

Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG): Historical perspective

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Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG): Historical perspective

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ABSTRACT

The beauty of philosophy and approach in Islam is that it wants to provide a dignified and decent life for all human beings regardless of their race, ethnic or their nationality. To uplift humanity and protect their honour, Islam introduces the concept of solidarity in jurisprudence and solidarity regulated in Islamic law. In order to strengthen solidarity in the field of sports, the Islamic Solidarity Sport Federation (ISSF) was formed to serve the needs of Muslims in sports. For the first time the biggest sporting event for Muslims was held outside the Middle East region, precisely in the city of Palembang, Indonesia. The Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG) event aims to strengthen relations for countries that are predominantly Muslim. This article aims to provide an overview of the implementation of the Islamic Solidarity Games 1st, 2nd, 4th, and especially in the 3rd edition in Palembang, Indonesia, covering the background, objectives, implementation, and real impact for the host of the event as well as the dynamics of the strength of the international sports system. This study uses a literature review to support the achievement of the objectives of writing this article. The findings from this literature study are that the ISG as a form of sport can be a solution behind the tensions between the Arabian Peninsula countries. ISG has the potential to become a new force in the international sports system.

Keywords: Islam; islamic identity; solidarity; islamic solidarity games; sports power dynamics



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INTRODUCTION

Islam teaches its people to respect each other, honor each other, care for each other, do mutual cooperation, do mutual assistance, do cooperation in kindness, promoting unity, and share in both open and narrow circumstances. Religious solidarity and shared identity is one of the fundamental messages used by Islamists (Sheikh, 2017). The meaning of solidarity is unity, harmony, cohesion, and similarity so that solidarity also gives the true meaning of Islamic norms and values comprehensively (Ahmad & Eijaz, 2011), beliefs, attitudes, or influences that bind different groups of people in one entity (Jones, 2013). Significant Muslim communities are also formed based on a common identity that develops as important consequences for international Muslim solidarity (Pratisti et al., 2019). In addition, Islamic solidarity pursues cohesion and enhances interaction between Islamic countries which can provide a basis for Islamic unity or the formation of an Islamic community model (Zandi, 2007). Contributing to the development of a poor and disadvantaged Islamic community is another important tool of Islamic solidarity (Akpınar, 2017). Solidarity can also be interpreted as a sense of sensitivity to others, always there when needed without measuring it with the

material. Many aspects of life can be realized from the values of solidarity, ranging from economic, social, political, cultural, ethnic aspects including sports.

Exercise and physical strength have become the focus of attention of leaders and rulers in the Arab world (Amara, 2014). Apart from not contradicting the Prophet Sunnah, sports are recommended in Islam which of course must be in accordance with the rules of Islamic law. They realize that sport has its own power in promoting and positioning the nation-state in the eyes of the international community and affirming that Islam is a peaceful religion. The Islamic world, accepts modern sports as a symbol of modernization in Muslim societies and as a special tool for nation-state development (Amara, 2008).

Modern sports have become an extraordinary magnet in the joints of human life, even for some groups considered to be a religion that has a very strong influence. Sports can also be used as a tool to show the world the superiority of individuals, groups, nation-states over individuals, groups, and other nation-states. The fact that sport as a social institution has a structure that is gradually developing every day in economic and cultural organizations has made a revaluation of this social phenomenon given the changing economic and social conditions of the world (Altungül & Devecioglu, 2015). Sports are not only seen as an effort to achieve a healthy mind in a healthy body, but also become an integral part of the national revolution to achieve ideological goals (Douglas, 2013). Sports are basically also a symbolic brand used by, '... 1) national elites to strengthen a sense of national unity, 2) promote values such as peace and friendship between nations, international relations and solidarity through assistance, 3) strengthen economic autonomy' (Amara & Theodoraki, 2010).

This study aims to explore historical information on the holding of the Islamic Solidarity Games. This is important to do so that Muslim solidarity is getting stronger by seeing the mandate of holding the Islamic Solidarity Games and eliminating the stigma of the western world towards the eastern world, especially countries with a majority Muslim population so that western nations do not underestimate them regarding sports. The Islamic Solidarity Games also has the potential to become a new force in the international sports system.

METHODS

The purpose of this article is to look at the historical picture of organizing the Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG) from the first edition to the fourth edition and see the extent to which the implementation of ISG can be said as a new power dynamics in the international sports system. The research in the article uses the method of literature study. In this study, data sources were collected from official writings by government and government institutions, articles, newspapers, and other sources related to the history and development of ISG from 2005 to 2017, and in 2021 planned to be held in Turkey. Reference collection was done using search engines Taylor & Francis Online, Harzing's Publish or Perish Version 7, Researchgate, Elsevier, which are trusted article search engines. The analysis used involves the process of investigating, recording, processing, and interpreting sources or primary historical data including the background, objectives, implementation, and host of the ISG event.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

History of Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG) from Mecca to Baku

Major events not only affect the local economy, but also generate international interest in the host country, which allows many direct and indirect impacts (Anh, 2014). Besides aiming to strengthen the ties of friendship between Muslim-majority nations, each country that is hosting the ISG certainly has its own mission in its administration. The mission can't be explicitly expressed and explained verbally, but it can be seen from the implementation process from the preparation, opening, implementation, and closing. Deeper how the host provides optimal service to the member countries of this ISG tournament. Apart from all conflict-prone situations, the value of solidarity is the motivating force in forming the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF) in 1980 during the Eleventh Conference of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad (Trotier, 2015). The establishment of the ISSF is to serve the needs of member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in all aspects of sports activities.

The choice of Mecca as the host of the first edition of ISG, has a high symbolic value, not only for Saudi Arabia, but also for other participating countries because Mecca embodies the central of Islam (Trotier, 2015). In this event, non-Muslim citizens in participating countries are permitted to take part in competitions. This shows that the implementation of ISG is not nuanced with racism because it holds that in the eyes of sports, humans have the same opportunity to do sports activities. Outside the competition, organizers offer cultural activities and art exhibitions to encourage transnational gatherings and to strengthen feelings of Muslim unity (Trotier, 2015). The cancellation of this game in Tehran revealed the difference between the noble ideals of solidarity between Muslim-majority countries and the harsh reality of foreign policy (Trotier, 2015). Looking at the case that occurred in this second edition, it can be said that the values of solidarity between nations through sports activities at certain moments are excluded by certain egocentric groups or nation-states.

The third edition of ISG was held in Indonesia precisely in the city of Palembang, Indonesia, although the largest country in Southeast Asia does not have a reputation as a sporting country and therefore receives little attention during international sporting events such as the Olympics (Trotier, 2017b). Hosting the ISG, it enables Palembang to strengthen ties with the Muslim world, to stay at the forefront of attention and position itself not only as a sports city but also as a central for tolerant and open-minded Islam (Trotier, 2017a).

This was reinforced by Presidential Decree Number 23 of 2013 concerning changes in the organizing committee of the Islamic Solidarity Games which established the South Sumatra province, precisely the city of Palembang as the host of the third edition of Islamic Solidarity Games (Keputusan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor No 23 Tahun 2013, 2013). According to Trench and Yeomanz (Prastya, 2013), it stated that "sports activities are a form of cultural diplomacy". At a glance the tagline 'Harmony in Unity', is in line with the Olympic Charter (Prastya, 2013), one of which points that 'sport is a human right', every individual must have the right to sport, without discrimination in any form and in the spirit of the Olympics, on the basis of mutual understanding, spirit of friendship, solidarity, and fair play.

In his remarks, President of the Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said that 'Harmony in Unity, which is the theme of this year's Islamic Solidarity Games, has a very deep meaning. Can play a role in conducting public diplomacy in order to show a positive image of Islam, while dismissing the wrong perception so far. Besides showing a good image of Islam, public diplomacy can also display a positive image of Indonesia for the international world. Indonesia has shown increasing interest in organizing sports events. After the consolidation of democracy, political leaders rediscovered sporting events as a promising tool for domestic and foreign policy. By hosting the first Asian Beach Games 2008, South East Asia Games 2011, Islamic Solidarity Games 2013 and ASEAN University Games 2014, Indonesia entered the arena by following other developing countries (Trotier, 2017b).

Some of the shortcomings in the implementation of the lack of media role in promoting the Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG) event resulted in the public not knowing information about the grand event, other than that from the recognition of several sources namely traders around the Jakabaring Sport Center (JSC), the high ticket prices set by the committee when the public wants to watch a competition event is the reason for the lack of visitors during the ISG (Lupikawaty et al., 2013), a multi-dimensional investigation of how local residents understand the impact of limited large sporting events (Ahmed, 2017).

This was proven by the election of Azerbaijan precisely in Baku City as the host of the fourth edition of ISG. Evidence shows that organizing mega sports events enables Azerbaijan to gain international recognition and, as a consequence, ensure political consolidation (Rojo-Labaien, 2018). In the field of public diplomacy, Azerbaijan has worked to actively involve itself by registering successes, and hosting various types of international sports and cultural contests. Mainly derived from the country's efforts to improve its international position as a rapidly developing modern nation (Ismayilov, 2014). From the historical description of the implementation of the Islamic Solidarity Games, we can see how the host countries promote their country, and how important the event is for the country in maintaining diplomatic relations between participating countries. More than that, the host effect can enhance the positive image in the eyes of the international world.

Islamic Solidarity Games as a New Dynamics of the Strength of the International Sports System

The growth and development of sports organizations throughout the world, global acceptance of 'sports rules', and the formation of international and global competition are bound in a series of streams that shape the world of sports (Maguire, 2011a). The development of national and international sports organizations, the growth of competition between national teams, the acceptance of specific rules throughout the world, namely the 'Western', 'sports' forms, and the formation of global competitions such as the Olympics and the World Cup are all indications of globalization in the world of sports (Maguire, 2011b). Sport is a key instrument in many domestic and foreign policies of governments and is also a factor in promoting the country's image both regionally and internationally (Kissoudi, 2008).

The aim of the Islamic Solidarity Sport Federation (ISSF) is to strengthen Islamic solidarity among youths, promote Islamic identity in sports, embed principles of non-discrimination in accordance with Islamic teachings, promote cooperation among member states on issues that relating to sports, uniting positions in international sporting events, and cooperating with international sporting bodies, as well as preserving sporting principles and promoting the Olympic movement in the Muslim world (Amara, 2008). Referring to the opinion, the implementation of ISG which incidentally as the biggest sports party for Muslims can contribute to the development of the sports world by not clashing with Olympic values or even having more value as an international sports system.

Sport has always been a tool for Western countries to show their hegemony towards nations outside the West. Many countries in the Arab world became independent or at least autonomous from Western powers (Silva & Gerber, 2012)(Silva & Gerber, 2012). It seems that this is what inspired the Arab nations to do something that is not always oriented toward the west. Therefore, in the field of Islamic sports want to offer a sporting event that bears the same level as a sports party initiated by Western nations. To prove that most Muslim countries have power, so that their identity as Muslims is maintained in the eyes of the world. As another example, Amara (Dine, 2013), explained that '... sports broadcasts in the Islamic world, which are increasingly and successfully used by Gulf countries to position themselves internationally'.

The use of sports to get 'soft power' is illustrated in the increasing influence of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (UAE and Qatar in particular) in the global sports arena. This influence has had a significant impact on staging international sporting events, ownership, and sponsorship of top soccer clubs, and important investments in sports television broadcasts (Amara, 2017). Belief in sports as 'strength for good', and perhaps also as intrinsic moral activity is an important principle of the international sports regime (Jedlicka, 2018).

The big event in sports activities (Mega Sport Event) is a profit-making effort, although not always for the host community, city or country (McGillivray et al., 2019). Sports events are an excellent platform for developing sympathy, harmony and respect. Sports competitions provide unique opportunities for friendship and solidarity (Ubaidulloev, 2018). In the context of globalization, it is not surprising that we are witnessing a convergence of sports and foreign policy that is getting closer (Jackson & Haigh, 2008).

The image of a nation through sports is usually associated with organizing major sporting events while winning in sports has been considered with a lot of prestige (Kobierecki & Strožek, 2017). Sports can be considered a unique case of world politics, which as a policy field at the global level is regulated by non-governmental organizations or organizations (Chatzigianni, 2018). I am of the opinion that the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF) as a non-governmental and non-profit institution has succeeded in organizing a major sporting event that shows the world that Muslims have a strong unity. This shows that Islam has the potential to become a new force in the international sports system, although it requires more concrete proof. But at least, Islam has shown internationally the ability to organize sports.

The Importance of Islamic Solidarity Games for Turkey under the Leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

After President Erdogan secured a decisive victory in the June 2011 elections, Erdogan immediately and deliberately began to shift the legacy of a decades-old secular government and Turkey's foreign policy away from the West and towards the Islamic world (Yayla, n.d.). Since 2002, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

has offered Turkey and the world a vision of stability and economic growth, while vowing to restore the glory of the Ottoman Empire, the caliphate was finally ruled by him (Journalists and Writers Foundation, 2019).

Characteristic or 'major events' are large-scale, planned events of limited duration that can have substantial social, economic, political, environmental, and/or cultural impacts on the host region (McCloy & Thibault, 2013). Furthermore, (Rensmann, 2015), revealed that, '... sport in domestic foreign policy ultimately has the aim of increasing influence in international relations ...'. Some humans will be empty forever without doing sports, moved by Turkey's vision in the field of sports to become the number one sports country, it is possible to involve the contribution of every Turkish citizen (Akça & Özer, 2016). Do not rule out this possibility might be realized if you see Erdogan's political progress on the international scene and the policies issued by Erdogan make Turkey a new power in international sports. Overall, this leads to two different leadership styles for Erdogan: in Turkey, Erdogan is an expansionist whose focus of attention is on expanding the range of leadership, government, and state control. Abroad, Erdogan is collegial and focuses on reconciling differences and building consensus to gain prestige and status through empowering others and sharing accountability (Kesgin, 2019).

Participation in international sporting events has provided the right opportunity for Turkey's "zero-problem" implementation with the neighbour country policy" (Polo, 2015). According to Sonntag (Polo, 2015), who stated that 'organizing an international sporting event, or the victory of a Turkish team in an international event, was presented and celebrated as a true national success'. An example is the linkage of the Olympic Games to Istanbul will be celebrated as a personal victory for Erdogan, evidence that under his leadership Turkey has successfully guided to a new position on the world stage (Polo, 2015). Likewise, with the implementation of the fifth edition of Islamic Solidarity Games held in Konya, Turkey, it is possible for Erdogan to celebrate a similar issue as his success in conducting multilateral and international diplomacy as a 'new force', especially in the field of sports.

CONCLUSION

In an effort to strengthen the solidarity of fellow Muslims, organizing sporting events can be a solution behind the tensions between the Arabian Peninsula countries and may even be with countries outside, which of course is a country with a majority Muslim population.

Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG) gives meaning to the existence of Islam, especially sports for Muslims in the eyes of the world. Through ISG, Western nation-state hegemony over Muslims can be abated. Because in accordance with the Olympic charter, that every human being has the basic right to do and be involved in sports activities and activities. To prove that ISG has the potential to become a new force in the international sports system, it needs hard work of Islamic countries, government organizations, non-governmental organizations, and Muslims in general who are bound through solidarity to realize this. Future research is deemed necessary to further prove the existence of the Islamic Solidarity Games by conducting quantitative and qualitative studies.

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