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IMPROVING HUMAN LIFE

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IMPROVING HUMAN LIFE

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BEYOND RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM: A MEETING POINT OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND ISLAMIC VALUES

Nurwanto[1]

Abstract

This paper highlights the issue of fundamentalism as the challenge for religious society. As a considerably popular term, it has attracted some scholars to define and rethink of it. It has been clarified that as an entity poposing certain fundamentals of life, religion—including Islam—could not be sparated from a reality which is culturally or socially more various and multicultural. The problem then emerges as certain religious tendency imposes its standpoint to public. The paper argues that religion with its fundamental aspects is legalized by nature and, however, should be revitalized when having a real contact with the multi-dimentional society. In this paper, as a case, religious—Islamic—fundamentals for instance, could be linked into Citizenship education which takes an emphasis on how to create a more

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harmonious and just society locally or globally as one of many ways to make religion more contributive in this life.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'fundamentalism' has been popular after the bombing attack to WTC building on 9/11. The 'disaster' was very often seen as an action conducted by terrorists, a group of people who propagate violence and threaten human safety to reach their certain political goals. If this term is then associated with any religion which basically has fundamentals or principles of life, however, it seems not as simple as the statement that religious fundamentalism is purely because of their religious fundamentals. In addition, it may be too simple to say that whoever following certain religion is able to be considered as a terrorist group. Eventhough it can also be said that there are, perhaps, some people justifying and perpetuating violence by which they refer to certain religious doctrines they choose, interpret and understand.

This paper will analyze some viewpoints of religious fundamentalism and construct a possible dialogue between Islamic notions relating to fundamentals aspects in Islam and global Citizenship. The 'dialogue' is expected to be one of the theses on how religious communities whose fundamental tenets should be practiced, are able to promote peaceful ways and harmonious life with different religious or even non-religious communities. In addition, the paper also traces back the writer's experience when involving in some projects to disseminate the mode of integration between Islamic values and universal values as included in Citizenship education.

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM?

Both Armstrong (2004) and Ruthven (2004) may similarly state that, historically, the term 'fundamentalism' cannot be separated from the dimension of 'fundamentals' of any religion. Armstrong also said that fundamentalism is originally a reaction to religious erosion considered to be able to threaten 'fundamental beliefs' of American Protestantism consisting of 'inerrancy of the Bible', 'the direct creation of the world and humanity'; 'ex nihilo by God' (in contrast to Darwinian evolution) and 'the authenticity of miracles'—to mention some. As a result, American Protestants think to be back to the pure notion of the Christians convicted to have been misused by liberal Protestants who promote rationalism and modernism. Here, religious fundamentalism has been examined to be vis-à-vis intelectualism whose influence then becomes the anchor of science and technology development in the

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West. The emergence of intellectuals as an opposition was reaction to the strict, monolitic and literal understandings of fundamentalists on Biblical doctrines. Thus, the history of separation between 'the Western intellectuals' and 'the religious fundamentalists' roles may be able to be comprehended from the tension of whether or not they follow religious notions strictly of literally.

In the context of Islamic discourses, Armstrong (2004) says that fundamentalism can be defined as ushuliyah (Arabic) meaning 'main sources or principles of Islamic law'. The fundamental teaching of this law is that God has sent the Holy Quran as a life guidance for all human beings; Allah has eternally been convicted as the Only God; and Muhammad has been witnessed as the last prophet—to mention few. In this respect, Islam—as other religions—believes that there are fundamentals the Muslims must follow. Given this point, Armstrong and Ruthven's work seems in line with each other by asserting that any religion has fundamental dimensions. Yet, they are both unlikely to state that indeed each religion has the right to preserve its religious fundamentals. In this regard, I would say that fundamentals of any religion are inevitable by nature. Nevertheless, the problem may occur regarding modes of understanding among religious adherents. Broadly speaking, in the sense, the influence of religious scholars, teacher, parentss and other significant people for example, is really paramount to lead religious adherents in understanding their religious norms and values.

Regarding the roots of Islamic fundamentalism, Hoodboy (1991) draws attention to how Muslim communities react to the Western cultures. He identifies the three mainstreams of those religious practicalities as follows: the first is the 'restorationist' group which propagates 'holy war' including 'intellectual war' to almost every single Western thought and action. For this group, such ideologies as capitalism, socialism, modernism and rationalism—to mention some—have been regarded as products of secularization, a movement escaping from religious doctrines and values. The second is the 'reconstructionist' group, an opposition to the first, which campaigns the compatibility of modernization and rationalization with the idea of 'ijtihad' (Arabic) or innovation. The spirit of this tendency is that Islam seems to have promoted human progression. The development of science and technology, for instance, has become evidence of humans' capacity to actualize their potentials and intelligence. Finally, the third is the 'pragmatist' group that is the majority who only makes full use of the existing progression in terms of science and technology and tends to be satisfied with the present political and economic life. It can be said that the first group generally choose political activism as their actions even though some may have taken an effort to build on their imagined particular sciences whose main

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resources are presumably Islamic. In addition, the second group is a community who believes that intellectual and technologic progression in the West is highly compatible with Islamic idealism. Accordingly, this group may be more open-minded and builds on a dialogue with other various leading resources whereas the first tends to resist on Western cultures and ideas. Because of these viewpoints, it may be founded that some of the first group potentially become fundamentalists whose political views are to try to impose other groups to follow their own ideology and knowledge system.

Having said that some of the restorationist group can potentially become fundamentalists, it may be clear that their political action actually needs to be addressed. Religiously speaking, the real duty of religious adherents is that how they have a room to practice their beliefs, rituals and values. It seems that in many countries, any religion can by law be practiced by its adherent even if different countries are generally influenced by various ideological and political tendencies. The initial problem may occur when certain religious communities impose their political orientation to public. The type of such social intolerance is then drawn by Harris (1994) cited in Ruthven (2004, p. 7) as the core of fundamentalism. He said that the term 'fundamentalism' originally describes 'anti-intellectual, bigoted and intolerant' perspectives and imposition of certain 'world-view(s) onto others' intolerably. It may be then using violence to spread certain religious or ideological standpoints. Thus, the term 'religious fundamentalism' might be defined as social and political activism of any religious community using one-sided, violent and intolerable ways. Therefore, I would say that practically, every religious adherent has a right to believe and practice his/her belief but it will become socially contested when he/she imposes others to follow his/her belief as well as becomes intolerable to others' beliefs and religious standpoints.

Another tendency of fundamentalism is a cultural orientation. Hussain (1992) states that Islamic community should go beyond power (political)-oriented actions and, rather, could intellectually and culturally create a society whose main mission is to build and preserve responsible freedom, justice and equality. It is arguably that as a community, Muslims should have a priority to develop more meaningful and humane sciences and technology in order for their society to be more civilized and prosperous. Consequently, Hussain (2008) then asserts that Islamic scholars in particular need to build on scientific notions and practicalities which promote rational and responsible dialogues within Muslims'traditions and other various cultures, either the East or the West. Such Hussain's work may be able to be called 'beyond-fundamentalism orientation' which is between 'restoratinists' and 'reconstructionists' (see Hoodboy, 1991). In short, fundamentals of Islam are important to practice either individually or

socially with peaceful and tolerant values. Furthermore, the final goal of religious—Islamic—life is not only certain religious matters individually or linked to a group of religious people internally but also social matters such as justice and prosperity for all people and environment which should be reconstructed by any religious belief.

Global Citizenship and Religious (Islamic) Values: 'Breaking Ice'?

To shape a picture on transforming tolerant, peaceful and harmonious values either in public or schools, below are the brief notes of history of Citizenship education and the reformed education of Citizenship and religious (Islamic) teaching.

Indonesia's Citizenship education in a brief

In the history of political education in Indonesia during the New Order ranging from the 1970s to 1998s, the subjects such as Pancasila and Citizenship had been set up as a gateway to transmit and indoctrinate the State ideology. The education of Pancasila (the five principles) had longer been an effective tool for the authoritarian regime to limit political and democratic activism. Even if these five principles consisting of deity, humanity, unity, democracy and justice seem to have fitted into Indonesians' interests and future, but the rulers had in many cases posited those values only to be a discourse in seminars for instance. In reality, however, citizens' aspirations legally issued as one of the main values of the ideology such as voices for autonomy in Aceh and Papua, has beed considered as a threat, instead of being seen as a challenge to solve peacefully. Therefore, it can be said that the State ideology has not yet become an appropriate and productive tool to build the multicultural Indonesia.

By taking account of Citizenship education during the New Order in Indonesian schools in particular, it seems that students had been set up as 'loyal' instead of 'critical' people, the ones who must always fulfil their obligations to the State even if their rights may not be fulfilled by the State on the contrary. Legally speaking, the 1945 Constitution asserts that the State shall protect freedom of speech. As a matter of fact, students' voices for democracy and their criticism had been banned and suspected to be a subversive agenda. For example, in the 1980s, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Indonesia issued a letter on 'normalizing campus life' by which students were led to solely study, not to get involved in critisizing government or political policy. As a response to such policy, some argue that it is evidence that the State ideology offering an arena where citizens have a ringht to participate in the public, had been victimized. According to Mannheim (2002), such

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a situation might be an 'utopia' since the Pancasila could not be practiced in Indonesian public. The ideology has imagined social freedom but in reality it has disappeared. Thus, it may be contested that Citizenship education has encountered between democratic expectations and practicalities.

The efforts of Citizenship education reform have already emerged since the 1980s. At this period of time, some civil societies mainly social organizations have offered an alternative approach in line with more democratic social education. As the government chose a top-down policy model so that public schools must implement a centralized curriculum, the social movements have non-fomally organized trainings which provided more democratic, critical viewpoints of many aspects of the nation life such as politic, economy and social systems. They even published training materials and supplements for schools' curricula. Yet, politically, such projects have been suspected by the dispotic regime as an ideologically subversive action to the State ideology. Consequently, some of such critical activities were to be underground movements and the rest of them even dissappeared. It can be said, unfortunately, that there had not been formal actions yet to deconstruct the centralized, authoritarian regime of schooling.

The remaining action to build on a new critical perspective of Citizenship education has re-emerged. After the New Order government under former President Suharto fell down in the 1998, as if 'a democratic gate' has been opened. Some academics either formally or informally have even tried to re-write books of history and social sciences including Citizenship education by re-exploring a great deal more resources which were previously banned by the former regime. This chance, for instance, has been taken seriously by socio-religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdhatul Ulama whose one of their foci is in educational sectors. They seem to have tried to create a scientific dialogue between religious values and Citizenship education including democracy. Why then was it shaped? Some of them argue that since any religion is not only linked to spirituality but also a code of daily practices, this sort of scientific and practical dialogue would predictably educate Indonesian students to be able dignifiedly live in a multi-religious and ethnic society. Such a dialogue can be shaped to make them aware of their social responsibilities as a religious and national mandate at the same time. It may be like Armstrong (1997) said as 'practical compassion' that will position them to take part in re-building the nation. The work of Gearon (2002) is also relevant that such a dialogical model would strengthen their religious understanding to be more attached to the real cases such as human right and other social problems.

Referring to Citizenship education globally, it may be valuable to take another

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nation history. Freathy (2008) investigated that based on the British experience in the 1940s, there had been an anxiety of the Board of Education to an intention of applying 'progressive pedagogies' through Citizenship. Progressive pedagogies here means that students were educated to be more critical of their own government policy. However, on the contrary, the Board then endorses Religious Education (RE) as the subject whose main duty was to promote a harmonious life rather than political debates. Yet, since the 1980s, when Citizenship has become a formally more recognized subject, it had not become a priority yet because the school orientation at the time was just to compete in school league tables taking an emphasis on mathematical rather than socio-political literacy (Harber, 2009).

The significance of the integation of Citizenship and Religious Education actually is that the teaching will possibly make students to be more humane (Blayblock, 2003). Blaybock examined that religious engagement is not only related to building on students' commitments to their nation-state but also humanity at large. Furthermore, it is argued that religious understanding and awareness would fulfil spiritual dimensions of Citizenship which has so far emphasized solely rational and empirical dimensions of human life as significantly projected by Western Humanism. Because of this notion, it may be clear that there will be more harmonious future by integrating Citizenship education and Religious (Islamic) education.

Putting Citizenship and Islamic values in 'the same box'

To minimize socially harmful practices such as intolerance and violence, the idea of global citizenship is quite important to put into practice. Davies (2006, p. 5) simply defines it as an idea which 'transposes a national political reality to a wider world order'. In this regard, the effort of making a dialogue between Islamic values and this type of Citizenship education can be drawn attention. Educationalists and their students could be concerned with both national and international issues. Since global (cosmopolitan) Citizenship is also 'based on feelings of solidarity with fellow human beings wherever they are situated' (Osler and Starkey, 2005, p. 23), universal tenets of Islam can be deeply explored. The teaching might be directed to explore, understand and practice such global ethics as responsible freedom, justice and equality. Theoretically speaking, such promoted global Citizenship values can meet with universal values of Islam such as respect to and cooperation with others (see: the Quran, 49: 13 and 5: 2) and tolerance to religious diversity (see: the Quran, 107: 1-6). The universally democratic practices such as 'accountability to the people' and 'mass control to government' seem to be more important to learn than 'necessarily slavish copies of the Western forms of democracy' (Grenville, 2005, p. 943). Basically, it is

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concerned with values not merely practical forms of certain social system. Thus, global Citizenship immersed in Islamic (religious) teaching or vice versa may have an opportunity to altogether anticipate and reduce possible over-sectarian tendencies of any religion.

However, not all Islamic scholars agree with the notion of scientific immersion as mentioned above. The work of March (2009) reveals that Citizenship education generally stands for 'liberal principles' in which students should be free-stand above certain religious bases. On the other hand, Islamic teachings basically go for fundamentals and principles of believed religious values. It seems that March did not see the universal ideas and values within and built-in religion such as Islam. Doctrinally speaking, as previously mentioned, Islam truly endorses its adherents to respect others even if they may strongly hold their beliefs. March may miss that as religious adherents and citizens at the same time, Muslims should and could stand on a balanced way, both individual and social, the life and the hereafter as well as rasional and spiritual. By looking at these doctrinal dimensions of the teaching, there is a potentiality for Islamic scholars and muslims in general to create more productive ways based on universal and particular (Muslims' beliefs) values.

In terms of schooling practicalities, anticipating extreme, damaging behaviors is actually able to begin with transformation of good values such as honesty, social respect, togetherness and peace. Yet, Davies (2004) and Harber (2009b), both were previously my tutors at Birmingham University, interestingly said that schools could, however, condition harmful environments where students are sometimes accustomed with violence such as ethnic and religious hatred. Davies (2008, p.3) said that '... there is writing on religious education, faith schools and Islamic education which touches on fundamentalism'. It might be clarified that the analysis of Davies possibly refers to some particular Islamic schools, for example in Afghanistan, not all places. Irrespective of a casual example that may be empirically clarified as founded by Davies and Harber, it is vital to note that teaching treatments consisting of teachers' attitudes, methods and classroom interactions should be shaped with comfort and service-based education. Without such educational environment, despite lots of good values taught, students may be more familiar and accostumed with intolerance and hatred as they have experienced so far.

Regarding the importance of global, peaceful values, for instance, there has been an Islamic school called 'Muhammadiyah Senior Secondary School in Ambon, an Eastern part of Indonesia, promoting a class for reconciliation after a social and religious conflict happened around the 1990s. Referring to the principal, the school had been destroyed and fired several times. Once it was burn, some elite Muslims

initiated to rebuild that school in the following time. The most important practice in that school is an effort to disseminate the true teaching of Islam on social respect, togetherness, solidarity and peace amongst students. Furthermore, the class for reconsiliation was attended by both Muslims and Christians (an interview with the principal, 2007). The commitment of the religious leaders to such a meaningful way, may be initially influenced by their instinctive dimensions of human beings by nature. Moreover, if treasured further, it has been proven that their action could be inspired by fundamental values of Islam which strongly teach 'salam' (Arabic) meaning 'peace' which is literally the same as the word 'Islam' coming from alphabets: s-l-m (Arabic) relating to peace, harmony and submission to the Geatest God. Köylü (2004, p. 73) for instance, investigated the roots of peace in Islam. He said that 'the Qur'an constantly commands Muslims to work wholly for peace and justice and condemns all the factors which tend to disturb peace and social order (Qur'an 2: 209, 5: 9 and 65, 7: 56 and 74, 11: 85, 28: 77–78, 29: 36). If there is a group of people committed to violence, who argue that their actions are religiously legitimate, the standpoint actually is religiously baseless referring to those doctrinal, Quranic texts. For that reason, building on social harmony can be either from a reflection on reality, peaceful doctrines as well as reality and religious texts altogether.

Relating to the potentiality and actualization of conflicts amongst groups of people, the promotion of peace building and education through Citizenship as well as Religious (Islamic) teaching is really beneficial. Firstly, it could repair and reorient schooling activities which endorse harmful and violent behaviors such as bullying, ethnic hatred, corporal punishment, sexual harassment and militarization of schooling (Harber, 2009b). Sociologically, these kinds of bad behaviors are contradictory to human rights as promoted by Citizenship education and those are theologically banned. Secondly, it would lead to much larger discourses and possible practices to campaign and educate against 'extremism' (see Davies, 2008). Harber and Sakade (2009, p. 174) said that education promoting peaceful values is '… to offer opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and values required for the practice of conflict resolution, communication and co-operation in relation to issues of peace, war, violence, conflict and injustice'. Thus, peventing on conflictual and violent ways taken by part of (political) fundamentalists could be conducted with transforming the significance of peaceful values and practices ranging from limited places such as schools to larger communities.

CITIZENSHIP AND ISLAMIC VALUES:
AN EXPERIENCE

Taking account of the practicality of the integration between Citizenship and Islamic values might be valuable by learning from my involvement in the project of Civic (Citizenship) education for Muhammadiyah Higher Education by the Board of Research and Education Development of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (called LP3 UMY) in the early 2000s. Since the despotic, New Order regime the late-1990s was down, much more discourses on Citizenship have then flourished. There was an idea that the new-fashioned Citizenship teaching projected should be an anti-thesis of the previous monolitic type of Citizenship indoctrination. The urgent knowledge such as democracy, good governance, civil society, human rights and globalization has been set up as a new perspective for students. As far as it is concerned, they had previously been indoctrinated with the State ideology, Pancasila (the five pillars) as well as nationalism to which the students must be loyal. There has fortunately emerged a paradigm shift by which they learn from national to global awareness as a key of global Citizenship (see Davies, 2006 and Osler and Starkey, 2005). Besides, another important notion was how to build on students' awareness of local democracy in line with decentralization. Additionally, since the late-1990s, this country also has encountered privatization which resulted in many public companies were sold out to private and foreign owners. At the same time, many Indonesia's public sectors have faced such immoral conducts as systemic corruption. By looking at this complexity, Citizenship education project by LP3 UMY was focused on leading both Muhammadiyah University's lecturers to redesign their curricula and their students to be aware, critical of and engage with the local to global social challenges.

In terms of social morality, Indonesian public has faced several social disasters such as religious conflicts in Maluku, ethnic conflicts in Middle Kalimantan, and terrorists' bombings in Bali and Jakarta. Some people argued that such tragedies should be the top priority to be addressed by remembrance of multicultural Indonesia where inter-religious and social communication should be built. Given these prolonged conflictual incidents, the Civic Education project of LP3M asserted that it was time to explore religious, primarily Islamic, notions and values in strengthening Citizenship education. By tracing back the history of Indonesia, for example, the role of religious communities to fabricate nationalism was unavoidable. Forum debates of the establisment of the State ideology in 1945 for instance, were even situated with the dominancy of religiosity. Unsurprisingly, the State constitution has declared that Indonesia's independence has also happened 'in the name of God (Allah) ...' (see

Preamble of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia) even if this country may not be the Islamic State by definition.

The project, moreover, tried to create a scientific and practical link between Citizenship and Religious (Islamic) values. By using to the work of Hoodbhoy (1991), the project seems not to be in line with the 'restorationists' who totally reject the universal idea of democracy as well as the 'reconstructionists' who sometimes tends to be ultra-rationalists and undermines religious fundamentals. Put simply, it was created to be a bridge of building harmony of 'more democratic and Islamic ideas' at the same time. Firstly, while this project tried to facilitate students to be able to communicate their ideas and practices of creating a Islamic society, they were also led to be aware of their responsibility to manage and sustain multi-religious and cultural society where they live. Secondly, while they learnt the need for global awareness economically or politically, they were directed to criticize any ideology which is predictably to be able to erode humanity and religious beliefs. It seems that the former focus of the project can be categorised as an effort of anticipating the possible emergence of fundamentalism while the latter could be that of enhancing global Citizenship literacy and awareness. As long as I am concerned, the project, one of which has been created in the form of producing a textbook, has provided fundamental aspects of Islam (ushuliyyah (Arabic)) to be able to be rationally discussed. It might be argued that the anxiety of Armstrong (2004) and Ruthven (2004) about religious fundamentals which can lead people to be fundamentalists, in the case from the project, would possibly be anticipated by applying much more various and appropriate learning approaches and contents .

Another project where I took part was writing on the integration of human right teaching into the supplementary book of Al-Islam which was dedicated to Muhammadiyah secondary schools. The project was managed by the Maarif Institute situated in Jakarta, Indonesia. Basically, the book was intended to be a suplementary one for the official textbook published by the Basic and Middle Education Council of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah. Based on the Maarif Institute's review, the official textbook has provided more doctrinal and less illustrative teaching. Many pages of this textbook tended to explain the material monotaneously and less contextually. Because of this evaluation, the team of writers included and used the work of Asy-Syatibi, a leading Islamic scholar in Jurispudence, on maqashidu as-syari'ah (aims of the Islamic law) as the fundamental analysis of the textbook. Referring to his notion, the primary needs for life, religion, reason, property, generation and—additionally--environment protection have been elaborated and illustrated including relevant pictures and caricatures (see Nurwanto, et. al., 2008).

There was by means a positive response saying that the complementary book could enrich the official one. However, there were also reaction and criticism to the book by sounding that it was a controversial one because the human right discourse considered as 'Westernized', tended to be dominant rather than Islamic notions. Some of critics also said that why the so-called 'Islamic book' was strongly influenced by the Western thought on human rights. It seems that there was different paradigm between them (critics) and us (writers). They may be generally 'restorationists' believing that the accepted ideas and values must be from 'Muslim communities' whilst, according to the critics, the writers may be seen as 'the liberalists' standing above any religion, not Islam especially. If they paid more attention to details of the book, however, they may find out the supplementary book has offered the fundamental aspects of Islam which can be explored from the Holy Quran and Hadis, Islamic scholars as well as other references such as Western scholars and documents as long as they (the latter) are compatible with universal Islamic notions. Therefore, I would say that the book may have been produced by the 'reconstructionists' or 'the moderate[2] reconstructionists' rather than the 'restorationists' (see Hoodboy, 1991).

CONCLUSION

Citizenship education in Indonesia has developed ranging from the despotic New Order regime to the other emphasizing social and political reform. The change of political elites from 'the authoritarians' to 'democrats', may have uncovered a new discourse of more democratic Citizenship education. This kind of discourse also attracts many Islamic scholars to try to build on a bridge between such social issues as democracy as well as human rights and Islamic notions and values. Theologically speaking, Islam as religion has actually offered doctrines or fundamentals of humans' life such as respectfulness, togetherness, peace and cooperation—to mention some—even though, of course, also taught its adherents to preserve and strengthen their beliefs individually. These doctrines are parts of religious fundamentals which potentially lead religious followers to be committed to social harmony but, on the other hand, if not appropriate in taking comprehensive ideas of Islam and being influenced to impose their belief to others, Muslims—as other religious adherents—are able to be trapped in being fundamentalists who could perpetrate violence and other imposition. By looing at the possible immersion of Islamic values into Citizenship education or vice versa, I argue that the future of either multicultural Indonesia or global world can be shaped altogether by religious (Islamic) values and

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[2]The adjective 'moderate'—the writer's addition—referring to those who are neither in the restorationists nor in the reconstructionists totally, but are in between.

global ethics with any reflection and criticism. Based on my experience, I also found that transmitting tolerant, peaceful and cooperative values really has had a spacious arena mainly through the educational sector. Given this evidence, it can be concluded that Islamic fundamentals seems not to be the threat for the national and global peace and togetherness as far as more spiritual and rational discourses and practicalities are given places to flourish.

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