

# Global Risk Watch Newsletter

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#### # Global increase of Muslim population (Hitoshi Motegi, Director at Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu LLC)

According to the private research agency, Pew Research Center, the global ratio of the Muslim population is 23.2% in 2010, and reached to 29.7% by 2015, which became the religion with the largest population growth. Although the biggest reason for the growth of the Muslim population is that contraception is not accepted in Islam, an increasing number of Christians, mainly in western countries have converted to Muslimism in recent years which has attributed to the growth.

Given the trend of an increasing Muslim population, as well as the continuous business expansion in the emerging countries by firms in Japan, one can expect that Japanese firms are sure to have a greater relationship and involvement with Islam. This however has caused an issue for Japanese firms due to the lack of knowledge /recognition regarding Islam.

Islam is a religion founded by Muhammad (Muhammad ibn `abdullah ibn `abd al-MuTTalib: around 570 AD – 632 AD) around 610 AD in the commercial city of Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula (today's Saudi Arabia), and is heavily influenced by Judaism and Christianity. Incidentally in the Old Testament, the prophet Abraham is believed to be the founder for “people of the book” whom followed Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the three religions were originated from the same root. Since Islam is a monotheistic religion, the same as Judaism and Christianity. One of the main differences however is that Idolatry is strictly forbidden compared to Judaism and Christianity. Muhammad is the last and the highest prophet in Islam following Moses and Jesus Christ.

The greatest feature of the religion of Islam is that it strictly poses the consciousness of an ‘afterlife’ rather than ‘this life’ on its followers. The after-life consciousness is similar to Judaism and Christianity, and is based on the notion that the world will soon end. Believers and non-believers are sorted out by the judgment of God, then divided into the heaven and hell.

In Islam, it is noted that there is a certain code of ethics in relation to politics, and this Code of Ethics is also closely tied to the strength of the after-life consciousness. For example, pardon is rewarded at the Last Judgment in order to taste the eternal bliss in heaven, thus it is necessary to maintain certain ethical norms regarding political order.

The concept of equality before God is valued strictly even compared to other religions. For example, ‘Ulama’ are Muslims in charge of religious rituals/facilities management, Islamic education, and Islamic law interpretation, while some often referred to this as a ‘clergy’. Nevertheless, there are no ranks among Muslims as the equality before god is strictly established in Islam. Principally, a clergy does not exist, and generally Ulama is often referred to as ‘Islamic law scholars’.

In the long history of religions, fundamental reform movements may occur. For instance, the Reformation in Christianity (occurred in the 16th century in Europe), evolved as reform movements for overall church activities such as the nature of the church, the Bible as a cornerstone of faith.

On the other hand, fundamentalism in Islam is a generic term for the Islamist movement which aims to realize the Islamic political, national and social modalities. Specifically, it is strictly interpreted literally with the belief in the infallibility of the Quran. It is intended to try to revive the Islamic community of the Prophet Muhammad's era, and also the Islamic social philosophy in order to address problems such as corruption of the social system, problems in civilized society, and etc. Meanwhile, the ultimate goal in the Islamic fundamentalist movement in recent years is to build an Islamic state that strictly complies with the Islamic Sharia law by the representative of the Prophet Muhammad (Caliphate).

The Islamic fundamentalist movement has expanded greatly following the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during the first half of the 20th century. The Muslim Brotherhood founded in 1928 had aimed to gain substantial Egyptian independence from the United Kingdom, and criticized the traditional secularization of the Islamic society at that time, while trying to revive Islam according to the contemporary situation; hence it was different from simply

the revisionism. For example, it was a movement to piously practice Islam such as reflecting on the securitized life at the individual level, worship and fasting. Also it spread social movements such as charity activity, construction of mosques and schools.

Thereafter, the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed under the military regime in Egypt, and faced a long period of oppression. However, it has always remained extremely popular in the public. The biggest reason for the Muslim Brotherhood's continued popularity is due to members whom were successful in business, acting on behalf of a financially struggling government to provide education, healthcare, and other welfare activities to the poor, as well establishing Non-interest-bearing banks (Islamic bank) in an Islamic society where interest is prohibited. (Today, the Muslim Brotherhood has continued these activities, such Islamic fundamentalist organizations around the world, for the most part, are an organization that is doing very moderate, peaceful activities)

On the other hand, such social movements also led to the movement of demand in the "Islam of politics". Particularly, in the Islamic world, for the sake of social disparities, although there was a need to establish a distribution system of wealth under a powerful regime, this has gradually encouraged the emergence of dictatorship, despotic monarchy, and military governments. Along with social discontent, against the background of the sense of unfairness, this has aided in the rise of radical forces that emphasize direct (armed aggression) means.

For example, criticized nationalism, socialism or the like in the secularization in the Islamic society as a non-Islamic. The movement to use armed forces to build the Islamic society has gradually increased. (Iranian Revolution in 1979, emergence of Taliban in 1996 were the typical examples)

The Islamic fundamentalist movements have surged in the 1990's as a result of intervention in the Gulf region of the Western countries and US forces during the Gulf War, and rapid economic disparities against the Western countries. Against this backdrop, various Islamic fundamentalist groups have emerged with a radical ideology to cast the validity to overcome such circumstances by force, and committed frequent terrorist acts.

These frequent terrorist acts by the recent radical Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organizations and terrorists are often featured in the media, thereby spreading the notion of labelling 'Islamic fundamentalism as terrorists'. In the broad view of Islam, one must keep in mind that these represent a very small fraction of the total population.

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