

Arab political reasoning: Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri's contribution for understanding crisis of politics in the Arab world¹

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Abstract

This paper deals with the thoughts of Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri (d. 2010), a prominent philosopher from Morocco, on the crisis of politics in the Arab world, by examining one of his great books entitled *al-'Aql al- Siyāsi al-'Arabi* (Arab Political Reasoning). This book is the third work from the sequence *Naqd al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (Critique of Arab Reasoning). The Arab political reasoning here refers to a collection of motives (*muḥaddidāt*) in politics and their theoretical and practical manifestations (*tajalliyāt*). This paper analyzes the sense of crisis that constitutes al-Jabiri's thoughts on Arab political reasoning. This paper then describes the three theoretical frameworks he utilized, which were “*aqīdah* (doctrine)”, “*ghanīmah* (booty)” and “*qabīlah* (tribe)”, and their application in the reading politics of the earliest period of Islamic history. Finally, this writing concludes with some points regarding al-Jabiri's contribution to Islamic studies.

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Tulisan ini mengkaji pemikiran-pemikiran Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri (w. 2010), seorang filosof terkemuka dari Maroko, mengenai krisis politik di dunia Arab, melalui pengkajian terhadap salah satu buku terkenalnya yang berjudul *al-'Aql al- Siyāsi al-'Arabi* (Nalar Politik Arab). Buku ini adalah karya ketiga dari rangkaian proyek *Naqd al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (Kritik Nalar Arab). Nalar politik arab dalam karyanya ini terdiri dari sekumpulan motif-motif politik bangsa Arab dan manifestasi teoretis dan praktis dari motif tersebut. Tulisan ini selanjutnya menganalisis tiga latar belakang pemikiran yang membentuk ide-ide al-Jabiri mengenai nalar politik Arab. Tulisan ini kemudian menggambarkan tiga kerangka teori yang ia gunakan, yaitu akidah, harta rampasan perang, dan suku, serta aplikasi dari tiga teori tersebut pada pembacaan terhadap periode paling awal dari sejarah Islam. Terakhir, tulisan ini menyimpulkan sejumlah hal yang menjadi kontribusi al-Jabiri pada pemikiran keislaman.

Keywords: *Abid al-Jabiri; Motives; Politics; Arab reason*

Introduction

Al-Jabiri is one of the most prominent thinkers whose main concern is crisis in Arab-Muslim world. His entire life was devoted to the analysis of the roots of contemporary problems, either through epistemological-philosophical analyses or empirical-sociological examination. Among his works, the most distinguished one is his project of *Naqd al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (Critique of Arab Reasoning)² which comprises of four volumes, namely *Takwīn al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, *Bunyah al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi al-'Arabi* and *al-'Aql al-Akhlāqi al-'Arabi*. With respect to the context of his works, in *al-Turāth wa al-Ḥadathah* he argued that he was addressing the most terrific problems in the Muslim and Arab world through a philosophical approach.³ He fur-

² The title of his project suggests that al-Jabiri is influenced by Emanuel Kant, a German philosopher, who wrote two influential books entitled *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*. To what extent he follows the philosophy of Kant and in what aspect, however, need more serious research.

³ Al-Jabiri gives a primacy to philosophy over theology. Among many Muslim scholars, therefore, al-Jabiri admires Ibnu Rusyd more due to his propensity to philosophy.

ther explained that while the first two monumental books (*Takwīn* and *Bunyah*) are part of theoretical philosophy (*al-falsafah al-naẓariyyah*), the third book (*al-'Aql al-Siyāsī*) is a practical philosophy (*al-falsafah al-'amaliyyah*).⁴ Throughout this current book, al-Jabiri proposed a different way to understand politics in Arab-Muslim world. He employed three theoretical frameworks (*al-jihāz al-mafāhimi*) which are taken from two different systems of reference (*marja'iyah fikriyyah*): from contemporary social and political thought of the Western academia, and from Islamic heritage (*al-turāth al-islāmi*). From those theoretical frameworks, he then founded the three most influential motives of political behavior in Arab politics.

I argue that al-Jabiri's examination of Arab political reasoning is inspired by at least three problems of politics in Muslim world. The first problem is an absence of democracy in Muslim countries, especially those within the Arab world. For al-Jabiri, this was a great lost which the Islamic civilization suffered from. This problem leads to other serious problems in Islamic history, *i.e.* an abuse of power by rulers and of religion by, both rulers and oppositions as well as an emergence of political violence among Muslims. Al-Jabiri posited that democracy is the only means of achieving the common good. He believed that democracy is the framework that Arab countries must adopt in order to attain modernity.

In this regard, it is noticeable that al-Jabiri's method for emphasizing the importance of democracy was quite distinct. I argue that we will realize the excellence of his method when we compare him to other Muslim thinkers in thinking and dealing with democracy. Unlike al-Jabiri, many Muslim scholars tend to be more apologetic, saying that Islam is theologi-

⁴ Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, *al-Turāth wa al-Ḥadāthah, Dirāsāt wa Munāqashāt*, Beirut: Markaz Dirasāt al-Wahdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1991, 339. He does not classify his fourth book, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsī al-'Arabi*, to any kind of philosophy. The absence of this classification perhaps is because *al-Turāth wa al-Ḥadāthah* appears prior than the fourth book.

cally compatible with democracy.⁵ They propose Islamic doctrines that seemingly match to democratic values, such as liberty (*hurriyah*), equality (*musāwā*) and consultation (*shūrā*). Another thinker even says that Islam preceded the West in inventing this political system.⁶ This apologetic approach, however, fails to realize that democracy almost never happened in history of politics in Islam.

Therefore, al-Jabiri selected another approach. In line with his two previous projects, *Takwīn al-'Aql al-'Arabi* and *Bunyah al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, al-Jabiri preferred a deconstruction approach (in *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi al-'Arabi* he used the term *ta'riyah* which has the same meaning with *al-tafakkuk*).⁷ What is meant by deconstruction in this respect, is a critical way of viewing the Islamic legacy. This approach was used to show what theoretical aspects of politics in Islamic heritage were wrong and what did ideological basis of dictatorship play in our way of thinking, and what doctrines are incompatible with democracy. In another word, in order to attain political modernity, he maintained, we should be cognizant of weaknesses and constraints coming from our past.⁸

The second problem is a secular perspective regarding the relation between politics and Islam. In this book, al-Jabiri challenged this view

⁵ Read for example Khaled Abou Fadel, *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy*, Princeton University Press: 2004.

⁶ Abbas Mahmud Aqqad, *al-Dīmūqaratiyyah fial-Islām*, al-Qāhirah: Muassasah Handāwi li al-Ta'lim wa al-Thaqāfah, 33.

⁷ Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi al-'Arabi, Muḥaddidātuḥu wa Tajalliyātuḥu*, Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 2000, 365. The term *tafakkuk* appears in his book *Bunyah al-'Aql al-'Arabi...*, 483.

⁸ In my view, al-Jabiri's approach in dealing with democracy in Muslim world more or less is in line with that of Asep Bayat in his book *Making Islam Democratic, Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, Stanford California Press, 2007. Both are concerned with empirical question pertaining to what are obstacles that Muslim countries face in order to be democratic. The biggest difference between them, however, is that al-Jabiri is more concerned with classical-epistemological analysis rather than contemporary-sociological examination as done by Asep.

and contended that Islam and politics are closely linked. He also maintained that Prophet Muhammad PBUH beside a messenger of God, was also a statesman. For him, it is quite evident that the prophet during his stay at both Makkah and Madinah also brought a political mission. Therefore, al-Jabiri refused the theses of Ali Abdul Raziq who maintained that the Prophet was not concerned about politics.⁹ Al-Jabiri believed that the Islamic message was political in nature. But, in another side, he also admitted that the Prophet, in his political activities, also took into account Arab traditions that emphasized family relations. He, in fact, utilized this kind of loyalty to family in achieving his purpose that was establishing the Madinah state. In another world, what al-Jabiri wanted to say is that, although Muhammad is a prophet, he did not always derive his legitimacy from the Quran, but often also from traditions of Arab itself.¹⁰

The third problem is related to the previous one, which is a claim made mainly by Islamists¹¹ that an Islamic state has a static pattern, which is a model that stemmed only from the scriptures (Quran and Hadith) and, therefore, has nothing to do with both of our current developments and needs. Those Islamists perpetuated one single model of governance. For example, with regard to a structure of governmental bureaucracy, they will refer to that made by the prophet.¹² This notion sounds not

⁹ Ali Abdul Raziq, *al-Islām wa Uṣul al-Ḥukm*, Lebanon: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnāni, 2011, 77.

¹⁰ Ibrahim Abu-Rabi, *Contemporary Arab Thought, Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History*, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004, 270.

¹¹ This term refer to Muslim activists who want to establish an Islamic state. For further information regarding this term read Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam*, Yale University Press, 2012, 95-133. Al-Jabiri himself prefers to call this tendency as *salafiyyah*, those who have past orientation, "al-Dĕmūqarāṭiyyah wa Ḥuquq al-Insān", *Kitāb fi Jarīdah*, vol. 95, July 2006, 7, *al-Dīn wa al-Dawlah wa Taṭbīq al-Sharīah*, Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1996, 136.

¹² Hizb Tahrir, *Ajhzatu Dawlah al-Khilāfah (fi al-Ḥukm wa al-Idārah)*, Beirut: Dār al-Ummah, 2005, 55-168.

only utopia but also is ahistorical perspective and results in neglecting the political behavior of the Prophet. What al-Jabiri proposed is that we should understand that the Prophet acted within the boundary and mindset of his epoch and it is not constant model, but quite flexible. In addition, the Prophet intentionally left a constitutional emptiness (*al-faragh al-dustūriy*), which today becomes our obligation to fulfill. Our Muslim predecessors (from the rightly guided caliphs until the modern one), unfortunately, have not succeeded to do so and, therefore, this is what makes Islamic history insufficient, to be a sole model on which to build our political system today.

A part from that, some modern Muslims when dealing with the modes of governance, also refer to notions formulated by Muslim scholars from the classical-medieval age. They still consider them as sound inspirations for today's politics. It is an undeniable fact that many Muslims nowadays, still idealize discourses formalized by classical scholars such as al-Mawardi in his *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* or Ibnu Taimiyyah in his *al-Siyāsah al-Shari'iyah*. What al-Jabiri has in mind is criticizing this kind of thinking. Through this book, he reminded us that any political books written in the past are not binding in this era. They were authored mainly for purposes of rulers to legitimate their actions. Therefore, al-Jabiri posited that thoughts of Muslim jurists or theologians in the past should be treated only as possible opinions. Their ideas could be adopted if they were still appropriate, but also could be negated if they are out of date.¹³

In short, the main idea that al-Jabiri wanted to put forth is that if we want to achieve modernity in politics, we need to combine relying on basic values provided by the scripture and thus exercising critical appropriation of insights from Islamic tradition with learning from experiences of the Western countries.

¹³ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 372.

Theoretical framework (*al-jihāz al-mafāhimi*)

Although he refused to write in French, in fact, al-Jabiri was very aware of philosophical discourses in French academia and broadly was influenced by the French school of philosophy. In *Takwīn* and *Bunyaḥ*, he borrowed the theory of epistemological breakdown from both Bachelard and Foucault. In this work, he employed theories more sophisticatedly where he quoted Sigmund Freud, Régis Debray and Bertrand Badi and reformulated them within Ibn Khaldun's perspectives. Al-Jabiri employed three theoretical frameworks to understand Arab political reasoning. They are:

Political unconsciousness (Allā Shu'ūr al-Siyāsi)

The first concept al-Jabiri used in his study of the Arab political reasoning is "political unconsciousness" that he borrowed from psychology studies. According to psychologists, there are some kinds of behavior that appear within human beings without consciousness. According to Sigmund Freud, unconscious mind consists of instinctive motives (*al-dawāfi' al-gharīziyyah*) and stored willingness (*al-raghbah al-makbūtah*), which are responsible for producing and directing human attitudes. Unconsciousness according to psychological science does not belong to one person, but to the community. The specific term for this is collective unconsciousness (*al-lāshu'ūr al-jam'iy*), which can be defined as failures buried in the human mind and refer to experiences and experiments of immemorial past. It is not only an individual sense or personal experience, but specifically to tendencies (*al-naz'āt*) and emotions (*'awātif*) of the society and belongs to both the recent and the ancient behavior of past human beings.¹⁴

Régis Debray brought this idea to field of politics and invented the notion of "religio-political unconsciousness" and then gave it a different

¹⁴ Al-Jābirī, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 10.

and independent meaning from “collective unconsciousness”.¹⁵ According to this French scholar, political unconsciousness emerges in organized political communities, such as tribe, party or a nation. According to Debray, it is not human consciousness that determines their political existence, but their social existence that more correctly determines their consciousness. Similarly, political phenomena are built neither by human awareness, nor by their opinions, nor by ambitions, nor by social relations and nor by class interests, but they are governed by political unconsciousness.¹⁶

To sum up, religio-political unconsciousness could be defined as a phrase describing an unconscious mind, which governs relationships between individuals and between communities where the pattern of their relationships is tribal as well as religious.

In his writing, al-Jabiri tried to modify Debray's theory. According to him, the modification should be carried out because of the context in which it is formulated, where Debray formulated his theory is in European industrial societies which are different from the context of Arab societies. In European context, social relationships with tribal and sectarian patterns, locate behind economy relationships or relationships of production. In the Arab-Islamic context of both the classic and modern society, the situation is another way around where social relationships based in tribal and sectarian natures still occupy a vital position. Meanwhile, the economic relationships or relationships of production do not predominate except in a very restricted form.¹⁷

Moreover, in Debray's narrative, political unconsciousness was employed to display what is sectarian and what is religious in political behav-

¹⁵ Philip Dexter, *National and Religious Identities: an Interpretation of Regis Debray's Critique of Political Reason*, Master Thesis in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, 6, 73. Pdf file, accessed from https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/13906/thesis_hum_1997_dexter_p.pdf?sequence=1 at 09:12 am, February 19, 2017.

¹⁶ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 12.

¹⁷ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 13.

ior in contemporary European society. Whereas, the use of this theory and in the context of Arab society within al-Jabiri's writing, is to demonstrate what exists within Arab politics, stemming from religious and tribal behavior within ancient and modern Arab societies. This is because, as al-Jabiri argues, in the Arab context, politics was practiced in the name of religion and tribe. To very large extent, this phenomenon is still happening up to present times. Therefore, he stated that the political unconsciousness that drives Arab political reasoning must be understood not only with religious and tribal factors directing resultant political activities, but also that it is the political factor drives religious and sectarian attitudes.

Debray contended in his study, that in order to comprehend European politics, one should look at the ideology, and to understand European ideology, one should examine the role of religion. To understand religion, one should investigate family relationships among Europeans. Meanwhile, according to al-Jabiri, this European experience is dissimilar to that of Arab experiment where social relationships within a tribe constitutes politics and then politics constitutes ideology and then ideology finally, constitutes religious affiliation or religious doctrine. Thus, what lays on surface in Arab context is religious doctrine. It floats above political unconsciousness and covers it.¹⁸

Social imagination (al-mikhyāl al-ijtimā'ī)

Social imagination is a theory plucked by al-Jabiri from science of modern sociology. It could be explained as a general reference for political reasoning that shapes political unconsciousness. It is like edifice filling up our thoughts consisting of heroism, bravery, hardship and vengeance. Arab's imagination is filled up by heroic figures, such as Umar ibn Khattab, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz and Salahuddin al-Ayyubi from the past, and like Jamar Abdul Nasser from modern period.

¹⁸ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 14.

Al-Jabiri stated that political reasoning as a practice and ideology, found its reference in social imagination, not in system of knowledge (episteme). Episteme directs scientific activities and at the same time it is a collection of concepts and principles that supply to knowledge its unconsciousness structure. While social imagination is a set of perceptions, criteria and values that give to political ideology its unconsciousness structure. Al-Jabiri acknowledged as well that practical politicians use one kind of episteme within a pragmatic way to carry out politics. Politicians employ *bayān*, *‘irfān* and *burhān* just when they are advantageous to their interests.¹⁹ Their main reference remains, however, not epistemes, but rather their collective imagination.

Political sphere (al-majāl al-siyāsi)

Another theory borrowed by al-Jabiri from modern sociological studies was political sphere. Political sphere, according to him, equated to political modernity (*al-hadathah al-siyāsiyah*). It is an achievement that every country should afford. The main feature of a political sphere are sovereignty of people; the contract between rulers and ruled; the consent of people for rulers and the clear distinction between ruler and state. But there is a serious problem. While this is already a common phenomenon on in European countries, unfortunately it does not exist in Arab countries yet. It is still merely a dream of academia. The question that al-Jabiri raised is what is the reason such a phenomenon disappear in Arab countries.²⁰

¹⁹ Al-Jabiri, *al-‘Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 14-16.

²⁰ Regarding the term “Arab countries”, sometimes al-Jabiri also mentions Islamic countries but then refer to Arab countries. In few occasions, he includes Iran and Turkey (look at page 18). Therefore, I argue that Muslim countries in Southeast Asia, like Indonesia, should be considered as out of his concern. This possibly is due to several factors: firstly, he has no adequate knowledge about democracy in this region, or secondly, because they are democratic already, at least more democratic than Arab countries.

To answer this question, al-Jabiri quoted and then criticized Bertrand Badie, the French scholar who formulated the theory of political spheres in his book *Les deux états: Pouvoir et société en Occident et en terre d'islam*. Bertrand proposed two questions similar to those of al-Jabiri. Why did states in Europe succeed in improving their political system from monarchy states into modern states? Which is state of the law where legitimacy of politics is derived from the will of people through a general election? He also questioned, on the contrary, why did Muslim countries fail in their transference modern politics of the West to their own homeland? Answering these questions, Bertrand Badie contended that it was because, in Europe, modernity was as a consequence of conflict between political leaders and the church during the Middle Ages. The tension among religious and secular authority happened in a serious manner and as a result, led to the appearance of social contract and a birth of third actor being the people (*al-sha'b*) as true holders of legitimacy. Based on the social contract, a ruler could be overthrown if he or she fails to serve a people for their common interest (*maslahah'amah*). Meanwhile, in Arab countries, no such break or difference appears between state and a ruler. They are quite identical. A state is what a ruler personally wants. This occurred because there were no hegemonic institutions like churches in Islam and this in turn makes conflicts that Europe underwent are vacant in Islamic history.

In the regard to the cause of the emergence of modern politics, al-Jabiri refused to admit the church as an effective factor in its birth or behind it. In the same way, he also rejected the theory of Max Weber which states that it was the Protestant Ethic or the Religious Reform that brought European society into the spirit of capitalism. Al-Jabiri mentioned Japan as a model of a country which was able to attain modernity without a role of the church or religious reform. He, in contrast, proposed another theory to understand modern politics and the system of the capitalism system in

Europe in contrast to its absence in the Arab worlds. He urged that it was a conflict between European society and external power that caused Europe to enter modernity in politics.²¹ The external power had existed since the Middle Ages and had operated as a trigger and stimulant for European people to race towards the modernity. In another words, this external power has acted as a threat to Europe and then gave them an impetus to carry out mobilization and form a coalition to fight against dangers the external power possessed. According to al-Jabiri, the true factor, which was the external power behind the development of Europe was, Islam.²²

In line with this theory, it is also an external factor that caused Islamic world to live in backwardness and stagnation. This external factor was very devastating for Islamic history. Its destruction started from the Hulagu Khan's attack to Baghdad, the crusader war in the Middle Age, until European colonization in modern days. Like Badie, al-Jabiri also proposes some but satire questions, "If the Europeans had not interfered with Egypt's situation economically, politically or military during the regime of Muhammad Ali, how would be the situation of Egypt be today? "If the European did not stop the project of reformation voiced by al-Tahtawi, what will be the situation of Egypt and Arab countries today"? And "what would be the situation of Arab countries, if Europe had not planted Israel in the heart of the Arab region"? Therefore, according to al-Jabiri, the absence of modernity in the politics of contemporary Arab countries is mainly caused by the presence of European occupation. Al-Jabiri even stated critically that European growth; continuity and development depend actually on its obstruction of growth and development of Arab-Islamic countries.²³

Al-Jabiri's knowledge of western discourses on politics as well as his critical attitude to read them led him towards an interesting finding. He

²¹ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 19.

²² Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 19.

²³ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 19-20.

concluded that the result of borrowing western theoretical frameworks to understand the specific context of Arab political reasoning is that we can find “religion” and “tribe”, in addition to “booty” or “economy” as very determining in political reality of Arab.

Al-Jabiri continued beyond western discourses, namely by combining them with an Islamic medieval view. Al-Jabiri found commonality between Western experiences with the analysis by Ibn Khaldun of the nature of politics of Islamic civilization.²⁴ This medieval thinker in his *al-Muqaddimah* emphasized the importance of family relationships (*acabiyyah*) and religious propagation (*al-da'wa al-muḥammadiyah*) in Islamic history in establishing a state or empire. Besides these two factors, according to al-Jabiri, Ibn Khaldun also proposed the third factor, which is the factor of an economy based on war (*al-iqtisād al-qāim 'ala al-ghazw*). In general, this factor could also be termed as an economy based on abnormal income (*mayḥab fi al-ma'āsh ghair tabī'iy*). The situation in Arab countries is still a pre-capitalism society and this economic pattern could be named as rentier economy (*al-iqtisād al-rī'i*) and the modern Arab countries themselves could be termed as *al-daulah al-rī'iyah* as their income does not come from production or investment, but rather from money resulting from labor living abroad, foreign funding as well as oil sale.²⁵

In concluding his explanation of theoretical frameworks, al-Jabiri said that rentier economy, tribe as well as religious doctrine are very important keys or motives in understanding the situation of both classical and contemporary Arab political reasoning. It is impossible, he stated, to gain a proper understanding of Arab politics nowadays without utilizing these three keys.

²⁴ Al-Jabiri is very knowledgeable about Ibn Khaldun, as he compiled his Ph.D. theses on Ibnu Khaldun's thought.

²⁵ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 47.

Al-Jabiri's own terminology

Al-Jabiri went further than merely relying literally on the notion of Ibnu Khaldun. He created another term for the three motives of political behavior proposed by Ibnu Khaldun and gave them new meaning as well. They are *'aqīdah* (doctrine), *ghanīmah* (booty) and *qabīlah* (tribe). These three motives are explained further in the following sentences:

Al-'aqīdah (doctrine)

What al-Jabiri meant is not religion as revealed by God or as a divine entity, but rather as a creed or religious dogma of group, either manifested in teaching of theological sect (*firqah kalām*), sufi order (*al-karoqah al-ṣūfiyyah*) or any other religious groups (*kawāif dīniyyah*). Al-Jabiri maintained that doctrine here does not operate as a producer of knowledge, but rather as a power to mobilize people and communities.²⁶ He also added that this doctrine does not function as individual reason, but as the collective mind of Muslims who adheres imaginary symbols.²⁷

I argue that Debray's definition of religion as al-Jabiri applied here was not a novelty made by Debray himself. In fact, this was a contribution of Emile Durkheim through his functional sociology. This French sociologist defined religion as: "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them."²⁸ This quotation affirms al-Jabiri's indebtedness to French school of thought.

²⁶ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 50-51.

²⁷ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 52.

²⁸ Daniel L. Pals, *Dekonstruksi Kebenaran, Kritik Tujuh Teori Agama*, translated from *Seven Theories of Religion*, Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2006, 145, 163.

Al-qabīlah (tribe)

Al-Qabīlah is one of the constituting factors behind the political unconsciousness of the Arab. This term is an expression that anthropologist articulates as kinship (*al-qarābah*) in their study about pre-capitalism society and also expression that Ibn Khaldun calls as *acabiyyah* (tribal loyalty) in his study about the nature of civilization (*tabāi'u al-'umrān*). Al-Jabiri argued that this motive of politics is always at the expense of reliance upon expertise and capacity. This motive can also be extended to covering affiliation to homeland, culture, ethnicity party or group, especially when it becomes the only factor taken into account in political practices overlooking knowledge. Al-Jabiri admitted that the motive of *qabīlah* (family relation) does exist, as well, in all kind of societies, including in the developed and industrialized countries. As for less industrialized and agricultural society, however, *qabīlah* (tribalism) without any doubt occupies very central position.²⁹

Al-ghanīmah (booty)

What al-Jabiri meant by booty is the role of the economy in society where its income produced mainly by tribute, not by productive relationships (*'ilaliqah intājiyah*). What al-Jabiri meant by tribute is what a state takes from its citizens, including booty itself, taxes and income from natural resources. In another words, in this economic pattern, production does not supply significant amount of money for state.³⁰

Manifestations of political reason of Arab

Unlike the *Takwīn* and *Bunyah* project where al-Jabiri noticed the formulation of *bayān*, *burhān* and *'irfān* taking place in the period of authorship

²⁹ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsī al-'Arabi...*, 48-49.

³⁰ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsī al-'Arabi...*, 49-50.

(*‘aşr al-tadwīn*)³¹, in this current book, al-Jabiri applied these three motives onto the earliest period in Islamic history which started from the period of the Prophet. However, he also alluded that during the period of ignorance (*‘aşr jāhiliy*), the politics of the Arab were determined by both *ghanīmah* and *qabīlah* factor as well. During the next period or the period of propagation (*marḥalah al-da’wah*), called also as period of establishment of state (*marḥalah daulah*) the most important motive in politics was *al-‘aqīdah*.³² However, he argued, this does not necessarily mean the absence of *ghanīmah* and *qabīlah* motive behind the political conduct of the Prophet and his Companions. During the period of *riddah* (apostasy) and *i’ādah daulah* (reestablishment of the state) or when the *khulāufaur rāsyidūn*’s period spanned, the factor of *ghanīmah* dominated the political behavior of the Prophet’s Companions, intertwiningly with two other motives.³³

According to al-Jabiri, those above-mentioned motives of politics produce two kinds of manifestations, one is theoretical and another is practical. The practical manifestations of these motives are political events (*aḥdāth siyāsīyah*) happening in Islamic history.³⁴ Whereas theoretical manifestations are political ideology, such as the ideology of predestination (*al-Jabr*) created by Muawiyah, a myth of Imamate (*Imāmah*) of Shi’ah, enlightenment thoughts (*Afkār Tanwīriyyah*) produced by Muktaẓilite and an ideology of sultanate (*Fiqh al-bulmān*) constructed by Muslim jurists (*fuqahā*).

We take here one manifestation as an example of the influence of three motives in Arab political reasoning. The example is Muawiyah

³¹ *‘Aşr al-tadwīn* as defined by al-Jabiri is a period of translation of foreign books into Arabic which result in construction and crystallization of self-awareness and culture of Arab. Look at al-Jabiri, *Takwīn al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi*, 70.

³² Al-Jabiri, *al-‘Aql al-Siyāsī...*, 52.

³³ Al-Jabiri, *al-‘Aql al-Siyāsī...*, 52.

³⁴ This writing does not focus on the practical manifestation of Arab political reasoning. But to mention an example is a decision made by most of the Prophet’s companions to choose Abu Bakar after the Prophet’s death which, according to al-Jabiri is a product of reliance upon tribal preference rather than religious consideration. Look at *al-‘Aql al-Siyāsī...*, 136.

leadership. According to al-Jabiri, Muawiyah's deviation from *shūrā* was actually the result of his effort to avoid schism among *ummah*. He argued, if Muawiyah carried out *shūrā* and gave the whole *ummah* voice to solve the situation, a disorder and chaos would never stop. Muawiyah's decision to monopolize the power was, in fact, the consequence of his loyalty to tribe. The consequence of returning to tribe loyalty for exercising politics as practiced by Muawiyah was the stability of *ummah*. Al-Jabiri further contended that for this achievement, he was praised by authoritative 'ulamā'.³⁵ By the same token, the ideology of predestination or fatalism was actually also the outcome of tribalism. It should not be seen as only hypocrisy of Umayyah leaders, but also as a manifestation of social imagination of member of a tribe. Because people who live within tribal traditions tend to consider the reality they face as a willingness of their tribe, they think that they are not able to change it. In this context, al-Jabiri also admitted the fact that religion has been used by the elite of Umayyah for their political interest, but he also believed that this cannot happen without consent of majority of people and resulting from a sense of belonging to tribe that seized Muslim's mind at that time.³⁶

Moreover, to support his claim that Muawiyah's conduct was accepted by his people, the ideology of pre-destination became widespread owing to the social structure of Umayyah caliphate which relied upon tradition of tribe, al-Jabiri quoted Ibnu Khaldun. Through the theory of *al-aṣabiyyah*, in his Magnum Opus *al-Muqaddimah*, IbnuKhaldun said:

³⁵ For positive appraisal of the 'ulamā' to Muawiyah, al-Jabiri quotes *Kitāb al-Kāmil fi al-Tārīkh* where the author (Ibn al-Athir) mentions a good character of Muawiyah. Read *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 233. In my opinion, al-Jabiri could be misleading here, because narrating a personal character does not necessarily mean accepting his power. What al-Jabiri did not consider here is a popular conviction among *ahluḥadīth* that all of the Prophet's companion are sound (*kullu al-saḥabah 'udūl*). The 'ulamā' as historian or biographer may not endorse Muawiyah's politics, but they accepted him as religious authority.

³⁶ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 259-261.

“Now, the nature of Royal authority requires that one person claim all the glory for himself and appropriate it to himself. It was not for Mu’awiyah to deny (the natural requirement of Royal authority) to himself and his people. (Royal authority) was a natural thing that group feeling, by its very nature, brought in its train. Even the Umayyads and those of their followers who were not after the truth like Mu’awiyah felt that. They banded together around him and were willing to die for him. Had Mu’awiyah tried to lead them on another course of action, had he opposed them and not claimed all the power for (himself and them), it would have meant the dissolution of the whole thing that he had consolidated. It was more important to him to keep it together than to bother about (a course of action) that could not entail much criticism”.³⁷

Al-Jabiri credited Muawiyah not only for his ability to end disorder, but also for creating the political sphere. Al-Jabiri made a claim that this was the first political sphere appearing in Islamic history. Such a sphere was absent even during the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs because the rulers (caliphs) exercised politics not for the sake of politics itself, but for religion and also on behalf of it. In this period, religion drove politics and, similarly, politics served religions. To mention clearly an example, the caliphs besides rulers were also a troop (*al-jundi*) and at the same time a religious leader. Likewise, at the bottom level of society, people (*al-ra’iyyah*) were also troops. There was no such kind of specialization.

In the next period, according to al-Jabiri, for the first time in Islamic history Muawiyah created a political sphere by making a separation of power when exercising politics and making clear distinction between society and state. The institution like *‘ulamā* and *umarā*, troops and ordinary people became clearly distinct. Muawiyah also ruled the government

³⁷ Ibnu Khaldun, *al-Muqaddimah*, Beirut, Shirkah Dār al-Arqām ibn Abi al-Arqām, 238. The above English translation belongs to Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 274. Download from https://asadullahali.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/ibn_khaldun_al_muqaddimah.pdf (accessed at 20 of February 2017, 10.00 am).

with some sort of liberalism. He provided a freedom of expression and environment for intellectual debate. This will, in turn, gave an impetus to the birth and consolidation of religious group, such as Kharijite, Shiite and Muktazilite. Since then, Arab political reasoning was constituted by theoretical debate over the politics. This was a period where politics was manifested through ideology or where transcending of politics (*al-ta'āliy bi al-siyāsah*) and politization of transcendence (*tasyīsu al-muta'āli*) happened as a consequence of the political sphere.

Al-Jabiri's recommendation

According to al-Jabiri, the political chaos that happened in Islamic history stemmed entirely from the absence of a constitution that regulates political system. This absence can be clearly seen in three main problems.

Firstly, it did not establish clear mechanism for the appointment of the caliph, nor did it canonize the appointment of the successor.

Secondly, it did not specify the duration of the rule of the caliph. In the imagination of the Arab, it was the character of commander of troops (*amîr al-jaiṣh*) that dominate political reasoning of the Arab and became a model for caliph. Arab people did not specify the duration of troop commander's tenure in their tradition. The Arab believed that his principality spans as long as warfare exists, unless he is dismissed or killed.

Thirdly, it did not specify the functions of caliph, what he can and cannot do, what differs him from other authorities. Finally, the absence of an Islamic constitution in Islamic history, led to a usage of sword by political authority in order to ask for legitimacy. It also resulted in an abuse of religion by several actors to legitimize certain political interests.³⁸

Al-Jabiri believed that accepting system of democracy is absolutely unavoidable if Muslim countries want to reach modernity in politics. But it

³⁸ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*,369-370.

is not enough. Deconstructing traditions that are incompatible with the democracy should begin attaining modernity. Moreover, Muslims should admit that they are still living in period of tribalism, sectarianism and religious radicalism. Therefore, they should criticize themselves and acknowledge that tribalism still becomes the motor of politic, tribute become the base of economy and religion is still only a means for justification of existing political reality.

Al-Jabiri called to rearrange politics based on fundamental principles established by the Quran and Sunah. He proposed three principle as a basic values for exercising politics: *shūrā*, *ijtihād* and responsibility.³⁹ Furthermore, he suggests that in order to reform political situation of Arab, there should be radical changes in their political reasoning. The whole meaning of the three motives should be renewed. Firstly, Arabs should change tribalism (tribe loyalty) in their societies and convert it to non-tribalism social political entities such as parties, movements and non-governmental organizations. In another word, Arabs should establish society where a distinction between the political entity (state) and social entity is clear. Second, they must change economy based on booty to economy based on production. Third, they have to change *aqīdah* or doctrine of religious group as only an opinion in addition to liberating it from authority of religious sectarianism.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Al-Jabiri's study on the political reasoning of Arab has contributed significantly to Islamic studies, in particular to its philosophical base. There are at least four contributions from his work, namely:

³⁹ Al-Jabiri refers to chapter 42, verse 38 of the Quran for *shūrā*, a prophet tradition "*antum adrā bi shuūmi duniyakum*" for *ijtihād* and "*kullukum rā'in wa kullum masūlun'an raiyyatihi*" for *al-masūliyyah* (responsibility). Read *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 366-367.

⁴⁰ Al-Jabiri, *al-'Aql al-Siyāsi...*, 379.

Firstly, al-Jabiri has shown the importance of sociological way of thinking to examine Islamic history. Basically, sociology is not new science in Islamic scholarship. Al-Jabiri himself proved in his book that some critical concepts are already existed in Islamic legacy, such as Ibnu Khaldun's theory concerning factors behind establishment of a state. Secondly, he disclosed that there is something called as "continuity" in Islamic history. Al-Jabiri has informed us that there is similarity between Arab's current political situation and that belong to the past. For example, we still find political despotism and religious radicalism in our political life. Due to this continuity and similarity, al-Jabiri suggested to employ the same theoretical framework to analyze both past and present political situations (*taḥlīl al-ḥādīr yuqaddimu lanā mafātih al-māḍi*). For example, if we want to analyze the Arab Spring phenomenon that exploded five years ago and is still happening, we should not neglect three important motives of the Arab political reasoning, namely economy, tribalism as well as religious affiliation.

Thirdly, he revealed the possibility to employ western theoretical framework in Islamic studies. However, this kind of employment must be undertaken with critical and careful examination, especially regarding its original context. Al-Jabiri throughout his book indicated that we should examine whether a certain western theoretical framework is applicable or not in context of Muslim world. Instead of absorbing ready-made patterns of thinking of the West, we should made modification or adjustment. In this book, he gave us an example regarding Debray's theory of political unconsciousness and Badic's theory of political sphere. Fourthly, al-Jabiri stated that the most fundamental challenge facing contemporary Islamic thought is how to link the two contending systems of reference (*marja'iyyah al-sultjah*), namely western reason and classical Arab reason, while at the same time using concepts that adequately fit with our modern Islamic reality.⁴¹

⁴¹ Ibrahim Abu-Rabi, *Contemporary Arab Thought...*, 283.

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