Ideology: Factors of Middle East Conflict and Failure

Khaled Ibrahim
Centre of Middle East Welfare, Oman
Email: khaled_ibrahim98@gmail.com

Abstract

The following article explains how Western ideology is a major factor in the occurrence of conflicts and state failures in the Middle East. In this paper, the author looks at the perspective of ideological hegemony. Ideology destroys the political and economic system which causes social inequality, thus accelerating the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East. The author raises Syria and Libya as examples to prove the factors driving the conflict. The author argues that the main cause of the Middle East conflict is the influence of Western ideology that has not been accepted by both the holders of power and society, which has led to divisions and even wars. Democracy is a model that is accepted in many countries which cannot be applied in the Middle East. The author also criticizes the failure to implement democracy and liberal economics in the Middle East.

Keywords: Ideology, Modernism, Imperialism, Capitalism, Democracy, Middle East.

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A.   INTRODUCTION

In the midst of various advances globally, conflicts and wars are endlessly on the agenda in various corners of the world, especially in the Middle East which has been a land of dispute for various civilizations for the centuries. The Middle East, which has inherited various ethnic groups, religions and cultures, is often like a mixture of dough that is never finished to be cooked. Coupled with the political order in each region that resembles the Pharaoh in the past. Power tempts every ruler for the luxury obtained from petroleum resources. So that it makes the Middle East which is rich in petroleum resources a place bloodshed since human civilization was born. As a matter of fact the Middle East is now constructed with conflict, Islamic fanaticism and even terrorism. On the other hand, the Middle East is also glorified as the birthplace of various civilizations with a wealth of cultural culture, natural resources, to a center of luxury and a charming all-expensive life.

The Middle East, which has been a conflict area for centuries, is very difficult to return to being a "Middle East" that is dreamed of by the world community. Differences in ethnicity, religion and socio-economic disparities have made this region an area prone to conflicts between religions and ethnicities to power struggles between certain ethnic groups. Not to mention the added element of natural wealth such as petroleum which is a major factor in the division of the country. The ideology that was left by the west during the French and British mandates in this region only reached the point of establishing an autocratic state, which was largely controlled by a small part of the inherited family of colonialism. So that western ideology, especially "democracy" becomes the main weapon in overthrowing the regime that the global capitalist system does not want.

Basically, ideological disputes only occur between the ideologies of capitalism and regimes that do not support global capitalism. Like the socialist regime and communism. The Middle East continues to experience conflict as long as the hegemon ideology becomes a reference in state politics. Where western ideologies become political motivations wrapped in elements of democracy, Islam, and even ethnic nationalism. Various political elements are used as sentiment to build a nation's identity in the state. These elements are actually dividers that cause wars with different ethnic groups and religions. The author argues that the Middle East will never be stable because western ideologies such as the democratic regimes that have developed in this region do not match the background of the people. Both in terms of religious, cultural and cultural values to the political system. The conflicts that occur in the Middle East are the responsibility of the international community and must provide concrete solutions. Because it is time for the people of the Middle East to accept their prosperity and future.

The author sees the conflict phenomenon that occurs in the Middle East from the perspective of Gramsci's critical theory. The developed ideology is a thought that dominates power and only represents the interests of some groups. So that ideologies such as democracy, liberalism and capitalism are ideas that only provide economic interests to certain groups. For example, the ideology of "democracy" used by the western capitalist ruling group to overthrow the Libyan government Kaddafi for the sake of winning the capitalist ideology and also the interests of natural resources. Therefore all aspects of life are formed based on the interests of some groups. This makes the hegemonic ideological culture dominate certain groups.

B.   METHODE

Research was conducted using qualitative methods. With this qualitative method, researchers attempt to reveal the universal essence of phenomena personally experienced by a group of individuals in depth. Data was collected through several techniques, including observation techniques, focus group discussions, and documentation studies. Data analysis was carried out through three analysis processes, namely coding, merging codes that emerged into themes, verification of themes through theory and follow-up interviews, and drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2010).

C.   RESULT AND DISCUSSION
1. Modernization of the West and the Middle East

Modernism is a phenomenon that has developed in Europe until the birth of the Renaissance enlightenment). This phenomenon
is a thought revolution that encourages people to think freely and modernly. So that it gave birth to the bourgeoisie / aristocratic class which had the idea of establishing a modern-state which was very different from the previous monarchical power system. The development of civilization in Europe gave birth to mercantilism and capitalism, which pushed the European bourgeoisie to become a colossal colonialist

in fulfilling needs and taking bigger capital until the outbreak of World War I and II.

The increasing variety of needs caused by the British Industrial Revolution encouraged sea explorers to get raw materials to all corners of the world. The need for raw materials and industrial developments that occurred during several centuries in Europe, both economically and ideologically, have changed the European nation in thinking, both in lifestyle and politics that gave birth to nationalism and liberal democratic practices. But have all these same things happened in the "Middle East"?

The region, which is often known as the Middle East, has never experienced an enlightenment like what happened in Europe or the industrial revolution that occurred in England. The area that was under the rule of the Ottoman Turks until World War I is only a place where ancient civilizations were born and took place. However, after the last heir of Muawiyah was wiped out by the Ottoman Empire, making this area a stopover for Lavantine merchants from Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan (Shea, 2003). After the Ottoman Turks lost power in the region in the 19th century, this area became a new ground for European colonialism. Britain and France absolutely after World War I made this region a territory. Then after the end of World War II it was inherited by the family of ex-colonialism to become the ruler in this region.

From a historical perspective the Middle East is very different when compared to Europe. Europe which has progressed both in its economic and political systems, this region is only a part that is under the rule of the Empire and colonialism. Therefore this region was never the center of progress, but the Middle East has only become a "peripheral" part. The Middle East developed traditionally with its own cultural and ideological wealth. The birthplace of various religions and ultur which are rooted in religious values. So that the developments taking place in the Middle East are very opposite to what is developing in Europe. The ideology that developed in Europe was different from what developed in the Middle East. The Middle East is filled with various tribes and races and cultures that are very thick, making this region like oil and water that can never be combined. So that western ideology, especially the democratic regime, becomes a threat to autocratic power (the power of a family) that is passed down from generation to generation.

2. Ideologization of the Term "Middle East"

"Middle East" is the term for the East from West (Europe) for the western colonial since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. The Middle East has never been a terminology that describes its exact geographic location. Because the Middle East is not a region that can be physically marked. The mention of the Middle East is the designation of a western country that positions geographically as the center of the world. After World War I "Middle East" was the term European colonialism to the Eastern Empire of the Ottoman Turks. In various literature on Middle East studies, the word "Oriental" is often found or studies that

study the Middle East region. This region includes the Sahara Africa, Egypt, the Indian border to the Bosphorus Bay of Istanbul. In literature, Middle Eastern usage was first used by the American geopolitist Alfred Thayer Mahan in 1902 (Koppes, 1976). The mention of the Middle East is a foreign term given by the west. Ideologically the Middle East is a region that was formed based on western views and interests in carrying out colonialism in the 19th century until now (Gerald & Alasdair, 1985).

3. Heterogeneous Ethnic Composition and Strong Religious Ideology

The Middle East is home to dozens of ethnicities and religious ethnicities. Arabs are the majority ethnic group in the Middle East (Ethnic groups in the Middle East, 2018). Apart from that, there are also Iranian, Turkmen, Urdu, Kurdish, Jewish, Azeri, Pasytun and Berber ethnic groups (Shoup, 2011). So that the composition of the population in each country in the Middle East is very diverse. Egypt is the country with the most Sunni Arab population in the Middle East and Bahrain is the country with the lowest population in the region (Demographics of Egypt, 2018).

The Middle East is also the cradle of the ancestors of various religions. This geography is prioritized by the Muslim population. However, the Middle East also has Christians, and Judaism, Yedisims, Zerdus, Nusairi, Namiri, and even Ensari (Religion in the Middle East, 2018).

The majority of the population of the Middle East is of Arab ethnicity, Arab tribes are also religiously divided into two groups, namely Sunnis and Shiites. Therefore, religious values are also one of the triggers for inter-tribal conflicts that have not been resolved for generations. This heterogeneous population composition is one of the factors of conflict between ethnic groups in competing for political power. Differences in religious values are also a factor of conflict in power competition. So that the value of western democracy which is rooted in secularism, freedom is very difficult to realize, let alone carry a liberal democracy that threatens autocratic power or family power. For example, the Esad family in Syria, who are adherents of the Nusairi minority religion. Leading a population that is 90% predominantly Sunni (Akdemir, 2000). This has resulted in an autocratic government and triggered conflicts between ethnic groups and religions. It is not surprising that most of the Syrian people reject their own leaders because they consider the oppression of the Nusairi family against the Sunni population for decades.

Another example of divisions caused by ethnic and religious differences in Iraq, where political parties symbolize religious values and represent certain ethnicities. Political parties in Iraq are filled only with Sunnis or Shiites. So that it gave birth to a political party composed only of Turkmen, Arab or Kurdish tribes. So it can be concluded that the very heterogeneous and varied composition of the population provides an opportunity for each religious or ethnic group in the Middle East to have a unique view and to have a different approach to western ideology.

4. Autocratic Governance and Monarchy

The Middle East, which is a legacy of colonialism, has a very unique political system. After the mandated rule of England, France and Russia ended in the region in the 19th century, the parts of the state in the region were inherited by families with close ties to the mandated state. This will make it easier for the mandate country to establish diplomatic relations in the future for various interests. However, the granting of power to certain families in the region has led to the development of an autocratic state under the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (Arab Baas Socialist Party). The government is only held by a small number of family members or those affiliated with the Ba'ath Party (Atay, 2000).

The ethnic and family systems that exist in the Middle East cause political power to be controlled by certain families. So that the political order in the Middle East tends to be monarchic and controlled by one family from generation to generation. Such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Yemen. Not only that, there are also republican and military-based political systems such as Egypt and Iraq. However, they still continue the inherited power that only prioritizes the interests of certain groups and also maintains the power that is obtained. So that even though there is a democratic system, in practice there are only military-based and radical regimes controlled by certain families (Lenczowski, 1988).

With the desire and desire to rule, almost every ethnic group in the Middle East finds it difficult to accept democracy. The value of democracy itself is even rejected by the ruling authorities and even this region rejects the presence of democracy (Ottaway & Carithers, 2004). Because power is interpreted as belonging to a blue-blooded family. Therefore, the ideology of power that exists in the Middle East is completely opposite to the western ideology. So that western ideologies such as modernism, nationalism, and even democracy are unlikely to develop in the Middle East. Therefore, the democratization of the Middle East is only an agenda for western countries that trigger conflicts over power struggles.

5. The Failure of Liberal Economy and Realism

Of the total 17 countries (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Oman, Qatar, Cyprus, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Jordan) in the Middle East region, no all countries are oil producers. There are also countries that do not have oil or gas natural resources. Like Israel, which depends on the export technology it has developed. Another example is Jordan, which continues to try to become a trade center in order to survive in the global economy. In general, countries in the Middle East depend on one source of income, namely oil. Dependence on a single commodity such as petroleum causes an unstable economy due to regulations created by the global commodity market. Therefore, when the main income decreases it creates serious

economic problems. As happened in Egypt which resulted in massive mass unemployment.

Understanding the need to have a strong military force to maintain the regime has led governments in the Middle East to spend massive budgets on defense. Most of the state revenue is used for the purchase of weapons. Because the rulers in the Middle East are more concerned with regime security and power than the people's welfare. Therefore, investments made for other sectors are very important a little. Such as the absence of food empowerment, lack of clean water infrastructure, and minimal investment in other major infrastructure. Thus making the Middle East a market for food exports. The government's misunderstanding of the importance of military power in maintaining balance in the Middle East, has drained all state revenue for expenditure which ultimately poses a threat to the Middle East region. Such as what was done by Saudi Arabia with arms spending of up to 70 billion dollars in 2017 (World Military Spending 2017). This brings concern to the region, especially those with a Shiite population. Therefore, realism has closed the eyes of the rulers in the Middle East with an interest in what actually does not provide welfare for their people, and even benefits western countries in terms of state expenditure. The author himself sees this as a western ideological hoax committed against the Middle East for the benefit of the arms industry regardless of the real problem facing the Middle East. Where the Middle East is a market for the Western defense equipment industry. This is the atrocity of global capitalism which only focuses on profit by instilling the wrong perception of the state towards political rulers in the Middle East.

There is very little investment in the sectors that are driving economies in Middle Eastern countries. Such as the lack of investment in the food sector, canalization, infrastructure, industry and even education. This raises a new problem that is very influential globally. The main problem is uncontrolled urbanization caused by increasing population. Coupled with inadequate infrastructure such as canalization, the city is neglected and dirty. Like what happened in Cairo, Karachi and even Baghdad which was once the center of civilization in his day. The lack of government investment in the infrastructure and industrial sectors has resulted in high unemployment. This phenomenon makes it difficult for Middle Eastern people to find jobs. The number of unemployed causes the problem of poverty which triggers various other social problems. From World Bank data, people in the Middle East show an average income figure of 2 $ per day (The World Bank, 2017). So that the economic turnover weakens due to lack of purchasing power because the population is dominated by the middle to lower class. With various problems that arise, this region is very dynamic both politically and economically. Thus making the Middle East an area prone to conflict.

6. Arab Nationalism

In Europe, nationalism is an element causing the outbreak of the French Revolution. In the Middle East, nationalism is an imaginative ideology that actually

did not come from the Arabs. Arab nationalism was first pioneered by two thinkers. Namely Butrus al-Bustani, a Lebanese figure who is a Catholic Christian and Nasif El-yazici from Greek Catholicism (Abu-Manneh, 1980). Al-Bustani is a pioneer in establishing the identity of the Syrian nation with a heterogeneous population with various religious and ethnic backgrounds (Abu-Manneh, 1980).

In the 19th century. Many Christian and Catholic missionary schools in the Middle East such as the American College in Beirut, the Robert College in Istanbul sparked the spread of western ideology. This missionary school teaches various western ideologies such as; republic, nationalism, democracy. This has encouraged political practice for Arab Christian tribes at that time. Basically, this nationalism appeared to oppose the Ottoman Turks who ruled this region during the 19th century. So that Arab nationalism was raised to fight against the rule of the Ottoman Turks which was Islamic in style. Therefore Arab nationalism is a western ideology pioneered by non-Muslim figures to gain power from the collapse of the Ottoman Turks.

Until now there has been no solid Arab nationalism, because the Arab community itself is experiencing conflicts, especially between Sunnis and Shia. Therefore Arab nationalism is not a setimen built for Arab nationalism but religious fanaticism which is an element that unites and divides the ethnic groups that exist in this region. It can be concluded that the ideology of nationalism in the Middle East is a product of western thought which was introduced through European missionary schools. Arab society itself does not accept the nation-state model of nationalism as a state identity. So it is difficult for the Arab community to unite, not to mention the different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

7. "Arab Spring": Clash of Western Ideologies and Middle Eastern Intervention

Many argue that the "Arab spring / awakening" is the beginning of the Middle East region experiencing enlightenment. Arab communities have taken to the streets in droves to fight for democracy, human rights and a decent life from their governments. In various media and even books, many writings have argued that the Arab Spring is a dynamic generated by Arab societies who are aware of their rights as citizens. The turmoil of the Arab spring was also accelerated by the presence of social media. If it is related to the previous author's arguments, all this happens because of the failure of the political system and the economic system that the previous author has discussed. Namely social problems such as urbanization, increase population, unemployment and poverty have sparked demonstrations starting from Tunisia to Yemen. The failure of western ideological values in both the economic system and the government regime has resulted in various divisions that could be a threat to global peace.

Western ideologies in the form of nation-state, nationalism, and economic liberalization have become the main ingredients for rulers in the Middle East in

building autocratic governments. So the Arab Spring is a picture of the failure of the regime and the economic system.

For example, the conflict in Libya was an interesting progression when the overthrow of Muammar Kaddafi, who is also known as the "NATO revolution" in 2011 ago. The strife in Libya is basically a dispute between tribes. Namely the clashes between tribes / tribes in Bengazi and Trablusgarp over the natural resources of Libya. However, this dispute invited the French exolonial state to participate in enforcing the "democracy" desired by the "Libyan people". The entry of France into the conflict that occurred in Libya also invited NATO to take part in fighting Kaddafi who was considered a dictator. Economically, France also has an interest in Libya. Where one of the largest oil fields in Libya is managed by a company from France, namely Total (Total, 2018). So that in the end the Kaddafi government was overthrown with foreign intervention through the hands of the Libyan people themselves.

This is one end of the "Arab Awekening" that western media in general is proud of. According to the author, what happened in Libya was a clash of western and eastern ideologies. Kaddafi, which upholds socialist values and controls a large source of oil energy in the world, does not provide opportunities for pro-westerners. The West is very unhappy when the source of the capitalist economy is in the hands of the socialist dictatorial regime. The West uses the values of democratic ideology to destroy Kaddafi by using its own people. So what happened in Libya is not a natural thing but a global ideology to fight against Kaddafi. The media as the spearhead in the mission to overthrow the Libyan Kaddafi regime, with all their efforts to explain to the world community that the Libyan regime is anti-democracy. So that NATO intervention against Libya militarily begins with a dispute over western ideology, namely democracy that has not succeeded in overthrowing the Kaddafi government.

Has Libya improved after Kaddafi? Is it true that the Libyan people strive for "democracy"? What do the west and its coalition want? These are all questions that must be digested again. Where the Libya after the Kaddafi regime became divided between Benggazi and Trablusgarp due to the competition for power between the two tribes. Libya's ethnic divisions are not fighting for democratic values, but fighting over natural oil resources. Western countries such as Britain, France and the US are unlikely to intervene in Libya if they do not have interests both ideologically and economically. The oil energy source in Libya is operated and the proceeds are bought by British and French companies since the Kaddafi regime. These companies such as Shell Group, British Perol and Total. Western intervention against Libya can be translated as safeguarding western assets in Libya. This is a factor in the liberal economic system which is cruel to the point of having to divide Libya for the benefit of the global capitalist system. To legitimize what happened in Libya, the western media presented as if the welfare of the Libyan people would exist if democracy could be implemented in Libya. However, this is a hegemonic state ideology that has good ideological hegemony in international politics. So that ideology destroys

the concept of a state in Middle Eastern society. Divisions and conflicts can not be avoided on the pretext of "democracy" and the future of the Libyan people.

D.   CONCLUSION

Various events that have occurred in the Middle East such as in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Egypt and even Afghanistan are very far from the struggle for democracy for the welfare of its people. The ideological understanding has triggered the Middle East's dissent in politics. Thus encouraging in conflict and civil war. Differences in religion, political regimes and also ethnicity are the main causes of Middle Eastern societies being in conflict. Western ideology such as democracy is an ideology that is very contrary to the values and culture of the regime in the Middle East. Where the people of the Middle East tend to be more comfortable with autocratic regimes or even dictators in western expressions. Ideologies such as democracy, liberalism and human rights are not the way out for conflict resolution in the Middle East, which are incompatible and contrary to cultural values and political culture.

However, democracy is a political regime which is often applied in various countries. However, democratic regimes are difficult to implement in countries in the Middle East. The Middle East is a very dynamic region with a heterogeneous population composition of various ethnicities, religions and cultures. The author concludes that democracy in the Middle East is only an ideology used by some pro-western groups for public legitimacy in gaining power. This has been proven by what has happened in Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iraq and even Afghanistan. So that the democratic regime is not a solution to the conflicts that have emerged in the Middle East until now. In this case, the authors recommend that it is better if the foreign party system does not intervene in the existing political regimes in the Middle East. Because the people of the Middle East have their own political culture that is far from discussing democracy, the ultimate goal is the welfare of the people. Therefore, letting the Middle East grow independently without foreign intervention, both ideologically and militarily, is the best solution. This has been proven by the success of the existing political regimes in Gulf countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates which are far from being democratic. Even the Middle East has been the center of former magnificent civilizations such as ancient Babylon to the Persian empire and lasted through the centuries.

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