islam which recognizes its historic and continuing centrality in the lives of all Muslims.

17. On their part, the Islamic countries have an equally important obligation to demonstrate their competency and readiness to be part and parcel of the process of globalization and modernization. Islamic countries and Muslim societies must institute reform and renewal in their thinking and in their governance processes. Muslims must demonstrate by word and deed that Islam is no obstacle to progress and modernity, including the practice of democracy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

18. In Malaysia, the status of Islam as the official religion is enshrined in the constitution. Islam has always been predominant in the political, economic and social life of the country. Soon after I assumed leadership of the Government at the end of 2003, we wanted to make a formal pronouncement that the true and correct teachings of Islam shall serve as the basis and inspiration for good governance and development in Malaysia. We decided to call the approach and articulate it as Islam Hadhari. We initiated this action in the wake of developments at the global level and we took into account, at the same time, our own rather unique national situation. Malaysia is a Muslim country of some 20 million people in which 33% are non-Muslims. The need to be just and fair towards all without distinction as to race or religion forms an important part of the principles underlying Islam Hadhari. The need to maintain national harmony is paramount in a racially and religiously diverse country like Malaysia. At the same time, the approach accords totally with the injunctions of Islam which require man to be compassionate and kind to their fellow human beings.

19. We have spelt out ten principles as constituting the fundamentals of Islam Hadhari. The first on the list of principles is faith in and piety towards Allah.

20. The second is a just and trustworthy government. To be just is to give people their dues accordingly. This is because justice must be blind to race, colour, social status, wealth and religion.

21. The third is a free and independent people. Liberated people are characterized, among others, as creative and innovative. They are people who are able to produce dynamic and positive new ideas.

22. The fourth is a vigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge. The ability to master knowledge in an integrated manner enables us to acquire intellectual vigour, be multifaceted and contemporary.

23. The fifth principle is the requirement for a balanced and comprehensive economic development. Within the framework of developing the country, the economic aspect is also a priority in Islam.

24. The sixth principle is the stress on achieving a good quality of life for the people. This includes all aspects including spiritual, physical and material things.

25. The seventh principle pertains to the protection of the rights of minority groups and women. The objective is to enable minority groups, including the non Muslims, and women to enjoy whatever is enjoyed by the majority groups and men.

26. The eighth principle concerns maintenance of cultural and moral integrity. The internalization of high moral values is particularly necessary to ensure prosperity, harmony and peace in a multiracial society like Malaysia.

27. The ninth principle calls for the safeguarding of natural resources and the environment. The life of mankind involves not only inter-human relations but also relations between human beings and the environment. Human prosperity depends upon a harmonious relationship between mankind and nature.

28. The last in the list of principles, that is the tenth principle, reminds us of the need for strong defence capabilities. This does not relate to military strength alone. It concerns also the individual's physical and spiritual strength. A Muslim country must have long-term plans and programmes to instill a sense of responsibility to defend the dignity of the individuals, nation and country. We must develop a strong resilience for the ummah and the ummah must be empowered to face present and future global challenges.

29. It is our intention to adopt Islam Hadhari as a comprehensive approach to the development of mankind, society and country based on the perspective of Islamic teachings and the Islamic civilization. The approach supposes a proper understanding of Islamic law and jurisprudence. As an approach to religion, we feel everyone should be comfortable with Islam Hadhari because it embodies principles which are universally familiar and accepted.

30. Islam Hadhari is a manhaj, progressive approach for all Malaysians whether they are Muslims or non Muslims. There is no cause to fear any discrimination or persecution on account of religion because the Malaysian Constitution guarantees freedom of worship. In any case, every Malaysian citizen irrespective of race or religion is equal before the law.

31. At the international level, it is Malaysia's hope that Islam Hadhari will be able to showcase Islam as a tolerant and caring religion and culture. In this connection, I would like to make it clear to all concerned, to my fellow Muslims in particular, that Islam Hadhari is not a new religion or a new mazhab or any kind of new religious order. Islam Hadhari merely reemphasizes the centrality of Islam in the daily lives of its believers. It serves as the guiding principles for appreciating and practising the faith in these modern times, Inshallah. Malaysia certainly wishes to be a dynamic part of the modernizing and globalizing world while maintaining its Islamic credentials. It is our intention that Islam Hadhari serves this purpose.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

32. I have spoken about Islam Hadhari in many countries. I have done so because many prominent individuals and groups had wanted to know more about what we

are doing in Malaysia in this regard. In fact, this is the second occasion I have spoken in Jakarta on this subject. I am pleased that Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University is also showing much interest in Islam Hadhari. I am particularly delighted that this University is organizing a special seminar on Islam Hadhari to take place later this afternoon. I have been informed that the seminar is formally entitled "Penguatan Peran Islam Hadhari Dalam Mewujudkan Masyarakat Modern di Asia Tenggara". I regret that my schedule does not permit me to be personally present at the seminar.

33. The Rector has, however, requested that I personally associate myself with that event. May I therefore take this opportunity to formally declare open, now, the Seminar on Islam Hadhari which convenes in the afternoon in this same auditorium. I wish the seminar great success.

I thank you.