

Theology As Revolutionary: Harun Nasution's Paradigm On The Challenges Of Globalization

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Abstract:

Globalization presents various multidimensional challenges for Muslims, ranging from cultural domination and social inequality to the marginalization of religious values in the public sphere. These conditions call for the formulation of a theology that is not only normative and dogmatic, but also capable of giving rise to critical awareness and transformative praxis. This article aims to analyse the paradigm of theology as revolutionary consciousness in Hasan Hanafi's thinking and its relevance in responding to the challenges of globalization. This study uses qualitative methods with a literature review approach and conceptual analysis of Harun Nasution's major works. The results of the study show that theology in Harun Nasution's perspective does not stop at the dimension of individual faith, but functions as an ideological consciousness that arouses resistance to structural injustice, Western hegemony, and the alienation of modern humans. Theology is positioned as a liberating force that sides with social reality and the needs of the people. In the context of globalization, this paradigm offers a contextual, critical, and emancipatory theological framework, enabling Islamic theology to play an active role in building social awareness and transforming civilization.

Keywords: *Harun Nasution, globalization, Islamic thought.*

Abstrak:

Globalisasi menghadirkan berbagai tantangan multidimensional bagi umat Muslim, mulai dari dominasi budaya dan ketidaksetaraan sosial hingga marginalisasi nilai-nilai keagamaan di ranah publik. Kondisi ini menuntut perumusan teologi yang tidak hanya normatif dan dogmatis, tetapi juga mampu menumbuhkan kesadaran kritis dan praksis transformatif. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis paradigma teologi sebagai kesadaran revolusioner dalam pemikiran Hasan Hanafi dan relevansinya dalam merespons tantangan globalisasi. Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan tinjauan pustaka dan analisis konseptual terhadap karya-karya utama Harun Nasution. Hasil studi menunjukkan bahwa teologi dalam perspektif Harun Nasution tidak berhenti pada dimensi iman individual, tetapi berfungsi sebagai kesadaran ideologis yang membangkitkan perlawanan terhadap ketidakadilan struktural,

hegemoni Barat, dan keterasingan manusia modern. Teologi ditempatkan sebagai kekuatan pembebasan yang berpihak pada realitas sosial dan kebutuhan rakyat. Dalam konteks globalisasi, paradigma ini menawarkan kerangka teologis yang kontekstual, kritis, dan emansipatif, memungkinkan teologi Islam berperan aktif dalam membangun kesadaran sosial dan mentransformasi peradaban.

Kata Kunci: *Harun Nasution, globalisasi, pemikiran Islam.*

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has a significant impact on religious identity in various Muslim communities. One study found that globalization has created challenges for Muslims in maintaining their religious identity amidst the tide of modernization, which often conflicts with traditional Islamic values. The processes of modernization and secularization that accompany globalization, particularly through mass media and digital technology, have influenced how Muslims view their identity. In some countries, this is evident in changes in lifestyle, dress, and even religious practices. (Sakup, Nikendro, and Ridwan, 2025)

This view actually contradicts Islamic teachings. From its inception, Islam has recognized the importance of reason and encouraged its followers to think critically, consciously, and rationally. (Sakup, Nikendro, and Ridwan, 2025) . Harun Nasution argues that Islamic teachings encompass many aspects, not just ritual worship; they also encompass history, civilization, theology, law, politics, and philosophy. He emphasizes that interpretation of the Quran is conducted within the context of a specific era, so our understanding of Islamic teachings must always be adapted to current developments. (Suwito, 2019) In addressing this issue, Harun Nasution's ideas are highly relevant. Based on his thoughts on Islamic rationalism, freedom of thought, *ijtihad*, and the integration of reason and revelation, Islam provides a conceptual foundation for strengthening contemporary Islam, one that remains rooted in Islamic values. (Wasim, 2020)

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative study with a library research approach aimed at examining *Theology As Revolutionary: Harun Nasution's Paradigm on the Challenges of Globalization*. The research data is sourced from Harun Nasution's primary works, as well as secondary sources such as books and scientific journal articles that discuss Harun Nasution's thoughts and issues concerning the renewal of Islamic thought. Data analysis is conducted using a conceptual-philosophical approach and descriptive-analytical method, which involves systematically presenting Harun Nasution's concept of Theology and then examining its meaning and implications in the context of modern Muslim community problems, such as identity crises, value secularization, and the weakening of spiritual awareness and social responsibility among Muslims. ...

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Harun Nasution's Principles of Thought

1. Islamic Rationalism

In his writing, Harun explains that the term renewal is a translation of the word "modernization," or in Arabic called *at-tajdīd* , which means a movement to

adapt Islamic religious beliefs to new developments brought about by the advancement of modern science and technology. (Akbar, 2025) Based on this thinking, Islamic leaders are expected to be able to lead Muslims out of a state of decline towards a direction of progress that is in harmony with the spirit of rationality and modern science. (Pohan, Ruwanda and Syahpitri, 2025) He believed that the Prophet Muhammad and his companions were openly rationalists who used reason to respond to revelation and resolve social problems. (Nasution, 1919) Harun stated that there is no conflict between reason and revelation if each is understood correctly. On the contrary, they actually reinforce each other. Reason is needed to grasp the meaning and wisdom behind religious commands and prohibitions, and it is essential for decision-making when facing modern problems not explicitly addressed in the text. (Wasim, 2020)

2. Rational Theology

Harun Nasution defines rational theology as a system of religious thought that places reason as the primary tool in understanding Islamic teachings without denying the role of revelation. (Muhammad Arifin, 2021) According to him, Islam is truly a rational religion because many verses of the Quran encourage humans to think, reflect, and use their reason to understand the signs of God's power in the universe. Therefore, true theology must be dynamic and open to reason. (Dr. Karwadi, 2019) Rational Theology was born as a form of criticism of Asy'Ariyyah theology which was considered too passive and fatalistic in understanding human destiny and role. Through this theology, efforts emerged to revive the spirit of rationalism of the Mu'tazilah which emphasized human freedom in determining their actions. (Akbar, 2025)

In Harun's view, the tendency of Muslims to accept teachings dogmatically without critical thinking has led to a decline in Islamic intellectual development (Suyanta and Ulfah, 2023). Harun's fundamental idea is to make religious education not only teach the procedures of worship, but also shape and educate students to become moral and ethical individuals. Educational progress depends on the ability to think rationally, critically, and scientifically. If education is dogmatic, it will be difficult for reason to develop. (Adira, 2023)

3. Modernization of Islamic Thought

From the beginning, Islam has highly valued knowledge, and this understanding was emphasized by Harun Nasution. Therefore, Muslims themselves must be open to developments in science, technology, and knowledge. According to Harun, being modern does not mean becoming Western; modernization is the process of refreshing Islamic values to remain relevant to the challenges of changing times. (Asngari *et al.*, 2022) Similarly, regarding the reinterpretation of religious texts, Harun encourages them to remain relevant to the contemporary context, as he believes many Islamic teachings do not require reinterpretation, and the goal is to avoid becoming trapped in rigid, literalist understandings that are irrelevant to modern realities. (Pohan, Ruwanda, and Syahpitri, 2025)

4. Integration of Reason and Revelation

Harun Nasution's thinking on the integration of reason and revelation is one of his many important contributions to the development of modern Islamic education. He rejected the rigid dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge. He argued that the two should be viewed as a complementary whole,

not as contradictory. (Khomaidi, 2005) From an Islamic educational perspective, this suggests the need for a balance between spirituality and morality derived from revelation, with rationality and an objective scientific approach. For Harun, an ideal Islamic education is one that integrates several key aspects: spirituality as the foundation of faith and morality, rationality as the foundation of critical thinking, and science as an empirical method for understanding nature and life. (Debi Areska, 2025) This integration allows Muslims to adhere to Islamic values while simultaneously adapting constructively to advances in science and technology. (Khomaidi, 2005)

5. Freedom of thought and Ijtihad

One of Harun Nasution's key ideas was his rejection of blind *taqlid*, the attitude of accepting the opinions of scholars without rational consideration. He believed that the decline of Islamic thought was largely due to the loss of the spirit of *ijtihad*, or the effort to think independently in understanding religious teachings. According to Harun, Islam actually allows ample room for the use of reason and freedom of thought, as long as it remains in line with the values of revelation. (Akbar, 2025)

For Harun Nasution, *ijtihad* is the key to the progress and renewal of Islamic civilization. Through *ijtihad*, the Muslim community can face modern challenges rationally and openly. However, the freedom of thought in question is not unlimited. Harun emphasized that critical thinking must be accompanied by moral responsibility, scientific knowledge, and respect for tradition. Thus, Harun Nasution's ideas teach that the progress of the Muslim community can only be achieved if reason and revelation are in balance, and *ijtihad* is revived as the foundation for the intellectual awakening of the Muslim community. (Karwadi, 2022)

The Relevance of Harun Nasution's Thoughts in the Global Era

1. Islamic Education Sector

In contemporary studies, his thinking encourages an inclusive and dialogical Islamic education curriculum, strengthening moral and spiritual character, and placing reason as the basis for understanding religious teachings so that they are relevant to the needs of modern society. (Ridho and Maragustam, 2025) This model implies the role of educators who not only transfer knowledge but also become role models in morals and reasoning so that students are able to face global changes critically and ethically. (Wahidah, Rusydi and Salik, 2022) This shows the importance of renewing and developing a progressive, integrative, and competitive Islamic education system, especially by emphasizing the harmonious relationship between spiritual and intellectual values and dialogue between religion and science. (Surawardi *et al.*, 2025)

The relevance of Harun Nasution's thinking in the field of Islamic education can also be seen in the epistemological and learning methodology reforms he initiated. Nasution positioned Islamic education as a space for intellectual *ijtihad* that demands academic courage to interpret Islamic teachings historically and contextually without losing their normative values. (Tanjung, Syafe'i, and Akmansyah, 2021) This reform strengthens the position of Islamic education as a center for the development of knowledge, morality, and civilization, capable of engaging in productive dialogue with modern science and global discourse without

losing its Islamic identity. (Asnawi and Hasan, 2025) Thus, Harun Nasution's thinking is not only conceptually relevant but also strategic in establishing a new direction for Islamic education that is rational, open, and globally competitive.

2. Political Field

Harun Nasution's political thinking stems from his belief that Islam has a strong rational dimension and can contribute constructively to modern political life. He rejected theocratic-dogmatic understanding of Islamic politics, as it potentially stifles the space for *ijtihad* and rational dialogue in state governance. In the context of the modern state, Nasution viewed politics as being ethically and rationally managed, not merely symbolic-religious. This view is relevant in the global era because it encourages Muslims to actively participate in the political system without imposing religious formalization. (Hasibuan, Munadia, and Basri, 2023)

In the context of democracy, Harun Nasution's thinking provides theological legitimacy to the principles of deliberation, freedom of thought, and popular political participation. (Bilmakruf, 2023) He views democracy as not contradictory to Islam as long as it is implemented within a framework of ethics and moral responsibility. This approach positions Muslims as active subjects in the democratic system, not merely objects of political policy. In the era of information globalization, this perspective is increasingly important because religion is often used as a tool for mass mobilization. Rationality serves as a control mechanism to ensure that religion remains a source of values, not a tool of conflict. Thus, Nasution contributed to building an Islamic political culture that is aware of ethics and public responsibility. (Arifin, 2021)

Harun Nasution's political thought can be read as a critique of classical Islamic politics, which is not always compatible with the realities of the modern nation-state. He asserts that Islam does not provide a single, standard political model that must be applied throughout time. What remains constant are its values. This view opens up space for the adaptation of Islamic politics in a constantly changing global context. A modern state with a legal system and constitution can be imbued with Islamic values without having to change its ideological form. (Hasibuan, Munadia, and Basri, 2023) This relevance makes Nasution's thinking crucial in contemporary Islamic political discourse.

Harun Nasution's thinking contributed to the formulation of political leadership ethics based on rationality and moral integrity. He emphasized that Muslim leaders must possess intellectual capacity, an open attitude, and a commitment to social justice. Leadership requires not only symbolic piety but also analytical skills and rational decision-making. This idea is relevant amidst the crisis of public trust in political elites. (Bilmakruf, 2023) By using reason and revelation as foundations, Nasution's thinking offers a model of moderate and responsible leadership.

Harun Nasution made significant contributions to strengthening civil society from an Islamic political perspective. He believed that a rational and theologically educated society would be able to ethically control political power. Islam, according to Nasution, speaks not only of the state and rulers but also of the moral responsibility of citizens. This idea aligns with the concept of civil society, which emphasizes participation, legal awareness, and freedom of thought. In the modern political context, this thinking is relevant for building a culture of constructive

criticism without necessarily conflicting with religious values. Therefore, Nasution can be positioned as an early thinker of civil society-based Islamic politics. (Sahrawi, 2022)

3. Religious Field

Harun Nasution played a significant role in the renewal of Islamic theology by shifting the orientation of theology from metaphysical debates to real-world issues. He criticized classical theology for its static nature and lack of social awareness. He argued that theology should serve as a moral guide in addressing injustice, poverty, and social conflict. Thus, theology not only strengthens faith but also encourages just social transformation. (Rahmadana and Suryanta, 2026) Harun Nasution's thinking is also relevant in building the intellectual religious awareness of Muslims through a rejection of blind imitation.

Harun Nasution's thinking is also relevant in the context of purging religious practices of the superstitious and fatalistic elements prevalent in some Muslim communities. This perspective is relevant for developing a religious and productive Muslim community. (Nasution, 2020) Furthermore, Harun Nasution made a significant contribution to strengthening intra-religious dialogue within Islam. He rejected claims of a single truth in the interpretation of religious teachings and asserted that differences of opinion were inevitable in Islamic history. By reviving the rational tradition of the Mu'tazilah, Nasution opened a space for dialogue between classical and modern thought. This approach encouraged mutual respect between Islamic schools of thought and prevented internal conflict within the Muslim community. (Fauziah and Muniron, 2025)

CONCLUSION

Harun Nasution's rational theological thinking can be understood as a form of revolutionary awareness in response to the challenges of globalization. By emphasizing rationalism, the integration of reason and revelation, freedom of thought, and the revival of *ijtihad*, Harun Nasution positions theology not merely as a normative metaphysical discourse, but as a dynamic framework of thought that encourages the active involvement of Muslims in facing global social, political, and intellectual change.

The relevance of Harun Nasution's thought is evident in various fields. In Islamic education, his ideas fostered an integrative, critical, and dialogical education system by harmonizing spiritual values, rationality, and science. In politics, his thought provided a theological foundation for rational, ethical, and participatory political practice, while strengthening the role of civil society in morally controlling power. Meanwhile, in the religious realm, his critique of blind imitation, fatalism, and claims to a single truth contributed to the formation of a religious attitude that is open, tolerant, and responsive to humanitarian issues.

Thus, theology, from Harun Nasution's perspective, functions as a transformative force that awakens critical awareness and moral responsibility in the community. Theology is no longer understood as a legitimation of the establishment, but rather as an intellectual and ethical energy that drives the renewal of Islamic thought. In the challenging context of globalization, Harun Nasution's rational theological paradigm remains relevant as a foundation for the development of a rational, humanistic, and just Islam, as well as a vital contribution to the intellectual

and moral awakening of contemporary Muslims.

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