The Relationship between Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Building Harmony in Diversity

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Abstract: *This paper aims to examine the relationship between Islam and democracy in the socio- political landscape in Indonesia. Based on literature analysis, this article shows that democracy does not contradict Islamic values, but can accommodate Islamic values , while the principles of Islamic teachings can enrich the practice of democracy in Indonesia. By highlighting the principles of justice, deliberation, and responsibility in Islam, this study shows that Islam and democracy are not only compatible but also complementary in exercising a just and accountable government. The results of this study show that Islam and democracy can coexist and strengthen each other in building a harmony in diversity in Indonesia supported by democratic, participatory and inclusive political system.*

Keywords: *Islam, Democracy, Harmony in Diversity, Indonesian Political System*

1. INTRODUCTION

Islam and democracy are often seen as two opposing entities, with the assumption that spiritual values in Islam are incompatible with secular principles inherent in democracy. However, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has proven that these two notions could interact harmoniously. Since the Reform Era in 1998, Indonesia has implemented a system of government that encourages public participation, upholds human rights, and provides space for pluralism (Mujani, 2018). As the religion of majority, Islam with its values such as justice, deliberation and social welfare, has contributed positively to the practice of democracy in Indonesia.

One way in which democracy can accommodate Islamic values is through the application of the principle of deliberation, which is an integral part of Islamic teachings. The concept of deliberation is in line with democratic practices that emphasize the importance of dialogue and deliberation among citizens in decision-making (Hafidz, 2020). Thus, integrating Islamic values in the democratic process can not only strengthen the legitimacy of power, but also increase the active participation of the community in political life. This is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where community-based approaches and public participation have proven effective in empowering communities.

On the other hand, Islam can enrich democratic practices in Indonesia by providing a strong moral foundation for political decision-making. Islamic values that emphasize justice, egalitarianism, and social responsibility can serve as guidelines in the development of policies that favor the community (Ali, 2021). With this approach, it is hoped that a democratic system will be executed not just in a formal form, but also in securing welfare and social justice for all people. Islam's contribution to democratic practices can also help reduce social conflict and create greater political stability.

Overall, the relationship between Islam and democracy in Indonesia has great potential to complement and strengthen each other. By understanding and developing synergies between these two notions, Indonesia can serve as a model for other countries in creating an inclusive, just and democratic system of governance without neglecting religious values. Through further research and discussion, it is important to explore how academic works and social practices could encourage collaboration between Islam and democracy in the context of Indonesia's plural society (Azra, 2019).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. The data was collected from various relevant sources, including journal articles, books and official documents that discuss the

relationship between Islam and democracy in Indonesia. The analysis was conducted by examining the principles of democracy from an Islamic perspective and how these principles are implemented in the socio-political landscape in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Alignment of Islamic Fundamental Values and Democracy

Understanding democracy in the Islamic context is not necessarily the same as the western model. Rather, the Islamic approach to democracy can be transformed into a form that is more appropriate to the culture and local context of Muslim societies. To respond to Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama's thesis that Islamic societies are not compatible with democracy, it needs to be emphasized that the empirical reality of Islamic societies is not monolithic or homogeneous. This means that plurality in the interpretation and implementation of democratic values in Islam is highly likely. There are many examples of Muslim countries that have successfully implemented democratic principles within the framework of Islamic values (Esposito, 2017). Indonesia has shown that democratic formats and Islamic values can form convergence, despite challenges and differences.

Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, has demonstrated that the principles of Islam and democracy can not only coexist but can also mutually reinforce each other. Democracy does not conflict with Islamic values in Indonesia as both complement each other to build a more just and civilized society. Various studies show that the values of justice, deliberation and responsibility in Islam are aligned with the principles of democracy, thus creating a positive synergy in the management of governance and social interaction in Indonesia (Murtadlo, 2020). Through an inclusive political system that encourages public participation, Indonesia has managed to prove that Islamic values, such as justice, deliberation, and responsibility, are in harmony with the essence of democracy. This makes Indonesia an interesting example to study in the context of relationship between religion and politics.

The first principle that deserves attention is justice *(al-'adl)* in Islam, the main pillar that regulates the social and political life of society. The principle of justice in Islam underscores the importance of equity and legal certainty. In the context of democracy, justice is the foundation for fair law enforcement and the protection of human rights. According to Abdurrahman Wahid (1999), one of the important figures in moderate Islamic thought in Indonesia, the principle of justice in Islam supports efforts to create a just social structure, which is an essential component of democracy. In this regard, Indonesia has integrated Islamic values of justice into its legal framework and public policies, enabling people to receive fair and equal treatment.

This principle is in line with the norm of justice in democracy that requires the rights of every individual to be protected without discrimination. A good government system is the one that upholds the principles of justice and fulfills the rights of citizens (Wahid, 2019). Therefore, the application of the principle of justice within the framework of democracy in Indonesia not only strengthens the legitimacy of the government, but also has a positive impact on the welfare of the people.

Furthermore, deliberation (*shura*) as a method of decision-making in Islam shows compatibility with the practice of deliberation in modern democracy. Deliberation, which is upheld in Islamic teachings, allows the decision-making process to be carried out in an inclusive manner, where every voice is valued. It is not just an activity, but a manifestation of the community's active participation in determining the direction of public policy (Nasution, 2019). Thus, deliberation not only strengthens social relations, but also improves the quality of decisions taken by the government.

In Indonesia, this deliberation mechanism can be seen in decision-making processes at various levels, from the village to the central government. The implementation of deliberation facilitates community involvement in political and decision- making processes, in line with democratic values that prioritize citizen participation. Therefore, deliberation is not only a core value in the culture of Indonesian society, but also strengthens inclusive democratic practices (Indradji, 2012).

Responsibility (*amanah*) is the third principle that is relevant in discussing the relationship between Islam and democracy. In the Islamic perspective, leaders are considered as parties who are given a mandate by the people, and must be responsible for their actions and decisions. This principle is in line with accountability, which allows people to monitor and assess the performance of their leaders,

as well as encourage transparency in government (Fauzi, 2021). Responsibility is a principle that underlies the harmonization between Islam and democracy. In both Islam and democracy, leaders are expected to be responsible for the people they lead. This is reflected in the Indonesian government system, which requires accountability from public officials.

Research shows that accountability and transparency in government not only create public trust, but also strengthen the legitimacy of democracy itself (Sihombing, 2020). The concept of *al-masuliyyah* or accountability in Islam is also related to the elements of democracy. Leaders in Islam are required to be accountable for every decision taken before the God and society. This creates a form of accountability that is indispensable in any government system, including in democracy (Zuhdi, 2019). In this context, awareness of social responsibility is very important in building a democratic society.

Furthermore, *al-hurriyyah* or freedom is not only recognized, but is also expected to grow within the moral and ethical framework established by Islamic teachings. Freedom of opinion, assembly and choice are principles that can be found in Islamic teachings, where individuals are given the right to determine their fate and views (Al Haq, 2021).

In order to achieve a more democratic society, inclusive and dialogical approaches must be strengthened. Appreciating the contributions of Muslim scholars and intellectuals who try to bridge Islamic teachings with the concept of democracy will help developing a just and responsive system of governance. The integration of Islamic values and democratic principles in Indonesia is not just an alternative, but a prerequisite to achieve a more democratic and equitable life. This complimentary approach emphasizes that the two notions cannot be separated, but rather strengthen each other to create a just and prosperous nation. Therefore, it is important that understanding this relationship continues should be developed in research and socio-political practice in Indonesia.

3.2. Interaction of Islam and Democracy

The interaction between Islam and democracy in Indonesia has long historical roots, shaped by various important events throughout the struggle for independence until the current Reform Era. Islam, as the majority religion practiced by the Indonesian population, not only influences aspects of spiritual life but also plays a crucial role in the political and social settings. The role of Islam in Indonesia's independence struggle was significant, with movements led by clerics and religious organizations being the main drivers. For example, Sarekat Islam, founded in the early 20th century, was one of the organizations that mobilized the spirit of nationalism against the Dutch colonialism (Azra, 2006).

In formulating the basis of the state and constitution, the contribution of Islamic figures cannot be ignored. Leaders such as Mohammad Hatta and Abdul Wahid Hasyim sought to integrate Islamic values with universal democratic principles. Pancasila as the foundation of the Indonesian state reflects values that are in line with Islamic teachings, such as social justice and unity (Nashir, 2010). Discussions on the basis of the state in the BPUPKI sessions showed broad support from various elements, including Islamic leaders, to create an inclusive and democratic system, accommodating the aspirations of various groups of society.

The evolution of Islamic political parties in Indonesia's political history reflects the dynamic interaction between Islam and democracy. Islamic parties, ranging from Masyumi to PPP (United Development Party), have attempted to represent the voice of Muslims in parliament and government. Although these parties face challenges in maintaining relevance amidst growing pluralism and other political ideologies, they continue to adapt and innovate in response to constituent needs (Munir, 2013). Party leaders also often play an important role in formulating policies that reflect Islamic and democratic values.

After the Reform Era in 1998, the interaction between Islam and democracy has been transformed. The emergence of new political parties based on Islamic ideology showed a new dynamic in Indonesian politics. Parties such as PKB (National Awakening Party) and PKS (Prosperous Justice Party) have succeeded in attracting voters by offering platforms that prioritize Islamic values within a democratic framework (Barton, 2002). This shows that Islam and democracy can support and strengthen each other in the Indonesian political context.

However, challenges remain, both from within Islamic parties themselves and externally in a multi-religious society. The tension between secular and religious ideas often creates a dilemma for Islamic parties and their voters. In some cases, there is a tendency to exploit religious identity for political gain, potentially undermining democratic principles (Cammack, 2016). Therefore, it is important for Islamic parties to develop an inclusive and tolerant approach to maintain democratic stability in Indonesia.

The history of the interaction between Islam and democracy in Indonesia provides many lessons. Since independence, Indonesia has endeavored to create a system of government that reflects Islamic values without neglecting democratic principles. The Reformasi Movement in the late 1990s is a significant example where demands for democracy aligned with the religious aspirations of the people. In this case, it appears that these two systems are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement and reinforce each other (Poeze, 2006).

Thus, Indonesia not only proves that a Muslim-majority country can have a democracy, but also provides an example that despite challenges, fundamental Islamic principles can be integrated into democratic practices. This marks the possibility of building a political framework that is inclusive and equitable, which in turn helps strengthen democracy. Further study of the content and implementation of these values in the context of local Indonesian culture is increasingly relevant, as an attempt to understand the fusion of religion and politics in the modern era (Hefner, 2000).

3.3. Integration of Islamic Values in the State Constitution

Pancasila is the foundation of the Indonesian state that not only functions as an ideology, but also reflects the characteristics and noble values of the nation. The formulation process of Pancasila involved various groups, including Islamic leaders who had a significant influence in determining the values contained therein. With diverse backgrounds, the founding fathers tried to harmonize the worldview of Indonesian society, so that Pancasila can be accepted by all elements of society, including Muslims in Indonesia. This shows that the values contained in Pancasila are in line with the principles of Islamic teachings, such as divinity, humanity, justice, deliberation, and unity.

One of the most fundamental values in Pancasila is Belief in One God. This principle is in line with Islamic teachings that prioritize tawhid as the main teaching. According to Ali (2010), the concept of divinity in Pancasila provides a foundation for Indonesian society to respect each other and coexist in a diversity of beliefs. This also reflects the spirit of Islam which respects differences and encourages tolerance between religious communities. Thus, Pancasila is not only a unifying tool, but also reflects moral values that are closely related to religious teachings.

In addition, the humanitarian values enshrined in Pancasila are in line with Islamic teachings on the importance of respecting human dignity. This concept emphasizes that every individual has the right to be treated fairly and equally before the law. As explained by Salim (2018), the protection of human rights is one of the important teachings in Islam that should be implemented in the life of the nation. By integrating this human value in Pancasila, Indonesia affirms its commitment to creating a just and civilized society.

The value of justice contained in Pancasila also has relevance to the principles in Islamic teachings. Justice in Islam is one of the attributes that must be upheld, both in social and economic contexts. According to Mustaqim (2021), Pancasila as the foundation of the state emphasizes the importance of fair and equitable distribution of wealth, which is in line with Islamic teachings on the obligation to help others and maintain community welfare. Therefore, the value of justice in Pancasila invites Indonesians to always strive to create inclusive social welfare.

Deliberation and consensus as values promoted in Pancasila describe efforts to reach agreement through dialogue and discussion, which is a form of implementation of Islamic teachings on deliberation. In Islam, deliberation or *shura* is a method of decision-making that involves the participation of all parties. As stated by Rahmat (2019), the application of the principle of deliberation in Pancasila results in decisions that are more democratic and reflect common interests, resulting in harmonious conditions in a pluralistic society.

Finally, the value of unity in Pancasila underscores the attention to social cohesion that is important in Indonesia's multicultural society. In the context of Islamic teachings, unity is a value that is highly

emphasized, as stated in the Qur'an to maintain harmonious relationships between people. The sentence in the Qur'an stating that Muslims are brothers (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 10) emphasizes the importance of unity and solidarity. Therefore, by integrating these values in Pancasila, Indonesia is committed to maintaining national unity amidst diversity.

Thus, the integration of Islamic values in Pancasila as the foundation of the Indonesian state not only strengthens the nation's identity, but also provides a solid framework for the development of a just, civilized and harmonious society.

3.4. Harmony in Diversity

Indonesia is a democratic country where the majority of the population is Muslim and one of the countries with the largest Muslim population in the world. As a country with the largest Muslim population, Indonesia has an important role in showing how Islam can coexist with the principles of democracy and pluralism. This is reflected in Indonesia's constitution which guarantees freedom of religion for all its citizens, as well as official recognition of other religions such as Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism (Syafieh, 2024).

In the midst of this pluralism, the Islamic community in Indonesia has demonstrated the ability to coexist peacefully with followers of other religions. This tolerance is the result of the moderation of Islamic values practiced by the majority of Muslims in Indonesia. Islamic moderation in Indonesia includes respect for diversity, respect for human rights, and rejection of extremism (Aniq, 2018). This moderation also contributes to the creation of social harmony in the midst of cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia.

The long history of interaction between Islam and other religions in Indonesia shows that pluralism can work in harmony with the principles of Islam. In fact, this pluralism has become an integral part of Indonesia's national identity. In practice, the government and religious organizations have sought to promote interfaith dialogue and interfaith cooperation to address common challenges and strengthen social cohesion (Judijanto, 2024).

However, while Indonesia has generally succeeded in maintaining interfaith harmony, there are still challenges that need to be addressed. For example, there are still small groups that promote extremist views and seek to undermine interfaith harmony. Therefore, efforts to promote Islamic moderation and pluralism must continue to be stepped up. One effective way to do so is through education that emphasizes the importance of tolerance and respect for diversity (Hutabarat, 2023).

In addition, legal, social and political factors also play an important role in safeguarding religious freedom and promoting moderation. The Indonesian government needs to continue strengthening policies and legal frameworks that protect religious freedom and prevent faith- based discrimination. Meanwhile, civil society and religious organizations can contribute through programs that promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation (ResearchGate, 2024).

Overall, the moderation of Islamic values in the context of religious pluralism in Indonesia contributes positively to the creation of tolerance and social harmony. By continuing to encourage moderation and interfaith dialog, Indonesia can serve as an example for other countries in managing religious diversity amid complex social and political dynamics.

3.5. Political Participation of Muslim Women

An important finding about the synergy of Islam and democracy in Indonesia is the widespread participation of Muslim women in the political arena. One of the crucial issues in the relationship between Islam and democracy in Indonesia is the role of Muslim women in the public sphere, especially in politics. The conservative view states the need for strict restrictions for women to participate in public life, especially in political life. This view is often rooted in certain interpretations of religious texts that emphasize women's traditional roles as mothers and housekeepers. For example, encourages Muslim women to be more active in da'wah activities, while still placing their primary role in the domestic sphere(Mujahidudin, 2016).

However, this conservative view does not fully represent the views of the majority of Muslims in Indonesia. Most Indonesian Muslims are more accepting of women's involvement in various aspects of public life, including politics. This is reflected in the increasing number of women involved in politics, both at the local and national levels. Numerous studies show that despite structural and

cultural barriers, Indonesian women continue to struggle for greater political representation (Aspinall, 2015).

History records many Muslim women playing important roles in politics, both at the local and national levels. This shows that Islam, which is practiced by the majority of Indonesia's population, does not prevent women from being involved in politics. Such examples include various female figures in political parties and government positions that prove that their participation in politics is natural and socially acceptable.

The presence of women in politics in Indonesia, especially Muslims, is also encouraged by various reform initiatives that prioritize gender equality. Laws regulating women's quotas in the legislature and other affirmative policies are concrete steps to accommodate women's participation in politics. These initiatives prove that Islam, in the Indonesian context, supports the empowerment of women to play an active role in government and policy-making. The results of the 2024 parliament elections has are increased the number of women's representation to 22.1% or 128 seats out of 580 parliament seats. This figure is 1.6% higher than the 2019 elections with 20.5% women's representation (118/575). The results of the 2024 DPR elections are also the highest achievement of women's representation in Indonesia's electoral history (Perludem, 2024).

In many parts of Indonesia, Muslim women have demonstrated effective and competitive leadership. They are not only involved in political parties, but also perform important functions in local government, such as becoming regents or mayors. Their success in these positions demonstrates that women's involvement in politics is not contrary to Islamic principles, but rather a manifestation of their rights as citizens.

The presence of Muslim women in politics also enriches political dynamics with different perspectives, often bringing innovative solutions to social and development issues. They bring a voice that represents the interests of family, education, and social welfare, which is important in formulating inclusive and people-oriented public policies. This shows that Islam supports women's contributions to achieving the general welfare and progress of the country.

In fact, Indonesia has a long history of women's involvement in politics. One of the most prominent examples is Megawati Soekarnoputri, who not only became Vice President but also the sixth President of Indonesia. This achievement shows that Indonesian women can reach the highest positions in government and play an important role in political decision-making

The presence of women in politics is also strengthened by the existence of laws that support gender equality and women's participation in politics, although their implementation still faces various challenges. Moreover, women's involvement in politics benefits not only the women themselves but also society as a whole. Women's participation in politics can enrich perspectives in the policy-making process and ensure that the resulting policies are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the whole community. Research shows that when women are involved in politics, issues such as health, education, and child welfare tend to get greater attention (Fauzi, 2014).

The increasing involvement of women in various political positions, including as ministers and regional head candidates, shows that Islam and political culture in Indonesia support each other in creating a more just and representative political system. This underscores that Islam, in the Indonesian context, provides space for women to contribute fully to governance and decision-making.

However, despite significant progress, Muslim women in Indonesia still face various barriers to political participation. These barriers include gender discrimination, cultural stereotypes, and lack of support from political parties and the community. Therefore, there needs to be a sustained effort to overcome these barriers and encourage greater participation of women in politics.

As such, the role of Muslim women in politics in Indonesia is a complex and multifaceted issue. While there are significant challenges, there is also progress showing that Muslim women in Indonesia are increasingly able and empowered to participate in politics. This shows that democracy in Indonesia is increasingly inclusive and responsive to gender diversity, which will ultimately strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of the political system in Indonesia.

3.6. The Role of Religious Organizations

Indonesia, as a predominantly Muslim country, has a variety of religious organizations that play an important role in the social and political life of the community. Among these organizations,

Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) stand out as the two largest moderate Islamic entities with significant influence. Both not only serve as a forum for Islam adherents to practice religious teachings, but also as agents of change that contribute to strengthening democracy through political education and advocacy for fair and inclusive policies. Research shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have sufficient capacity to build political awareness among their members, while encouraging active participation in the democratic process (Baker, 2018).

Nahdlatul Ulama, with tens of millions of members, has been a driving force in the development of political education in Indonesia. Through various training programs and seminars, NU educates its members on the importance of political participation as well as an understanding of the rights and obligations as citizens. This approach has a positive impact on increasing people's political awareness, thus encouraging them to be active in voting and involved in the political decision-making process (Luthfi, 2020). As an organization that adheres to the principle of moderation, NU also promotes healthy democratic values, promoting discussion and dialogue as the key to resolving differences of opinion.

On the other hand, Muhammadiyah also has an important role in strengthening democracy in Indonesia. As an organization committed to modernization and social renewal, Muhammadiyah actively advocates for inclusive and equitable public policies. Through its extensive educational, health, and social networks, Muhammadiyah spreads democratic values and encourages citizen participation in demanding social justice (Rahman, 2021). This approach not only provides space for the community to speak out, but also bridges communication between the government and the community in formulating policies that are more responsive to the needs of the people.

The existence of Muhammadiyah and NU as moderate Islamic organizations that have a strong influence in society shows the important role of religious institutions in building healthy democracy in Indonesia. By supporting political education and inclusive policy advocacy, these two organizations have successfully raised crucial social issues and educated the public about the importance of participation in a democratic system. In this context, research showing the significant contributions of Muhammadiyah and NU in strengthening democracy provides evidence that religious organizations can serve as important pillars in the sustainable development of democracy in Indonesia (Hidayat, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

The relationship between Islam and democracy in Indonesia shows significant potential to build a model that can be adopted by other Muslim-majority countries. In this context, it is important to underline that Islamic values, which in principle uphold justice, equality and deliberation, can contribute positively to the strengthening of democracy. By embracing and integrating Islamic teachings in line with democratic principles, Indonesia can develop a political system that is not only inclusive but also reflects the cultural and spiritual identity of its people.

Furthermore, the active support of Muslims in promoting democracy is a key factor in creating bright and stable political future. When religious and democratic values support each other, society will be better able to face challenges and develop wider public participation. Thus, the synergy between Islam and democracy in Indonesia not only strengthens the social legitimacy of the political system, but also enables the creation of a safe space for diversity and pluralism, which are essential foundations for the nation's progress.

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