

## RESILIENT TRADITIONS OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT: Navigating Religion and Politics in Indonesia's Emerging Future

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**Abstract:** This paper examines how the tradition of Islamic thought in Indonesia demonstrates resilience and the capacity for transformation in the face of contemporary socio-political changes—from identity polarization and populism, to the challenges of digital governance and environmental sustainability. Using a qualitative-interpretive approach based on literature, this study maps the philosophical foundations of resilience in Indonesian Islamic thought (*ijtihad*, *maslahah*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *musyawarah/ijmā'*, and *wasatiyyah*), examines the dynamics of mass organizations (NU, Muhammadiyah) and the Islamist movement, and formulates the future direction of democratic, inclusive, and socially just religion-state relations. The paper's novel contribution is the proposal of a "philosophies of resilience" framework as a lens to bridge tradition and innovation, formulate a values-based policy research agenda, and integrate the discourse of green Islam and digital ethics into the study of Indonesian religion-politics

## PENDAHULUAN

The history of Islam's development in Indonesia demonstrates the resilience of a tradition that is flexible, dialogical, and deeply rooted in local wisdom. From the time of the Islamic kingdoms in the archipelago, through the colonial period, the New Order, and the post-reform democratic era, Indonesian Muslim communities have developed religious practices that integrate universal Islamic values with local socio-cultural contexts and negotiate with changing power structures (Mardika & Ramli, 2023). In the last two decades, new challenges have emerged that mark a crucial phase in the dynamics of Islam and Indonesian politics: first, the strengthening of identity politics that culminates in elections and local political contestations (Widian, Satya, & Yazid, 2023); second, the growth of populism and liberal tendencies that test the quality of democracy (Mietzner, 2019); third, the penetration of digital space that accelerates the flow of da'wah while giving rise to hoaxes and polarization (Titi & Khotimah, 2025); and fourth, the ecological crisis and natural resource management problems that require a theological-ethical response from an Islamic perspective (Fauzi, 2020).

In this context, the tradition of Indonesian Islamic thought is not only required to survive but also to thrive by offering creative answers to contemporary problems. Tradition (*turāth*)

is therefore not merely viewed as a legacy of the past, but as a normative and epistemic resource capable of guiding the community in facing the challenges of the times. Therefore, this paper poses a central question: how can the philosophy of resilience in Indonesian Islamic thought guide the navigation of religious-political relations toward a more inclusive, just, and sustainable future.

This study offers novelty by introducing a framework *philosophies of resilience* which integrates the concepts of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *maslahah*, and *wasatiyyah* with contemporary democratic theory and governance. This approach allows for a new reading of the dynamics of Indonesian Islam in the face of political and social transformation. Furthermore, this study presents a cross-domain synthesis that connects issues of identity politics and populism, the authority of religious organizations, digital ethics, and ecotheology within the Indonesian context. Another novelty is the compilation of *policy roadmap* which is oriented towards strengthening institutional capabilities and citizen participation, thus offering a practical perspective for the sustainability of democracy and socio-ecological justice in Indonesia (Azra, 2021; Rahmat, 2023).

Practically, this study offers several strategic policy implications. First, in the realm of election regulation and the digital space, accountable anti-disinformation policies are needed, including participatory algorithmic audits and protection of freedom of expression and religious freedom (Lim, 2017; Nugroho, 2022). Second, in partnerships between the state and mass organizations, a model needs to be developed *co-governance* for social services, digital literacy, and disaster mitigation, through philanthropic-state matching fund schemes and performance contracts that maintain the autonomy of mass organizations (Bush & Fealy, 2019). Third, mainstreaming *maqāṣid* needs to be realized through public policy assessment instruments with indicators of *maslahah* and inter-group justice, including *ethics impact assessment* for data and AI policies (Auda, 2021). Fourth, the community-based green transition can be strengthened through the integration of environmental fatwas with regional development planning instruments, support for *eco-Islamic boarding school* and *eco-mosque*, as well as the development of a circular economy for Muslim communities (Kersten, 2021; Rusli, 2020).

## METHOD

This paper employs a qualitative-interpretive approach with an emphasis on literature review and discourse analysis. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for examining the meaning, dynamics, and ideological constructions of the relationship between religion and politics in Indonesia. The primary data sources come from reputable journal articles, academic books, research reports, and policy and religious documents, including fatwas from the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) on the environment and official statements from Islamic community organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah.

The analysis technique was carried out through three main steps. First, a mapping of themes covering issues of identity politics, populism, the role of mass organizations, democracy, digital ethics, and ecology. Second, a hermeneutic interpretation of key concepts such as *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *maslahah*, and *wasatiyyah* to understand its relevance in the contemporary socio-political context. Third, triangulation of narratives across sources to ensure the accuracy of interpretation and relevance to the Indonesian context. A limitation

of this research is the lack of direct fieldwork, so the findings are more of a conceptual-empirical synthesis. Nevertheless, this approach allows for the development of an in-depth analytical framework for understanding the resilience of Indonesian Islamic traditions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Syafruddin, 2024).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Philosophies of Resilience in Islamic Thought

#### Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and Maslahah

*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and the concept of *maslahah* provide an ethical framework for evaluating public policy. The classical principle covers the protection of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), reason (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), descendants (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). In contemporary developments, the scope of *maqāṣid* has been expanded to include environmental issues, human dignity (*karāmah*), social justice, and even digital rights as a form of actualizing Islamic values in facing changing times (Auda, 2019). The resilience of Islamic thought arises from the ability to translate *maqāṣid* into new contexts, for example, making ecosystem protection part of the principles of *The living* (Fauzi, 2020).

#### Ijtihad, Tajdīd, and Wasatiyyah

The concepts of *ijtihad* and *tajdid* emphasize Islam's capacity to normatively adapt to socio-political change. Meanwhile, the principle of *wasatiyyah* prioritizes moderation, balance, and dialogue in responding to societal diversity (El-Mesawi, 2021). In the political realm, the values of *shūrā* (deliberation) and *ijmā'* serve not only as sources of participatory legitimacy but also as conflict resolution mechanisms that maintain social cohesion (Rahmat, 2022).

#### Organizational Traditions and Social Ecology

Large Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah have institutionalized resilience values through education, *da'wah* (Islamic outreach), philanthropy, healthcare, and disaster response (Latief, 2016; Nashir & Burhani, 2022). In the realm of public policy, these organizations' scholarly traditions and social networks facilitate the aggregation of community interests while limiting the narrow politicization of religion, thus strengthening inclusive democracy in Indonesia (Menchik, 2021).

#### Traditional Resilience as Political-Social Capital

The resilience of Islamic tradition in Indonesia operates at three interrelated levels. At the normative level, the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework and the concept of *maslahah* serve as ethical guidelines in formulating public policies, including protecting minority groups, promoting social justice, strengthening electoral integrity, and maintaining ecological balance in the face of environmental crises (Auda, 2019; Fauzi, 2020). At the institutional level, Islamic community organizations, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and philanthropic networks serve as buffers for social welfare by making tangible contributions to education, health, disaster mitigation, and strengthening civic literacy (Latief, 2016; Nashir & Burhani, 2022). Meanwhile, at the cultural level, the values of deliberation, the tradition of mutual cooperation, and acceptance of plurality have underpinned the practice of deliberative democracy in Indonesia, while strengthening the capacity of Muslim communities to maintain social cohesion amidst contemporary political dynamics (Menchik,

2021; El-Mesawi, 2021). Thus, the resilience of Indonesian Islamic traditions not only reflects a historical legacy but also constitutes a normative, institutional, and cultural force relevant to addressing current and future challenges.

### **Identity Politics, Populism, and the Quality of Democracy**

Religious-based polarization in Indonesian politics exhibits ambivalence. On the one hand, it can activate the political participation of the people; but on the other hand, this polarization reduces the quality of public deliberation, deepens distrust, and weakens democratic consensus (Mietzner, 2019). Recent studies show that religious populism can catalyze democratic decline, especially when intertwined with oligarchy, the personalization of power, and the instrumentalization of the state apparatus (Widian, Satya, & Yazid, 2023). In this context, the resilience of Islamic tradition is crucial for restoring ethical boundaries in political contestation: maintaining legitimate criticism, rejecting stigmatization, and upholding the principle of the rule of law.

### **NU, Muhammadiyah, and Religious Authority Negotiations**

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah play a dual role as guardians of tradition and agents of modernization. Both organizations develop resilience strategies through expanding public services, such as education, health, and philanthropy, as well as strengthening spaces for religious dialogue and developing scholarly traditions (Latief, 2016; Nashir & Burhani, 2022). However, significant challenges arise from competition for digital authority generated by celebrity religious teachers and social media preachers, the fragmentation of Islamic preaching networks, and the infiltration of electoral interests. Therefore, the resilience response of large Islamic organizations is manifested in the form of strengthening digital religious literacy, clarifying Islamic jurisprudence (fikih) authority, and critical engagement in responding to public policy (Menchik, 2021).

### **Digital Ethics, *Da'wah*, and Cyber Tribalism**

The expansion of digital preaching has opened up wide access to religious knowledge, but has also triggered a phenomenon *cyber tribalism* in the form of echo chambers, misinformation, and escalation of symbolic conflict (Hariyanto et al., 2023). In this situation, the *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* and the principle of *wasatiyyah* are relevant for formulating Islamic digital ethics based on the trustworthiness of information, the etiquette of discussion, and verification (*tabayyun*), as well as defamation prevention (Titi & Khotimah, 2025). Practical directions that can be taken include: (1) the integration of digital literacy into pesantren and madrasah curricula, (2) the compilation of *maqāsid*-based digital preaching guidelines, (3) the development of partnerships between digital platforms and organizations for fair and transparent content moderation, and (4) in-depth research on the impact of algorithms on religious polarization.

### **Green Islam, Environmental Fatwas, and Ecological Justice**

Recent developments show that Indonesian Islam is starting to expand the *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* towards *The living* or environmental protection. Environmental fatwas, such as the prohibition on hunting endangered species, and the eco-pesantren movement demonstrate the capacity of the Islamic tradition to link theological norms with environmental science and public policy (Fauzi, 2020). This positions Islam as a strategic partner in issues of climate change, natural resource governance, and the circular economy. Practical directions that can be developed include: (1) integrating environmental fatwas into the RPJMD (Regional



Medium-Term Development Plan) or regional regulations, (2) providing fiscal incentives for environmentally friendly practices based on Muslim communities, (3) mainstreaming eco-waqf and green philanthropy, and (4) strengthening ecotheological literacy in the curricula of Islamic organizations (Kersten, 2022).

### **Emerging Futures Roadmap: Values-Based Democratic Governance**

Combining all the above findings, a Resilience Roadmap can be developed to address Indonesia's contemporary socio-political dynamics. First, reconsolidate public ethics by establishing religious-political ethical standards based on anti-violence, anti-disinformation, pro-transparency, and pro-social justice. Second, institutionalize the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in the form of policy testing (*policy impact*) for election regulations, protection of religious freedom, data privacy, and environmental sustainability (Auda, 2019). Third, knowledge co-production through

collaboration between universities, mass organizations, government, and digital platforms in research and policy laboratories (*regulatory sandbox*). Fourth, developing leadership ecology by producing cadres for mass organizations and Islamic boarding schools. *policy-savvy* in law, data, and public communication. Fifth, strengthening the virtuous economy through Islamic philanthropy and Islamic finance as a source of funding for public services, social innovation, and the green transition (Latief, 2016; Nashir & Burhani, 2022).

### **CONCLUSION**

Indonesian Islamic tradition demonstrates resilience at both the conceptual and institutional levels, enabling intelligent navigation in a constantly changing political and social landscape. Through the framework *philosophies of resilience* This study emphasizes that the future of Indonesia's religious-political relations is largely determined by the ability to institutionalize substantive democratic values, digital ethics, and ecological justice. Large mass organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, along with their educational and scientific ecosystems, are key anchors for transformation, while the state and the market need to create collaborative spaces that maintain autonomy and accountability (Hasan, 2022; Al-Anshori, 2023).

This study also has several limitations. First, reliance on secondary literature limits the depth of field data. Second, the varying quality of digital data makes it difficult to verify the reliability of the findings. Third, this study has not yet mapped local heterogeneity in detail through an ethnographic approach. Therefore, further research agendas are directed at comparative studies between cities and villages, ethnographic explorations of digital authority, evaluations of *maqāṣid*-based policies, analysis of the impact of environmental fatwas, and experiments with anti-polarization public communication in Muslim communities (Fealy, 2020; Trihartono & Suyatno, 2021).

Based on the study findings, several recommendations can be put forward. First, for academics, it is necessary to develop *center of excellence* for study *Islamic governance* and resilience, and encourage cross-disciplinary publications based on field data. Second, for Islamic organizations, it is important to strengthen digital and ecological literacy programs based on Islamic boarding schools and religious study groups, develop guidelines for digital *da'wah* based on *maqāṣid* (the principle of religious education), and establish public policy cadre schools. Third, for the government, institutionalization is needed. *Test-maqāṣid* for

regulation, development *sandbox* digital space policy, as well as the recognition of environmental fatwas as *soft law* public policy supporters. Fourth, for digital platforms and media, transparency in content moderation, support for *civic tech* for online deliberations, as well as mechanisms to prevent the amplification of hate speech (Nurdin, 2022; Syafruddin, 2024).

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