

HOW HUMANITARIAN ISLAM FOSTERS PEACE: THE PERSPECTIVE OF NAHDLATUL ULAMA

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Abstract

This paper explores the perspective of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, on the relationship between Islam and citizenship, and how its Humanitarian Islam initiative fosters peace and harmony among Muslims and non-Muslims. Using a literature review method, it examines the historical and conceptual background of Islam and citizenship and their relevance and implications in the context of Indonesia. It argues that NU and Humanitarian Islam view Islam and citizenship as compatible and mutually beneficial, based on the Islamic values and principles that are in line with the ideals and norms of citizenship. It also analyzes the main features and achievements of NU and Humanitarian Islam in promoting and practicing

Islam and citizenship in Indonesia and beyond, such as their role in countering extremism, advancing democracy, and enhancing social justice. It discusses the challenges and opportunities that NU and Humanitarian Islam encounter in the contemporary world, such as the rise of Islamophobia, the impact of globalization, and the need for interfaith dialogue. It concludes that NU and Humanitarian Islam can serve as a model and a catalyst for the Muslim world and humanity at large, to foster a more peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive society.

Makalah ini mengeksplorasi perspektif Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), organisasi Islam terbesar di Indonesia, mengenai hubungan antara Islam dan kewarganegaraan, serta bagaimana inisiatif Islam Humanitarian mereka mempromosikan perdamaian dan harmoni di antara umat Muslim dan non-Muslim. Dengan menggunakan metode tinjauan literatur, makalah ini mengkaji latar belakang historis dan konseptual Islam dan kewarganegaraan serta relevansi dan implikasinya dalam konteks Indonesia. Makalah ini berargumen bahwa NU dan Islam Humanitarian memandang Islam dan kewarganegaraan sebagai hal yang kompatibel dan saling menguntungkan, berdasarkan nilai dan prinsip Islam yang selaras dengan ide dan norma kewarganegaraan. Makalah ini juga menganalisis fitur utama dan pencapaian NU dan Islam Humanitarian dalam mempromosikan dan mempraktikkan Islam dan kewarganegaraan di Indonesia dan lebih luas, seperti peran mereka dalam menangkal ekstremisme, memajukan demokrasi, dan meningkatkan keadilan sosial. Selanjutnya, makalah ini membahas tantangan dan peluang yang dihadapi NU dan Islam Humanitarian di dunia kontemporer, seperti munculnya Islamofobia, dampak globalisasi, dan kebutuhan akan dialog antariman. Makalah ini menyimpulkan bahwa NU dan Islam Humanitarian dapat berfungsi sebagai model dan katalisator bagi dunia Muslim dan umat manusia secara luas, untuk membina masyarakat yang lebih damai, toleran, dan inklusif.

Keywords: *Islam and citizenship, Nahdlatul Ulama, Humanitarian Islam, peace and harmony*

Introduction

Islam is a religion that has a long and rich history of interaction with diverse cultures and civilizations (Manj et al., 2021). Throughout its history,

Islam has faced various challenges and opportunities in adapting to different contexts and realities. One of the most pressing issues that Islam faces today is how to reconcile its universal values and principles with the demands and expectations of modern citizenship (Cohen & Ghosh, 2019). Citizenship, as a concept and practice, entails the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups in relation to the state and society (Kallio, Wood, & Häkli, 2020). It also involves the recognition and respect of diversity and pluralism within and across communities (Kirmayer, 2019). In the contemporary world, citizenship is often associated with democracy, human rights, rule of law, and social justice (Jelin, 2019). However, these ideals are not always compatible with the traditional interpretations and applications of Islamic law and ethics, which may emphasize the primacy of religious identity and authority over secular and civic ones (Saada & Magadlah, 2021). Therefore, the question of how Muslims can be faithful to their religion and at the same time be good citizens in a pluralistic and democratic society is a crucial and complex one (Rahman & Setia, 2021).

This question is especially relevant and urgent in the context of Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country and the third-largest democracy (Hefner, 2019). Indonesia is a country that has experienced a remarkable transition from authoritarianism to democracy since the fall of Suharto's regime in 1998 (Hicken, 2020). It is also a country that has a remarkable diversity of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious groups, which coexist under the national motto of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity) (Hefner, 2023). However, Indonesia is also a country that faces various challenges and threats to its stability and harmony, such as corruption, poverty, inequality, terrorism, radicalism, sectarianism, and intolerance (Kingston, 2019). These challenges and threats pose serious risks to the consolidation and quality of democracy and citizenship in Indonesia, as well as to the peace and security of the region and the world (Setiawan & Tomsa, 2022).

In this context, the role and contribution of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world's biggest Islamic organization, is significant and influential

(Saenong, 2021). NU is a socio-religious movement that was founded in 1926 by a group of traditionalist Muslim scholars (ulama) who sought to preserve and promote the teachings and practices of classical Sunni Islam (Jufri, 2022), especially the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence and the Ash'ari school of theology, in the face of modernist and reformist challenges (Hanafi, 2023). NU has a large and loyal following of about 50 million members and 14,000 Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) across Indonesia. It also has a strong and active presence in various fields of social, educational, cultural, political, and humanitarian activities (Purwanto, 2019). NU is also known for its support and participation in the democratic process and institutions in Indonesia, as it endorses the principles of constitutionalism, pluralism, and civil society (Barton et al., 2021).

One of the most notable and innovative initiatives of NU in recent years is the Humanitarian Islam movement, which was launched in 2016 by the current chairman of NU, Kyai Haji Said Aqil Siradj, and the general secretary of NU, Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf (Mostowlansky, 2020). Humanitarian Islam is a vision and mission of Islam that aims to address the root causes of the crisis of civilization that afflicts the Muslim world and humanity at large (Nasution, 2019). It is also based on the recognition that some of the existing interpretations and applications of Islamic teachings are no longer relevant or compatible with the current realities and challenges of the 21st century (Akrim, 2022). Therefore, Humanitarian Islam emerges as a response to the complex socio-political landscape of the modern world.

Humanitarian Islam advocates for a holistic reform encompassing theology, jurisprudence, and social norms. Islam underscores the importance of dialogue and cooperation across religious boundaries. Successful interfaith initiatives demonstrate the feasibility of peaceful coexistence (Ahmed et al., 2020). Humanitarian Islam promotes inclusivity regardless of ethnicity, sect, or gender. Thus, Humanitarian Islam offers a vision of Islam that transcends parochial boundaries, emphasizing compassion, justice, and coexistence.

The main objectives and strategies of Humanitarian Islam are articulated and elaborated in several documents and declarations that have been issued and endorsed by NU and its affiliates, such as the Nusantara Manifesto (2016), Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam (2017), Nusantara Statement (2018), and The Humanitarian Islam Charter (2019) (Ivanyi & Lohlker 2023). They also provide a constructive and positive contribution to the global discourse and action on peace, security, and development, as they offer a viable and alternative model of Islam that is compatible and conducive to democracy, human rights, rule of law, and social justice (Ranjbar & Chikrizova, 2023).

The main argument of this study is that Islam and citizenship are not incompatible or contradictory, but rather complementary and mutually reinforcing, in the perspective of NU and its Humanitarian Islam initiative (Satibi & Supriadi, 2023). It demonstrates how NU and Humanitarian Islam foster peace and harmony among Muslims and non-Muslims in Indonesia and beyond, by promoting and practicing the values and principles of Islam that are in line with the ideals and norms of citizenship (Jamilah, 2021). It also discusses the challenges and opportunities that NU and Humanitarian Islam face in advancing their vision and mission of Islam and citizenship in the contemporary world (Nubowo, 2023). This article consists of three main parts: the first part provides a historical and conceptual overview of Islam and citizenship, and their relationship and relevance in the context of Indonesia; the second part analyzes and evaluates the main features and achievements of NU and Humanitarian Islam in promoting and practicing Islam and citizenship in Indonesia and beyond; and the third part concludes with some reflections and recommendations on the future prospects and implications of NU and Humanitarian Islam for the peace and harmony of the Muslim world and humanity at large.

Method

To dig deeper into how Humanitarian Islam facilitates peace, this research adopts a literature review approach. The steps taken in this research

were literature collection. It started with searching for literature relevant to the topic "Humanitarian Islam" and "Nahdlatul Ulama" (NU). The next step was accessing databases of journals, books, articles, and other trusted sources. This stage aims at selecting the most relevant literature from the past five years, focusing on Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and their role in promoting peace. It ensures that the selected literature is of good academic quality by using Publish or Perish and exclusively relying on sources indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). This study analyzes the issue by identifying patterns, findings and concepts that emerge from the literature we research. The synthesis also involved comparing and contrasting various existing views and approaches.

To ensure objectivity in our analysis and present a balanced view of the research, this study employed a systematic approach in comparing and contrasting various existing views and approaches. The methodology involved the following steps: *First*, systematic literature review done by selecting sources that are peer-reviewed and indexed in recognized academic databases. *Second*, critical analysis that involved assessing the credibility of the research by examining the authors' affiliations, potential conflicts of interest, and the robustness of the research design. *Third*, synthesis of literature that was constructed to reflect the complexity of the subject matter, acknowledging areas of consensus as well as ongoing debates. *Fourth*, objective presentation, focusing on the evidence provided by the studies rather than personal opinions or biases. *Fifth*, acknowledgment of controversies and disagreements, which are discussed in the context of their implications for the field and the potential for future research. *Sixth*, transparent methodology, done by making sure that the research process, selection criteria, and analytical methods are clearly outlined to allow for reproducibility and scrutiny by other scholars. By adhering to these methodological principles, this study aims to contribute a rigorous, balanced, and objective analysis to the academic discourse on the subject. In sum, the methodological rigor enables a holistic understanding of NU's

impact on peace, underscoring its significance within the Islamic Humanitarian framework.

Findings and Discussion

Overview of Islam and Citizenship in Indonesia

The exploration of Islam's role in the Indonesian context of citizenship begins with a historical overview, tracing the nation's journey from an authoritarian regime to a vibrant democracy. The pivotal year of 1998 marked Indonesia's re-emergence as a democratic state, a transition that was both celebrated and fraught with challenges. This period underscored the nation's unique standing as the world's most populous Muslim-majority country and its commitment to democratic principles (Hefner, 2023).

The analysis then shifts focus to the influential role of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the Humanitarian Islam movement in shaping Indonesia's democratic landscape. NU, with its deep roots and extensive following, has been instrumental in advocating for a form of citizenship that transcends religious and ethnic divisions, promoting a vision of democracy that is inclusive and representative of all Indonesians. This vision stands in stark contrast to the challenges posed by the rise of Islamist militias and the surge in violence against minority groups. Such tensions highlight the ongoing struggle between inclusive citizenship and exclusionary ideologies (Cayli, 2019).

Nahdlatul Ulama's contributions to democracy and citizenship in Indonesia are further highlighted by its commitment to religious tolerance and good governance. NU has been recognized as a leading Muslim institution dedicated to protecting traditional Islamic values while simultaneously advocating for democratic civility, inter-group conciliation, and the public good. Its efforts have been crucial in mainstreaming marginalized communities, including ethnic minorities, women, non-Sunni Muslim minorities, and non-Muslim religious minorities, thereby enhancing

the process of democratization in Indonesia (The Conversation, 2021; The Diplomat, 2023).

The concept of Humanitarian Islam has emerged as a significant force in promoting an inclusive public ethics that aligns with democratic ideals. It emphasizes the importance of equal citizenship and deeper cooperation among Muslims, Christians, and followers of other religions to promote world peace. This interpretation of Islam, which focuses on love and compassion, represents a reformist agenda that challenges controversial issues such as political leadership and relations with non-Muslims, advocating for the legitimacy of modern states' constitutional and legal systems over a state based on Islamic law (The Conversation, 2021).

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Humanitarian Islam's Democratic Endeavours

Indonesia's journey from an authoritarian regime to a robust democracy is a testament to the nation's resilience and commitment to democratic ideals. The year 1998 stands as a watershed moment in Indonesian history, marking the end of a repressive era and the beginning of a new chapter characterized by electoral democracy and the pursuit of inclusive citizenship. This transition has been particularly significant given Indonesia's status as the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation and the third-largest democracy, presenting a unique blend of Islamic traditions and democratic governance (Hefner, 2023).

The democratization process in Indonesia has been underpinned by the active participation of major Islamic groups, which have played a crucial role in shaping the country's political landscape. These groups have supported the development of a pluralistic and participatory democracy based on the national ideology of Pancasila, which emphasizes unity in diversity and religious tolerance. The consensus on Pancasila among these groups has been instrumental in fostering a moderate interpretation of Islam that aligns with democratic values (Anwar, 2019).

Furthermore, Indonesia's experience with local elections has shown how Islamic leadership can contribute to democratic processes. In this concern, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of the largest Islamic organizations globally, has played a pivotal role in shaping the democratic ethos of Indonesia. NU's advocacy for a democratic model of citizenship that is inclusive of all Indonesians, irrespective of religious or ethnic identity, has been a bulwark against the rise of Islamist militias and the increasing violence directed at religious minorities. This commitment to inclusivity is a cornerstone of NU's vision for a harmonious society, where the values of equality, justice, and non-discrimination are paramount (Cayli, 2019).

NU's innovative approach to citizenship is encapsulated in the term "al-muwatinun," which signifies a socio-political identity that transcends traditional religious classifications. This concept, developed in response to the emergence of exclusionary ideologies in Indonesia, represents a departure from classical Islamic thought and reflects NU's efforts to foster a society where all individuals are valued equally and afforded the same rights and opportunities, regardless of their faith (Zuhdi, 2022).

The application of the al-muwatinun concept is a manifestation of NU's contextualized approach to Islamic jurisprudence, which is attuned to the unique cultural and societal landscape of the Indonesian archipelago. By embracing a form of fiqh that is responsive to local realities, NU underscores its dedication to safeguarding the unity and integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. This approach serves as a counterbalance to radical ideologies that seek to divide society along religious lines (Schmid, 2022). NU's embrace of al-muwatinun has profound implications for the fabric of Indonesian society. It demonstrates the potential for Islamic principles to evolve in harmony with contemporary political and social dynamics, thereby contributing to the creation of a more cohesive and inclusive nation.

Interplay between Islam and Societal Changes

The interplay between Islam and societal changes is a multifaceted concept that reflects the dynamic relationship between Islamic teachings and

the evolving needs of society. The concept of Humanitarian Islam, as articulated by Khafagy (2020), is a prime example of this interplay, where the core principles of Islam intertwine with the universal values of humanitarianism. By promoting a version of Islam that aligns with global humanitarian standards, NU aims to demonstrate that Islam can actively contribute to solving modern societal challenges while fostering a peaceful coexistence worldwide.

In the Islamic tradition, charity and assistance to others are not merely acts of kindness but are considered fundamental components of one's faith. Mittermaier (2019) highlights that these acts are deeply embedded within the religious practices of Islam. The Qur'an and Hadith—the primary sources of Islamic jurisprudence—emphasize the significance of benevolence and altruism. Syahfriani, Hasibuan, and Fanreza (2020) note that the Qur'an particularly stresses the importance of doing good deeds and aiding those in distress. This ethos of helping the needy is further reinforced by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), who advocated for Muslims to engage in humanitarian actions, encompassing donations, material support, and direct services to the less fortunate (Rahmanto et al., 2023).

Beyond the spiritual acts of prayer and fasting, Islam mandates its followers to partake in charitable giving and support for others as a religious obligation (Nisar & Rashid, 2019). This obligation is operationalized through mechanisms such as zakat (mandatory alms-giving), infaq (voluntary charity), and sadaqa (voluntary alms), which Hamed (2020) describes as the humanitarian pillars of Islam. Al-Bawwab (2023) and Owoyemi (2020) elucidate that zakat, in particular, is a compulsory act for financially capable Muslims, aimed at alleviating poverty and reducing social disparities. Additionally, kafarat, a compensatory practice for certain transgressions, involves monetary penalties or assistance to the needy, further embedding the concept of restitution within the framework of social welfare (Firmansyah & Fadoli, 2024).

The role of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), particularly Islamic NGOs, is pivotal in actualizing these principles. Ahmad and Ali (2022)

observe that numerous Islamic NGOs adhere to these humanitarian tenets, initiating diverse programs across education, health, and disaster relief sectors (Beigbeder, 2023). Historically, Islam's humanitarian outreach has transcended boundaries of religion, ethnicity, and nationality, offering aid to all those in need, a testament to the profound humanitarian spirit ingrained in Islamic doctrine (Di Stasio et al., 2021; Alak, 2023). Islamic-based NGOs in Indonesia have experienced remarkable growth and are increasingly influential across various societal sectors.

The growing prominence of Islamic-based NGOs on the international stage highlights their dedication to the welfare of humanity, driven by the compassionate principles of Islamic teachings. They are crucial in realizing the ideals of Humanitarian Islam, launching diverse initiatives across multiple sectors to enhance societal well-being (The Conversation, 2021). The dynamic relationship between these NGOs and societal transformations continues to evolve, adapting to contemporary challenges while remaining anchored in the timeless values of the faith.

The influence of Indonesian Islam, as exemplified by the legacy of Wali Songo in the 15th and 16th centuries, showcases the adaptability of Islamic humanitarianism. Qomar (2019) details how Wali Songo propagated Islam in Indonesia by underscoring the principle of *rahmah* (compassion) and tailoring Islamic teachings to the contextual realities of the time and place. This approach underscores that Humanitarian Islam transcends mere assistance; it represents a harmonious blend of religious tenets with humanitarian efforts aimed at the collective well-being of society. In summary, the interplay between Islam and societal changes encapsulates the essence of Humanitarian Islam, which is characterized by a commitment to the welfare of humanity, guided by the compassionate and inclusive spirit of Islamic teachings. This interplay is a continuous process, evolving with the changing times while remaining rooted in the timeless principles of the faith.

Challenges and Prospects for Democracy and Inclusive Citizenship

Islam's teachings on fundamental human values offer a robust framework for understanding the challenges and prospects for democracy and inclusive citizenship. The challenges and prospects relate to the implementation of Tawhid, justice, Tasamuh, deliberation and Ishlah, Qudwah, and Hubbul Wathan. Each of the concepts is elaborated in the following.

Tawhid: resonating human values essential for democracy

The concept of Tawhid (Oneness of Allah), which is the cornerstone of Islamic belief, underscores the notion that only Allah is supreme and perfect (Almirzanah, 2020). This principle fosters a sense of equality among humans, as the highest degree of reverence is reserved solely for Allah (Ali, 2021). Such a perspective is pivotal in democratic societies where the equality of all citizens is paramount.

Tawhid has several dimensions that resonate with human values essential for democracy and inclusive citizenship (Al Mahmud, 2023). The first dimension is *Tawhid Rububiyah* that focuses on the belief that Allah is the sole creator and governor of humanity (Fatimah et al., 2024). This belief instils a sense of accountability and governance that is reflective of democratic principles. The second dimension is *Uluhiyah* or monotheism emphasizing that Allah is the only deity to be worshipped (Chasan & Zamhari, 2021). This form of monotheism is at the heart of the Messengers' teachings and promotes the idea that all humans are equal in the eyes of God, a notion that is fundamental to democratic societies. The third dimension is *Tauhid Asma wa Sifat* that pertains to the names and attributes of Allah, encouraging humans to recognize and honour the noble qualities of the divine. This aspect of Tawhid are key tenets of a democratic society where rights are safeguarded by the community and the state (Ramcharan, 2021).

Justice in Islamic Teachings: A Pillar for Social Harmony and Inclusive Citizenship

Justice, as articulated in Islamic principles, calls for fairness and equity for all individuals, irrespective of their social standing (Ciftci, 2019). Justice is a fundamental norm that is deeply desired in the social fabric of life (Young, 2020). Within Islamic teachings, justice is not merely a human construct but is seen as a divine mandate, reflecting the will of Allah (Sirait, 2022). This divine justice is instrumental in establishing equality, eradicating social disparities, and safeguarding individual human rights (Cole, 2022).

In Islamic teachings, justice has a central role and includes several principles that are relevant to human values (Haron et al., 2020). The first principle is be fair by following Al-Maidah verse 8: “O you who believe, be steadfast in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So, follow not personal inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted” (Murdiono et al., 2023). The second principle is justice in all things since Islam advocates for justice as a means to attain peace, prosperity, and happiness in both this life and the hereafter (Ibrahim & Riyadi, 2023). Believers are instructed to practice justice in every aspect of life, encompassing both religious and secular domains (Fengren, 2022). The third principle is true testimony as Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of truthful testimony, which underscores the need for fairness and honesty in all testimonies (Liddini et al., 2022). The fourth principle is active engagement where Muslims are called upon to actively engage in the pursuit of justice, which includes conflict resolution, humanitarian efforts, and the advocacy of human rights. This moral responsibility extends beyond personal conduct to encompass societal actions (Karimullah, 2024).

Tasamuh: Fostering Respect and Peaceful Coexistence

The principle of tolerance or Tasamuh in Islam advocates for a harmonious coexistence amidst diversity (Astuti, 2023), which is essential for

nurturing inclusive citizenship where diverse perspectives are respected and valued (Pascual, 2021). These principles form the foundation of a societal framework where the application of justice and tolerance not only strengthens community bonds but also enhances the collective capacity to address and resolve social challenges effectively. Tasamuh is a vital concept in Islam that promotes mutual respect, acceptance of differences, and peaceful coexistence (Nawawi, 2023).

It is through the application of Tasamuh to respect religious diversity, appreciate cultural variances, engage in constructive dialogue, and avoid extremism (Hanif, 2020). Its application is related to the following principles. First, freedom of belief where Islam asserts that there should be no compulsion in matters of faith, allowing every individual the liberty to choose their religious beliefs (Islam, 2020). Second principle is social interaction with non-muslims, in which Muslims are instructed to interact kindly and respectfully with people of all beliefs, fostering harmonious relationships (Haron et al., 2020; Kawangung, 2019). Third is respect for other religions; Islam teaches its adherents to refrain from mocking or insulting the deities of other religions, thus maintaining respect for diverse beliefs (Hapsari & Wahyuningtiyas, 2023). The last is recognition of differences. Understanding and respecting the distinctions between Islamic teachings and those of other religions is crucial, and Islam prohibits the amalgamation of its doctrines with those of other faiths (Bahri, 2019). By adhering to the Quranic guidance on justice and Tasamuh, we can cultivate a more inclusive and harmonious society, which is essential for the flourishing of democracy and inclusive citizenship.

Deliberation and Ishlah: Foundations for peaceful governance and social equity in Islam

Deliberation in Islam is not merely a process of discussion; it is a profound principle that underscores the importance of collective decision-making through negotiation and consensus (Mirahmadi, 2021). It is about articulating beneficial ideas and seeking common ground among diverse

perspectives, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued equally (Holmes, et al., 2019). The ultimate aim is to achieve mutual agreement or *mufakat*, with a willingness to compromise for the greater good (Zamharir et al., 2023).

Historically, after the Prophet Muhammad's passing, the principle of deliberation was effectively applied in choosing the head of state, exemplified by the selection of Abu Bakr as caliph through a consensual process (Ahmad, 2019; Oweidat, 2019). In contemporary governance, this principle can be realized through democratic mechanisms such as general elections or deliberative assemblies. It emphasizes the significance of leaders considering the populace's views (Macq & Jacquet, 2023).

The Islamic principle of deliberation emphasizes the importance of dialogue and consensus in decision-making processes (Reykowski, 2019), mirroring the democratic practice of participatory governance. Similarly, the concept of *Ishlah*, which promotes peace and harmony (Nursita & Sahide, 2019), is crucial for resolving conflicts through peaceful means, a fundamental aspect of a stable democracy (Väyrynen, 2023). These principles not only align closely with democratic values but also underscore the potential for Islamic teachings to contribute positively to the political and social stability of a society.

Ishlah, or the pursuit of peace, is another cornerstone of Islamic principles that promotes equitable and humane relationships among individuals (Sulaiman, 2021). It encompasses several key concepts. The first concept is *karamah insaniyah*; this principle affirms the inherent dignity of every human being, deserving of respect and honor (Noh, et al., 2023). Second is *musawah*; Islam advocates for absolute equality among all humans, transcending distinctions of gender, race, ethnicity, or culture (Ahmad, 2022). Third concept is religion based on justice; justice is a fundamental tenet of Islam, demanding impartiality in divine ordinances (Jorjorzadeh, et al., 2021). The fourth concept is peace in oneself that is essential for fostering peace in society and the environment (Afsaruddin, 2020). Muslims are encouraged to transcend personal desires and cultivate righteousness within themselves. By integrating the principles of deliberation and *Ishlah*, Islam

lays a foundation for peaceful governance and social equity, which are essential for the development of a just and harmonious society.

Qudwah: Exemplary leadership in Islam

Qudwah refers to the concept of exemplary leadership that is derived from the Arabic language and conveys the idea of a role model whose actions are emulated by others. Leaders who embody Qudwah possess commendable moral and ethical qualities, setting a positive example through their daily actions and behaviours (Ihsan & Umar, 2020). It entails setting a positive example in upholding human rights and advocating for humanity (Qorib, 2022). This aligns with the democratic expectation of leaders to be role models in protecting the rights and dignity of all citizens.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is regarded as the ultimate Qudwah for humanity, exemplifying the virtues of an ideal leader (Erihadiana & Ridwan, 2021). The Quranic verses highlight that the Messenger of Allah serves as an excellent model for those who seek Allah and the Last Day (Reynolds, 2020). In Islamic pedagogy, the method of teaching through example—both in knowledge and actions—is pivotal in shaping the character of learners (Khaidir & Suud, 2020). Leaders who are Qudwah effectively inspire others, combining justice, wisdom, and exemplary conduct (Zaim, 2024). By adhering to the principles of Qudwah, leaders can foster a humane, equitable, and peaceful environment.

Love of the Motherland: A Reflection of Faith

The love for one's homeland, also called Muwathanah or Hubbul Wathan, teaches Muslim to cherish their country and uphold the rights of fellow citizens (Bahraen, 2023). It is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings as an expression of faith (Anshori & Muhith, 2023). This principle, articulated by the Indonesian cleric KH Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, posits that love for one's country is an intrinsic part of one's belief (Subekti, 2022). Islam emphasizes the importance of maintaining the unity, integrity, and security

of the homeland as a manifestation of profound faith (Sari & Sutomo, 2022).

Loving one's country is a natural human inclination and is encouraged in Islam, provided it does not conflict with Islamic values. The absence of a homeland can lead to a sense of loss and imperfection in one's religious practice. Love for the Motherland plays a crucial role in sustaining peace and contributing to global justice (Aydin et al., 2022). Islam advocates that this love should not lead to exclusivity or conflicts with other nations (Thahir, 2021). Patriotic love can be actualized through education, environmental stewardship, respect for authority and peers, and a commitment to the welfare of society, nation, and state.

The principles of Islam provide a comprehensive blueprint for addressing the challenges faced by democracies today. By advocating for equality, justice, tolerance, deliberation, peace, exemplary leadership, and love for one's country, Islam lays the groundwork for a society that values inclusive citizenship and democratic governance. This integration of Islamic values with democratic principles can greatly enrich political and social systems, offering solutions that promote sustainability and cohesion within diverse communities.

NU's Role in Promoting Peace and Tolerance

Established on January 31, 1926, in Surabaya by Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari, NU emerged as a response to the rigid interpretations of Islam following the Saudi conquest of Mecca and Medina (Fuad, 2020). It has since played a pivotal role in fostering harmony among Indonesia's diverse religious communities. Adhering to mainstream Sunni Islam, NU integrates Islamic spirituality with Indonesian cultural traditions, reflecting a commitment to traditional Islamic teachings while engaging with modernity.

The founders of NU, including K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, K.H. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, and K.H. Bisri Syansuri, envisioned an organization that would reinforce adherence to one of the four recognized Islamic schools of thought (Madzhab) and engage in activities aligned with Islamic

principles. NU's key initiatives include: (a) fostering unity: strengthening the bond among scholars dedicated to the teachings of their respective sects; (b) educational guidance: offering direction on the curriculum of Islamic educational institutions; (c) dissemination of teachings: spreading Islamic doctrines in harmony with the four Madzhab; (d) institutional growth: expanding the number of Madrasas and organizational bodies; (e) infrastructure support: aiding in the construction of mosques, prayer halls, and Islamic boarding schools; (f) social welfare: assisting orphans and the underprivileged.

NU's influence extends to the global stage, where it advocates for peace and stability through religious diplomacy, aiming to shape norms and identities within the international community. In Indonesia, NU has been instrumental in maintaining interfaith harmony, actively participating in interfaith dialogues and championing the principles of tolerance and mutual understanding (Ridwan, 2020; Saumantri, 2022). The organization underscores the significance of preserving the rich cultural heritage of the archipelago and promotes cooperation among religions to establish a peaceful coexistence (Selamat, 2023).

In the realm of religious governance, NU contributes to the consultative processes for religious regulations in Indonesia, addressing topics that are seldom discussed (Pelletier, 2021). The Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), established in 2006, is a testament to NU's commitment to dialogue and harmony, created in the wake of rising conflicts over sacred sites and places of worship (Ali-Fauzi, 2019). Furthermore, NU's educational institutions play a crucial role in nurturing inter-religious harmony, instilling values that foster peaceful relations based on core Islamic tenets of human dignity and social justice (Abduloh, et al., 2022).

Nahdlatul Ulama's principles and stance on inter-religious harmony are rooted in mutual tolerance and respect (Rahman & Shapie, 2023). By encouraging such values, NU not only preserves the peaceful fabric of Indonesian society but also sets an example for the global community on fostering tolerance and respect among diverse religious groups. NU's

approach to moderation serves as a bridge between religious communities, promoting social harmony and national unity (Prasetiawati, 2020). NU's guiding principles—*tawazun* (balance), *Tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawasut* (moderation), and *i'tidal* (fairness)—are applied across various sectors of national life, reinforcing its role as a stabilizing force (Maarif et al., 2022).

Founded in 1926, NU has a storied history of advocating for peace, tolerance, and social justice, championing a moderate interpretation of Islam (Gumuruh & Amrullah, 2021). Despite facing challenges such as maintaining relevance in a rapidly evolving world and countering the rise of extremism, NU remains a steadfast proponent of a peaceful and inclusive Islam (Purwono, 2020; Nazar & Hamid, 2022). Its efforts in interfaith dialogue have been pivotal in building bridges between different religious communities, contributing to a stronger, more harmonious society (Lattu, 2019; Selamat, 2023).

As NU continues its journey, it must navigate the complexities of Indonesia's political landscape, balancing traditional values with modernity (Jamal, 2023). The organization's resilience in promoting a moderate and inclusive vision of Islam is more crucial than ever, as it stands against the tides of extremism and terrorism, striving to uphold the values of peace and cooperation (Pohl, 2009; Pektas, 2021). This strategic balance not only enhances its credibility and influence within Indonesia but also serves as a beacon of progressive Islamic thought in the global community.

Conclusion

In the contemporary landscape, where the world is increasingly interconnected yet paradoxically divided, Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) Humanitarian Islam emerges as a guiding light, advocating for a harmonious coexistence that transcends religious and cultural divides. This initiative is not merely a response to the growing tide of extremism and Islamophobia; it is a proactive movement towards a global society that values peace, democracy, and social justice. At the heart of NU's Humanitarian Islam is the conviction that Islamic values are inherently aligned with the principles

of good citizenship. This alignment is the foundation upon which a society can build a future where democratic values and social justice are not ephemeral ideals but lived experiences. NU's commitment to this cause is a powerful testament to the transformative potential of interfaith dialogue in enhancing societal cohesion and fostering a sense of shared responsibility among all citizens.

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in this vision. They are the nurseries where the seeds of Humanitarian Islam can be sown and nurtured. By integrating the principles of this initiative into their curricula, educational institutions can enlighten young minds on the critical importance of interfaith understanding and civic responsibility. They can create programs that not only educate but also encourage students to actively engage in community service and dialogue with diverse groups, thereby cultivating a generation of leaders who are empathetic, informed, and committed to societal harmony.

Religious leaders are the custodians of faith and have a profound influence on their communities. They are called upon to embrace and propagate the message of Humanitarian Islam, highlighting the synergy between religious devotion and active citizenship. By organizing interfaith events that foster shared experiences and understanding among different religious communities, they can break down barriers of ignorance and mistrust, paving the way for a society that is united in its diversity.

Looking to the future, there are several aspects to develop in further studies. The role of youth in championing the cause of Humanitarian Islam and inclusive citizenship is paramount, given their vital role in shaping the future. The impact of globalization on the perception and practice of Humanitarian Islam is another area ripe for exploration, as is a comparative analysis of Humanitarian Islam with other interfaith initiatives across the globe.

In conclusion, NU's Humanitarian Islam is a clarion call to all stakeholders to strive towards a future characterized by peace, tolerance, and inclusivity. It is an invitation to celebrate diversity and uphold our shared

humanity, advancing collectively towards a society that not only tolerates but wholeheartedly embraces differences. The path laid out by NU's initiative provides practical steps for related parties to follow, ensuring that the principles of Humanitarian Islam continue to inspire and guide efforts for societal betterment. The journey ahead is long and complex, but with the roadmap provided by NU, it is one that can lead to a more harmonious and just world.

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