Significance of *Islam Nusantara* Values in an Indonesian Multicultural Society

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Abstract

Indonesian society is plural, consisting of various cultures, religions, beliefs, and ethinicities. All these differences can trigger fanaticism, causing tension and conflict in society. This paper uses the literature method to describe the values contained in *Islam Nusantara* (Indonesian model of Islam). The results of the literature review show that *Islam Nusantara* values can act as an alternative and mediator when there is a conflict of differences, since it prioritize a high appreciation of plurality as a social reality. *Islam Nusantara* can drive social ethics to foster tolerance and social solidarity in a multicultural society like Indonesia.

Keywords: *Islam Nusantara,* values, multicultural society, Indonesia

Introduction

Indonesia is a country that has a diversity of ethinicities, religions, races, and cultures. The visibly-complex diversity of sociocultural conditions and geographical circumstances, has made Indonesia one of the largest multicultural countries in the world.[1] This country has 17,508 islands inhabited by more than 360 ethinicities with 1,340 sub-ethinicities,[2] in comparison with other multicultural countries such as Canada, which only has 450 ethnic groups.[3] A multicultural country is a country that has diverse ethnic groups, cultures, and other social plurality and heterogeneity,[4] whose existence is accepted equally and is seen as an asset for national development. However, this diversity has other aspects. In addition to owning potential as a nation-building asset, it also own potential to cause community conflict.[5] Lestari stated that Indonesia as a multicultural country is faced with its dilemma: on one hand, its inherent multiculturalism is seen as an opportunity to create an advanced, cultured, multicultural national state, but on the other hand, it poses a threat to harmonious living.[6] The rise of intolerant groups and radical movements in Indonesian society these days seems to prove that the threat is increasingly real.[7]

As long as Indonesians cannot appreciate the diversity and only think for the benefit of their own while denying others, then radicalism and weakening of tolerance will increasingly affect national stability.[8] Common living in a multicultural society needs to be supported by mutual respect for differences. Lestari stated that disputes in a multicultural society are prone to occur when community members view difference as a divider and make them antipathetic to others.[9] One should sought solutions to this condition so that differences in the community are well-managed, which in turn preserve harmonious social interaction.

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[1] Gina Lestari (2015), "Bhinnekha Tunggal Ika: Khasanah Multikultural Indonesia Di Tengah Kehidupan Sara," *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan*, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 31.
[2] Saldi Isra and Pan Mohamad Faiz (2021), "The Role of the Constitutional Court in Protecting Minority Rights: A Case on Traditional Beliefs in Indonesia," in Bertus de Villiers et al. (eds.), *Litigating the Rights of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Domestic and International Courts*, Leiden: Brill, p. 125.
[3] Statistics Canada (2022), "The Canadian Census: A Rich Portrait of the Country's Religious and Ethnocultural Diversity," *Statistics Canada*, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm.
[4] Kusumohamidjojo (2000), *Kebhinnekaan Masyarakat Indonesia: Suatu Problematik Filsafat Kebudayaan*, Jakarta: Grasindo, p. 45.
[5] Ketut Gunawan and Yohanes Rante (2001), "Manajemen Konflik Atasi Dampak Masyarakat Multikultur Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Mitra Ekonomi Dan Manajemen Bisnis*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 217.
[6] Lestari (2015), "Bhinnekha Tunggal Ika," p. 32.
[7] David Eko and Firman Panjaitan (2021), "Titik Temu Pancasila Dan Etika Politik Gereja Dalam Melawan Radikalisme Di Indonesia Combating Radicalism in Indonesia," *Jurnal SMaRT Studi Masyarakat, Religi Dan Tradisi*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 46.
[8] Eko and Panjaitan (2021), "Titik Temu Pancasila," p. 46.
[9] Lestari (2015), "Bhinnekha Tunggal Ika," p. 33.

In order to enable these realized, social ethics is needed, since without it, societal harmony is difficult to realize.[10] Social ethics, if applied tactfully, can bridge differences within a community to create harmony.[11] Social ethics is an order regulating one's behavior related to association with his/her environment.[12] It is the basis for each individual when dealing with diversity in association, cooperation, and discussion, so that differences in religion, ethnicity, ethnicity, gender, and social status do not become barriers.[13]

The question of the role of religion in supporting the creation of social ethics in the community is commonly asked. To answer this, one need to look at the relationship between ethics and religion. Nizar explained that ethics and religion are closely related since they fill and support each other.[14] These conditions are achieved since both of them investigate and determine good and bad by looking at human deeds, even though ethics teach values to human through reason and conscience while religion achieve the same through revelation (Scripture) whose truth is considered absolute and testable with reason.[15] Based on this assertion, it is apparent that religion exists in ethics and vice versa.[16] Religion can certainly provide support to social ethics since it provides purification to values prevailing in community.[17]

Islam has a large adherent in Indonesia. It is even often said that Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. As one of the recognized formal religions in the country, its role in Indonesians lives is highly expected. The emergence of *Islam Nusantara* (Indonesian model of Islam) concept around 2016 has added to the treasures of Islamic culture in the country.[18] *Islam Nusantara* is not a form of movement to change Islamic doctrine, but an effort to find ways to establish Islamic culture in the context of a plural society.[19] Kasdi further explained *Islam Nusantara* as follows: "The model developed in *Islam Nusantara* is an empirical form of Islamic values that develop in Indonesia as a result of interaction, contextualization, indigenization, interpretation, and vernacularization of universal Islamic teachings and values by the socio-cultural realities of Indonesian society."[20] The gentle character embedded in *Islam Nusantara*, manifested in its friendliness, non-violence, tolerance, and respect of diversity, tradition, & national concept, encourages the creation of a harmonious multicultural society.[21]

This study is important because it offers the significance of the values of *Islam Nusantara* whose essence is cultural, plural, and tolerant so that it can be used as a basis for social ethics to knit harmony in diversity without creating conflicts among religious adherents.

Methodology

In view of the background presented, the research seeks to present the significance of Islamic values as a driving force of social ethics in a multicultural society. This study used a qualitative approach that sought to describe an object, phenomenon, or social setting in the form of narrative writing.[22] This study tried to describe *Islam Nusantara*, whose values' significance in being a driving force of social ethics in Indonesian multicultural society was further studied as a phenomenon. The method used is literature study, in which the authors sought to collect data from various sources that correlate with research problem.

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[10] Andy Dermawan and Zunly Nadia (2015), "Etika Sosial Dalam Kerukunan Umat Beragama," *Humanika*, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 62.
[11] A. Triono, "Membumikan Etika Sosial Dan Pemahaman Multikultural Umat Beragama Melalui Pendidikan Tinggi," *Holistik*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2020), p. 3.
[12] Sukiratnasari Anastasia (2015), "Etika Sosial Dalam Ruang Publik," in Nina Mariani Noor (ed.), *Manual Etika Lintas Agama Untuk Indonesia*, Geneva: Globethics.net, p. 19.
[13] Anastasia (2015), "Etika Sosial Dalam Ruang Publik," p. 19.
[14] Nizar (2017), "Hubungan Etika Dan Agama Dalam Kehidupan Sosial," *Jurnal Arajang*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 31.
[15] Nizar (2017), "Hubungan Etika Dan Agama Dalam Kehidupan Sosial," p. 31.
[16] Mufid Muhammad (2009), *Etika Dan Filsafat Komunikasi*, Jakarta: Kencana, p. 180.
[17] Rosana Ellya (2018), "Agama Dan Sekularisasi Pada Masyarakat Moderen," *Al-Adyan*, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 141.
[18] Luqman Nurhisam and Mualimul Huda (2016), "Islam Nusantara: A Middle Way?," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 153.
[19] Nurhisam and Huda (2016), "Islam Nusantara," p. 164.
[20] Abdurrohman Kasdi (2018), "Islamic Dialectics and Culture in Establishing Islam Nusantara Paradigm: Variety Model of Islam Nusantar for Indonesia," *Addin*, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 301.
[21] Kasdi (2018), "Islamic Dialectics and Culture in Establishing Islam Nusantara Paradigm," p. 312.
[22] Albi Anggito and Johan Setiawan (2018), *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*, Sukabumi: CV Jejak, p. 11.

Results and Discussion

Unity in Diversity: Multicultural Indonesia
Indonesia is undeniably diverse, with its population of 270.20 million living in 17,508 islands, large and small, stretching 5,000 kilometers from east to west, comprised of 360 ethinicities, 1,340 sub-ethinicities, and 250 different language types.[23] The wealth of traditions, arts, religious rituals, and beliefs has established Indonesia as one of the largest multicultural countries in the world.[24] Through it all, Indonesia has great potential to become an advanced and cultured multicultural nation-state.[25] However, the richness of diversity also has another side. Afandi likens the wealth to a double-edged knife: if maintained and managed properly it will bring inspiration and strength to the nation's development efforts, but on the other hand, it can also trigger conflicts in society.[26]

The above situation was predicted by Indonesian founding fathers, namely Supomo, Soekarno, Hatta, and Sjahrir, which necessitated the emergence of the national motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika,[27] meaning that even though Indonesian society is plural and heterogeneous but it is integrated into one.[28] The motto, with its literal meaning of "diverse, but one" is derived from the Book of Sutasoma by Mpu Tantular.[29] This expression refers to the societal condition of Majapahit Empire who had differing religious beliefs but could still coexist.[30] In its modern application, it describes the unity of Indonesia as a whole; with its differing societal background, it in fact remains one.[31] It is concluded that initially this motto was adopted due to awareness of the importance of mutual respect for diversity in a multicultural society.[32] The motto should encourage Indonesians to preserve both their nation's unity and diversity. It is not easy to maintain diversity;[33] high awareness and strong commitment from every component of the nation are required to keep the unity in Indonesia's diversity intact. There are efforts by the government to realize this, such as the Four Pillars of Nationhood and Statehood political philosophy propagated by MPR (Indonesian parliament),[34] MPR Regulation No. IV/MPR/2001 on the Ethics of National Life,[35] and *Gerakan Penumbuhan Budi Pekerti* (GKBP) based on Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture No. 23 of 2015.

In addition to those above, there are proposals from the scientific community. Susilowati and Masruroh proposed to strengthen the *gotong royong* (mutual assistance) culture and to develop citizenship education & paradigm of multiculturalism in society.[36] Furthermore, Farih proposed nurturing an attitude for Muslims of respecting differences and safeguarding the rights of each other through the following:[37]

a. Appreciating differing religious teachings,
b. Preserving culture of any ethnicity and religion as long as it is not contrary to the Sharia,
c. Acknowledging the strength in others and being able to accept own shortcomings,
d. Avoiding scolding others due to their differences,
e. Getting used to doing good to anyone, and
f. Instilling religious values in their entirety.

[23] Isra and Faiz (2021), "The Role of the Constitutional Court in Protecting Minority Rights," p. 125.
[24] Lestari (2015), "Bhinnekha Tunggal Ika," p. 31.
[25] Lestari (2015), "Bhinnekha Tunggal Ika," p. 32.
[26] Munif Afandi (2018), "Potret Masyarakat Multikultural Di Indonesia," *Journal Multicultural of Islamic Education*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 2-3.
[27] Khudzaifah Dimyati et al. (2021), "Indonesia as a Legal Welfare State: A Prophetic-Transcendental Basis," *Heliyon*, Vol. 7, No. 8, p. 4.
[28] Lestari (2015), "Bhinnekha Tunggal Ika," p. 31.
[29] Indah Wahyu Puji Utami and Aditya Nugroho Widiadi (2016), "Wacana Bhineka Tunggal Ika Dalam Buku Teks Sejarah," *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1, p. 109.
[30] Utami and Widiadi (2016), "Wacana Bhineka Tunggal Ika Dalam Buku Teks Sejarah," p. 109.
[31] Utami and Widiadi (2016), "Wacana Bhineka Tunggal Ika Dalam Buku Teks Sejarah," p. 109.
[32] Lestari (2015), "Bhinnekha Tunggal Ika," p. 35.
[33] Eko and Panjaitan (2021), "Titik Temu Pancasila Dan Etika Politik Gereja," p. 46.
[34] Sri Untari (2016), "Kebijakan Pemerintah Dalam Memperkokoh Jati Diri Dan Wawasan Kebangsaan Pada Era Global," Proceeding, Kebhinekaan Dan Masa Depan Indonesia: Peran Ilmu Sosial Dalam Masyarakat, Universitas Negeri Malang, p. 618.
[35] Untari (2016), "Kebijakan Pemerintah Dalam Memperkokoh Jati Diri," p. 618.
[36] Endang Susilowati and Noor Naelil Masruroh (2018), "Merawat Kebhinekaan Menjaga Keindonesiaan: Belajar Keberagaman Dan Kebersatuan Dari Masyarakat Pulau," *Jurnal Sejarah Citra Lekha*, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 14.
[37] Amin Farih (2019), "Konsistensi Nahdlatul Ulama' Dalam Mempertahankan Pancasila Dan Kedaulatan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia Di Tengah Wacana Negara Islam," *Jurnal Politik Walisongo*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 7.

Social Ethics in a Multicultural Society

Social interaction demands the presence of norms that can regulate relationships between individuals and groups to create harmony. Social ethics plays an important role in this. Social ethics is an order that regulates the behavior of individuals related to association with their environment.[38] It is undeniable that in social interactions, frictions occur between individuals and between groups due to differences, especially if the community consists of various ethinicities, cultures, customs, religions, races, and/or groups, which increases the potentials for conflict. A condition like this requires norms that can encourage understanding in tolerating plurality.

Social ethics can manifest in norms that guide people in daily interaction. These guidelines maintain social order by preventing harm due to mutual suspicion, intolerance, and anarchic actions. Its purpose is to direct a society towards building a harmonious, orderly, and peaceful atmosphere within it.

According to Anastasia, one may apply social ethics for multicultural societies that uphold pluralism, with actions like the following:[39]

a. Growing openness of self-identity (ethnic, religious, racial, and class) in social interaction.
b. Accepting others as "a part of us" and not as "others."
c. Developing sympathy, empathy, and social sensitivity towards others with problems.
d. Respecting differences and similarities in bodily expressions and language of others.
e. Putting aside prejudice and stereotypes against others.
f. Respecting and appreciating the identity of others with difference.
g. Accepting ethnic, cultural, religious diversity as God's design.
h. Honing social intelligence, an inner condition that can adapt to the surrounding environment of various religions, cultures, ethinicities, and social classes.
i. Developing a tolerant and non-jugdmental attitude towards identity of others with difference.
j. Practicing dialogues between religious adherents which foster social sensitivity and peace.
k. Developing virtue to all mankind regardless of their background.
l. Having an exclusive attitude towards personal beliefs in religion, but an inclusive one when socially interacting with fellow human beings.
m. For religious leaders, adapting religious texts into an easy-to-understand language to encourage peace among religious adherents.

It is believed that Islamic values as applied in Indonesia are culturally tolerant and liberating, relevant to the country's multicultural society. *Islam Nusantara* can become a driving force of social ethics to create harmony in Indonesian diversity. It is affirmed by one of the widely known Muslim figures in Indonesia, Azyumardi Azra, that the *Islam Nusantara* model is needed by the global Islamic community today, due to its nature that prioritizes the middle way in the form of moderation, tolerance, peaceful coexistence with other religious adherents, and acceptance of democracy.[40]

Islam Nusantara: *Meeting of Nusantara Religion and Culture*

The phrase *Islam Nusantara* was introduced during the 33rd convention of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, which was held in Jombang, East Java in 2015.[41] However, according to some NU scholars, *Islam Nusantara* has long been practiced by the Wali Songo (nine Islamic saints of Indonesia) during their Islamic proselytization in Java.[42] According to Qomar, *Islam Nusantara* is a "model of thinking, understanding, and practice of teachings packaged through cultures and traditions that develop in the Southeast Asian region."[43] Meanwhile, Al-Zastrouw explained that *Islam Nusantara* is not a new Islamic tradition, but is "a way of understanding and carrying out the teachings of Islam conducted by Indonesians so that it becomes a system of values, traditions and Islamic culture typical of the country."[44] In short, *Islam Nusantara* is present in the

[38] Anastasia (2015), "Etika Sosial Dalam Ruang Publik," p. 19.
[39] Anastasia (2015), "Etika Sosial Dalam Ruang Publik," p. 20.
[40] Azyumardi Azra (2002), *Islam Nusantara : Jaringan Global Dan Lokal*, Bandung: Mizan, pp. 2-5.
[41] Khabibi Muhammad Luthfi (2016), "Islam Nusantara: Relasi Islam Dan Budaya Lokal," *SHAHIH : Journal of Islamicate Multidisciplinary*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 2.
[42] Luthfi (2016), "Islam Nusantara," p. 2.
[43] Mujamil Qomar (2016), "Islam Nusantara: Sebuah Alternatif Model Pemikiran, Pemahaman, Dan Pengamalan Islam," *El-HARAKAH (TERAKREDITASI)*, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 202.
[44] Ngatawi Al-Zastrouw (2017), "Mengenal Sepintas Islam Nusantara," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 3.

encounter between religion and culture. Through it, Indonesian cultural values are not eliminated, but instead become a vessel of teaching Islamic religious values to manifest in a more contextual model of thought and practice.

The positive response to religious and cultural encounters enables *Islam Nusantara* to present itself in a unique way. In contrast to the face of Fundamentalist Islam, which tends to homogenize all the world's cultures into one so that different cultures are considered un-Islamic, *Islam Nusantara* instead seeks to initiate dialogue between the teachings of Islam and Indonesian culture without violence (but not reaching the level of syncretism) in a peaceful manner.[45] This is what then makes *Islam Nusantara* become "a more typical Islam *a la* Indonesia, combining theological Islamic values with the values of local traditions and culture."[46]

Al-Zastrouw mentioned some characteristics of *Islam Nusantara* as follows:[47]

a.   The *sanad* (succession of teachings) in *Islam Nusantara* is unbroken and clearly tracked, evidenced by Indonesian *Islam Nusantara* ulamas whose *sanad* is traceable from their teachers, whose knowledge is beyond doubt. This is important to maintain the teachings authenticity and to track thought consistency.
b.   *Islam Nusantara* puts forward wisdom and virtue (*maslahah*) rather than formal and symbolic legal demands. This does not mean a rejection of the formal and symbolic matters in Islam, but rather a proportional placement of them, so that Islam no longer "burdens" and "shackles" Indonesian Muslims but rather solves problems and offers real solutions.
c.   *Islam Nusantara* has a characteristic of non-frontal, non-radical non-cooperation, or in other words, assertive but not rigid. This means that *Islam Nusantara* is assertive and uncompromising in the case of *aqidah* (theological belief), but flexible in the case of forms of government and state.
d.   *Islam Nusantara* always tries to preserve diversity with mutual understanding and respect for differences. This characteristic is what makes *Islam Nusantara* different from others due to its willingness to accept diversity and its attempt to nurture it as a national asset.

By looking at the explanation and characteristics of *Islam Nusantara* above, it is stated that *Islam Nusantara* is a product of long history between Islamic teachings and the Indonesian cultural construct that produced mindset, tradition, and Islamic behavior typical of the country.[48]

Islam Nusantara *and Multicultural Society*
Islam Nusantara is apparently more compatible with a multicultural society, since in a society like this cultural diversity is highly valued and a pride that must be preserved. *Islam Nusantara,* which offers Islamic concepts and practices more tolerant of diversity, are better in providing solutions to plurality in society, as exemplified in the story of Kyai Chudlori as quoted by Al-Zastrouw in Baso.[49] At that time, there was tension between residents of one of villages in Tegalrejo sub-district due to money from the sale of village land. Some residents wanted the money to be used for constructing a mosque since the village had none, but others plan to use it to buy a set of *gamelan* (traditional Javanese percussion) instrument. Then, to ease the tensions, Kyai Chudlori proposed to divide the money in half so that both parties' wishes were fulfilled. The group intending to build the mosque agreed, but the other group refused since the divided amount would not cover the cost needed. Adding to the urgency was the *gamelan* owner's dire economic condition which required him to sell his precious set to the highest bidder. These revelations did not help to ease the tension and Kyai Chudlori decided that the money would be used to buy the *gamelan* only.

Hearing the decision, the group intending to build a mosque asked the Kyai, "Why didn't you put the mosque first, when it is what Islam has commanded?" Hearing this the Kyai replied that because the effort was commanded by Islam, then surely it would be completed quickly due to financial assistance from *shadaqah jariyah* command (making charitable donation to enjoy continuous spiritual rewards), but the command to perform this to buy *gamelan* did not exist according to Islamic teachings so in his

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[45] Luthfi (2016), "Islam Nusantara," p. 10.
[46] Bizawie and Milal Zainul (2015), "Islam Nusantara Sebagai Subjek Dalam Islamic Studies: Lintas Diskursus Dan Metodologis," in Sahal Akhmad and Aziz Munawir (eds.), *Islam Nusantara Dari Ushul Fiqh Hingga Paham Kebangsaan*, Bandung: Mizan, p. 239.
[47] Al-Zastrouw (2017), "Mengenal Sepintas Islam Nusantara," pp. 9-15.
[48] Al-Zastrouw (2017), "Mengenal Sepintas Islam Nusantara," pp. 15.
[49] Al-Zastrouw (2017), "Mengenal Sepintas Islam Nusantara," pp. 11-12.

view, it was better to buy the *gamelan*. The Kyai's wisdom was heard by many *abangans* (Muslims in name only who still performs traditional faith rituals) in Tegalrejo. This message even reached Magelang and Yogyakarta which in turn caused donations to be received in masses to help build a mosque in the village. The message was proven to be true, since the mosque was completed sooner than planned. This attitude by Kyai Chudlori of not putting forward Muslim ego and Islamic ritual symbols is characteristic of *Islam Nusantara*.[50]

A multicultural society that is thick with diversity is strongly supported by the presence of *Islam Nusantara*. *Islam Nusantara* has provided a creation space of cultures and traditions not contrary to Islamic teachings and uses this creation as a means to explain and teach Islam that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all) peacefully.[51]

Islam Nusantara *Values: Religious Concepts and Practices*
Al-Zastrouw pointed out that since the initiation and launch of the *Islam Nusantara* concept by the General Committee of Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU), there was a variety of responses among Muslims themselves in the community. One group, generally referred as Islamists, counters this notion by giving direct, negative responses and sharp, nearing to pejorative, criticism. The group includes those adhering to Wahabism & Salafism and those admiring Muslim Brotherhood (MB) which tend to orient themselves towards the Arabization of Islam and Muslims.[52] They think that *Islam Nusantara* is a product of liberal Islamic thought, that it will change the teachings of Islam, that it divides Muslims, and that it is inherently anti-Arab. Meanwhile, groups that support the concept, including Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, accept it positively as moderate Islam (*wasathiyyah Islam*, "Middle Way" Islam).[53] This group thinks that the *Islam Nusantara* concept is a new current of Islamic thought, usually identified with hard and intolerant tendencies, and a welcoming, charitable alternative face of Islam, usually depicted as fierce and full of conflict.[54] Mubarok and Rustam stated that in order to find the middle way of two opposing thoughts, namely fundamentalists and liberalists, moderate Islam (called *Islam Nusantara*) is the alternative solution to preserve the conducive, peaceful, and welcoming atmosphere in Indonesia.[55]

According to Al-Zastrouw, groups opposing *Islam Nusantara* do not have a complete basis of understanding of its ideas and concepts. Due to their shallow understanding of *Islam Nusantara*, they create assumptions and thoughts contrary to the concept initiated and intended by PBNU. In other words, what they criticize is not *Islam Nusantara*, but rather their assumptions and thoughts about it. For Al-Zastrouw Islamic, these opposing groups need to straighten out their misunderstandings by using scientific arguments according to *Islam Nusantara* thought method and basic characteristics.

As explained by Mubarok and Rustam, the *Islam Nusantara* concept was born as an alternative model of moderate Islamic thought, understanding, and practice which avoids fundamentalism and liberalism. The concept tries to offer an anti-mainstream idea and concept. Ideas and concepts in *Islam Nusantara* are expected to build social, cultural, and religious harmony which in turn enable the development of an Indonesian Islamic humanitarian civilization. Islamic moderation initiated in this model becomes a new paradigm towards Islamic understanding that upholds the values of *tasamuh* (mutual respect), plurality, and *ukhuwah* (fraternity). That is, Islam strongly prioritizes unity of the ummah in building civilization and humanity. Qur'anic verses such as QS. Al-Furqan:67; QS. Al-Isra:29; QS. Al-Isra:110; and QS. Al-Qashash:77 legitimize these moderate teachings to Muslims.[56]

According to Al-Zastrouw, factually (meaning socio-political), the *Islam Nusantara* model was born as an effort to find a solution to the socio-political reality of the global Islamic society that is caught up in various horizontal conflicts, as seen in Arab countries. in view of this fact, *Islam Nusantara* tries to offer the concept of diversity that uses Indonesian Muslims' approach which put wisdom and virtue

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[50] Al-Zastrouw (2017), "Mengenal Sepintas Islam Nusantara," pp. 12.
[51] Al-Zastrouw (2017), "Mengenal Sepintas Islam Nusantara," pp. 15-16.
[52] Leonie Schmidt (2021), "Aesthetics of Authority: 'Islam Nusantara' and Islamic 'Radicalism' in Indonesian Film and Social Media," *Religion*, Vol. 51, No. 2, p. 240.
[53] Schmidt (2021), "Aesthetics of Authority," p. 240.
[54] Al-Zastrouw (2017), "Mengenal Sepintas Islam Nusantara," pp. 1–2.
[55] Silvia Rahmelia and Apandie Chris (2019), "Merajut Kerukunan Dalam Keberagaman: Praksis Pancasila," Prosiding Seminar Nasional Institut Agama Hindu Negeri Tampung Penyang Palangka Raya, Kalimantan tengah, p. 156.
[56] Ahmad Agis Mubarok and Diaz Gandara Rustam (2018), "Islam Nusantara: Moderasi Islam Di Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 154-155.

ahead of symbols and formal rituals as a means of teaching and actualizing Islamic teachings in the country.[57]

The above notion does not mean that Islamic formal and symbolic matters are considered unimportant or ignored. On the other hand, *Islam Nusantara* wants to position it proportionally, where symbols and rituals become a medium to realize the goals of Islam, namely the embodiment of virtues that are *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. As stated by Astuti, who quoted QS al-Anbiya: 107, translated to: " And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds," Islam is a religion of mercy for all beings, which in turn means that Islam is universal and this universalism has been manifested in its teachings, which include religious law (*fiqh*), belief (*tawhid*), and ethics (*akhlaq*).[58] The Qur'an itself is clear that, in fact, Islam is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Its teachings require its followers to practice love and acceptance towards each other without discriminating ethinicities, religions, races and groups, and other social differences. This notion, highly suitable to highly multicultural reality in Indonesia, is the essence of *Islam Nusantara*. Departing from the idea and concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, *Islam Nusantara* is not conforming and not compromising the purity of its teachings, but it is the way Islamic teachings are manifested in a multicultural society such as Indonesia. It is not a religion that adapts to culture, but it uses culture as a 'medium' for preaching Islamic teachings. This is exemplified by the deeds of the Wali Songo in preaching Islam to Javanese population. They did not force people to convert to Islam, but they respected the values of wisdom from their targeted population. Their *da'wah* (proselytization effort) was packaged with traditional arts such as *wayang* (shadow puppets) and *gamelan*. These methods enabled Islam to be seen not as a fierce religion, but a peaceful and moderate one which made it more acceptable.

Astuti said in *Islam Nusantara*, culture is part of religion, where one of the driving force to Indonesians' acceptance of Islam is cultural acculturation, so that Islam is effectively rooted to the recipient community.[59] Indonesian society is very multicultural. Stevanus admitted that the diverse reality of multicultural society, on one hand, is Indonesia's wealth, but on the other hand it is very vulnerable to potential conflicts and divisions.[60]

Diversity in multicultural citizenship consisting of socio-cultural differences will lead Indonesian society to its maturity. This can only happen as long as society can maintain diversity in all aspects of life.[61] It can be stated that the *Islam Nusantara* concept is very relevant to the reality that exists in multicultural Indonesian society.

Islam Nusantara is not a new sect in Islam that wants to change the universal basic teachings of Islam, but rather is a way of understanding and practicing the teachings of Islam by Indonesians, resulting in a system of values, traditions, and Islamic culture which are typical of the country. In this manner, *Islam Nusantara* does not intend to change the teachings of Islam to fit Indonesian culture or traditions. On the contrary, it tries to maintain the basic principles of Islamic teachings as expressed in the Qur'an & the Hadiths and try to practice them in daily life. Thus, the teachings of Islam can remain actual throughout the ages without changing their substance and essence.[62] In conclusion, *Islam Nusantara* will always refer to the Qur'an and Hadiths as the main sources and will not act out of these sources' principles in doing its practices. Mubarok and Rustam explained five unique characteristics that become the values of *Islam Nusantara* compared to Arab Islam or other global Islamic movements as follows:[63]

a. Contextual, in which Islam is understood as a teaching that can be adapted to the circumstances of the times.
b. Tolerant, in which *Islam Nusantara* recognizes all forms of Islamic teachings that exist in Indonesia without discriminating them.

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[57] Al-Zastrouw (2017), "Mengenal Sepintas Islam Nusantara," p. 6.
[58] Hanum Jazimah Puji Astuti (2018), "Islam Nusantara: Sebuah Argumentasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Kultural," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 28.
[59] Astuti (2018), "Islam Nusantara," p. 29.
[60] Yonatan Alex Arifianto and Kalis Stevanus (2020), "Membangun Kerukunan Antarumat Beragama Dan Implikasinya Bagi Misi Kristen," *HUPERETES: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 42.
[61] Rahmelia and Chris (2019), "Merajut Kerukunan Dalam Keberagaman: Praksis Pancasila," p. 3.
[62] Al-Zastrouw (2017), "Mengenal Sepintas Islam Nusantara," pp. 3.
[63] Mubarok and Rustam (2018), "Islam Nusantara: Moderasi Islam Di Indonesia," p. 157.

c. Respect to tradition, in which it acknowledged that the Indonesian model of Islam is the result of acculturation between Islamic teachings and local culture. Islam does not erase the local culture but recontextualizes it into Islamic culture.
d. Progressive, in which progress of the times is considered as a good thing to develop Islamic teachings and to hold dialogues with other people's thought traditions.
e. Liberating, in which it considers Islam to be a teaching that provides answers to issues in people's lives and does not discriminate against people. All humans are seen as equal in their status as God's creature. *Islam Nusantara* is a reflection of the teachings of Islam that frees its adherents to seek laws & ways of life and gives them choice whether or not to obey them, in which all options have their own consequences.

These five unique characteristics form moderate teaching of *Islam Nusantara* which promotes peace, harmony, and tolerance in the life of multicultural Indonesian society without losing basic Islamic teachings. It is expected that such values of peaceful coexistence with the *liyan* (others) become the basis in practicing religious life in Indonesia.

Rusydi stated that harmony reflects a reciprocal relationship characterized by mutual acceptance, trust, respect, and understanding.[64] On the contrary, negative attitudes such as inability to accept others' opinions in a community or society and tendency to bring up differences will lead to conflict.

In the pursuit of harmony with others in Indonesia, it is clear that in practice, awareness of diversity becomes an urgency for every Indonesians. Therefore, it is necessary to increase awareness of diversity through similarities, not differences. As Pettalogi said, religious plurality is an inevitability.[65] In plurality, there are differences in nature, but there are also similarities. Thus, diversity itself should be seen as a gift from God.

This is where religion should serve to foster brotherhood, both internally and between religious adherents. The world has differing religious systems to offer, but since all of them embrace fraternity as one of their core values, relationship between religious adherents can be said to remain relatively harmonious from time to time.[66] According to their nature, every religion has normative teachings about harmony with other religions to be practiced in the practical state. It was revealed by Nisvilyah, that normatively the basic values that founded religious moderation are religious and cultural.[67]

It is undeniable that religious moderation, which is to create a harmonious atmosphere in religious praxis in pluralist Indonesian society is one of the aspects that need to be instilled in citizens as early and continuous as possible through religious institutions and formal & non-formal education. Stevanus stated that not to be missed is the role of informal education in the family by parents.[68] Families have a strategic role to support religious moderation.

According to the authors, the *Islam Nusantara* model is highly suitable in a multicultural Indonesia to further intensify harmony in the life between religious adherents. It is expected that this model can develop and preserve harmony between peoples.

Significance of Islam Nusantara *Values as a Driving Force of Social Ethics*

A harmonious life of religious practice in Indonesia is an inevitable expectation., and this is the shared responsibility of all religious adherents. The prevailing historically factual condition is that the founder of the Indonesian nation had agreed that Pancasila and 1945 Constitution as some of the wealths not owned by other countries as the basis of ideology in building a life of religious praxis. All religious adherents, irrespective of their religious activities, have an equal place, position, accommodation, and guarantee in the country.

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[64] Ibnu Rusydi and Siti Zolehah (2018), "Makna Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama Dalam Konteks Keislaman Dan Keindonesian," *Journal for Islamic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 172.
[65] Sagaf S. Pettalongi (2013), "Islam Dan Pendidikan Humanis Dalam Resolusi Konflik Sosial," *Cakrawala Pendidikan*, No. 2, p. 176.
[66] Amal Fathullah (2020), "Pendidikan Kerukunan Sebagai Sarana Mewujudkan Harmonisasi Kehidupan Beragama (Studi Normatif Praksis Pada Agama-Agama Di Kalimantan Selatan)," *Tarbiyah Islamiyah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Agama Islam*, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 60.
[67] Lely Nisvilyah (2013), "Toleransi Antarumat Beragama Dalam Memperkokoh Persatuan Dan Kesatuan Bangsa (Studi Kasus Umat Islam Dan Kristen Dusun Segaran Kecamatan Dlanggu Kabupaten Mojokerto) Kabupaten Mojokerto)," *Kajian Moral Dan Kewarganegaraan*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 382.
[68] Kalis Stevanus (2018), "Tujuh Kebajikan Utama Untuk Membangun Karakter Kristiani Anak," *BIA': Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen Kontekstual*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 89.

The nation's founding fathers were aware of their plurality and acknowledged each others' differences. Such attitude should be the most basic thing that must exist and be possessed in living a religious life in Indonesia. If each religious adherents have these awareness on the meaning of plurality, it will give birth to attitude of mutual acknowledgment. Thus, every community members coming from all religious groups must be able to show a pluralist attitude. It is further stated by Nafis that not only pluralism signifies diversity but more than that, it also necessitates acknowledgement and appreciation to the truth of faith found in other religious beliefs.[69]

This article tries to explore the position of the *Islam Nusantara* concept within the framework of Indonesian religious plurality, in terms of life of religious praxis. The authors describe their process in two steps. Firstly, by using the historical and philosophical approach of *Islam Nusantara*, the authors sought to describe its values' significance. Then, the authors sought to find ways of Indonesian Muslims in applying this values in their interaction with other religious adherents in Indonesia, in which the room for dialogue with other religions is opened, which in turn enrich religious experience of each adherents with 'values' or 'truths' contained in other religions. The authors believe that the values of *Islam Nusantara* can bridge the creation of a harmonious life of religious practice in Indonesia and can also be a driving force of good social ethics in a multicultural society. Cahyono outlined at least five indicators of harmony in religious life embodied in conditions of mutual respect and interfaith cooperation.[70]

a. Development of moderate religious understanding. Harmonious living conditions between religious adherents is visible from the substantially pluralistic and inclusive way the religious adherents understand their beliefs. This moderate understanding of religion paves the way to the birth of tolerance and cooperation without disturbing the respective beliefs of each religious group.

b. Increased religious understanding and experience. Harmonious life of religious adherents can encourage the improvement of religious understanding and experience, since all religious adherents have the freedom to realize their teachings without being disturbed. Religious facilities and religious social organizations will grow while respecting equal opportunities for other religions.

c. Development of religious cooperation in social life praxis. A harmonious life of religious practice are measurable by intertwining social cooperation among religious groups.

d. Fair treatment in all aspects of public life. A harmonious life of religious praxis are indicated by reduced social jealousy among religious adherents for unfair treatment in the economic, social, and political fields. Fair treatment in all aspects of public life is very closely related to the realization of the harmony of religious adherents. Syam stated that on the other hand, riots in the name of religion in Indonesia often occured because of economic jealousy, combined with political and religious issues.[71]

e. Reduction of conflicts with social and religious undertones. Harmony of religious adherents impacts social life, in which conflicts with social and religious undertones, both intra-faith or interfaith experience reduction.

As aforementioned, Indonesia faces crucial issues, including the rise of acts of terrorism and radicalism. All of these are manifestations of intolerance that divides social relations in society. Nuryansah stated that radicalism and terrorism that occurred after Reformation in Indonesia became a crucial issue. One of the causes to this is the wrong paradigm of religious doctrines, especially with regards to the meaning of *jihad*, understood as a call to arms.[72]

Misconceptions of religious concepts, such as *jihad*, have contributed to the rise of radicalism in religion. Contributing to this is the fact that some understood the texts containing the concepts literally and partially. This kind of act entails implication for the life of religious praxis, since according to the Qur'an and Hadiths, Islam is universal, carrying out a peaceful mission to be *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Thus, it is concluded that the false understanding of religion has become a source of radicalism and terrorism as well as all other forms of intolerance.

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[69] Muhammad Muntahibun Nafis (2008), "Pesantren Dan Pluralisme," *Insania: Jurnal Pemikiran Alternatif Pendidikan*, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 84.
[70] Cahyono Didi (2019), "Pentingnya Memiliki Sikap Lepas Bebas Dalam Mewujudkan Keharmonisan Umat Beragama," OSF, pp. 10-11.
[71] N. Syam (2009), *Tantangan Multikulturalisme Indonesia: Dari Radikalisme Menuju Kebangsaan*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, p. 91.
[72] M. Nuryansah (2018), "Qital Dalam Alquran Dan Hadis: Tinjauan Historis Dan Praksis," *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith*, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 192.

Nisvilyah explained that the first form of tolerance needed is religious tolerance. Religious tolerance is a form of tolerance concerning creedal beliefs, namely the readiness to give opportunity to other religions to worship according their beliefs. The second is social tolerance, which is tolerance among members of a community. In a multicultural society due to religious differences, it is recommended to uphold peace and cooperate with different people within predetermined boundaries.[73] *Islam Nusantara* does not deny and is even aware of fundamental differences in each religion. Its values are significant, in which they can force social ethics to initiate and manage awareness of differences to maintain social harmony through social interactions, so that community members are able to give and receive each other in equality. There needs to be an effort to find and formulate social agreements without compromising the basic teachings of each faith. Thus, it will nurture an attitude of tolerance, open in the practice of religious life anywhere.

The values in *Islam Nusantara* are not contrary to other religions. It is better for all Muslims to be able to live and internalize these values to be a driving force of social ethics. Involvement of all parties is needed to build a harmonious life in a pluralistic and multicultural society like Indonesia. One of the positive actions of Muslims needing massive support is an effort to internalize these values in religious practice. *Islam Nusantara* tries to build good communication between religious adherents, regardless of religion to foster mutual respect for the position of each religious adherents is the same and equal in this archipelago. The authors is optimistic that the values of *Islam Nusantara* are massively internalized in daily life as a driving force of social ethics in a plural and multicultural society in the archipelago, which can prevent conflict between religious adherents. The values initiated in *Islam Nusantara* are very relevant to the historical-geographical condition of Indonesia that prioritizes recognition of the existence of other religions. Therefore, the attitude that needs to be built is not only with normative-theological awareness but also social consciousness.

Conclusion

Indonesia is a multicultural country with a diversity of ethinicities, religions, races, groups, and cultures. The condition presents the country a classic double-edged sword situation: on one side, it can prove beneficial, but on the other hand, it can also be detrimental. It comes to Indonesia's advantage if its diversity are managed properly to become useful asset for national development. On the contrary, it will be detrimental if the diversity is even pointed out and disputed, which will inevitably trigger social conflict. Multicultural Indonesia needs social ethics that glue the abundance of diversity.

The presence of *Islam Nusantara* with a unique face in multicultural Indonesia has visibly encouraged emergence of good and correct social ethics. The tolerant, firm-but-not-rigid, local-wisdom-respecting, and diversity-upholding values of *Islam Nusantara* are significant in fostering social solidarity, equality, and appreciation in social interaction.

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[73] Nisvilyah (2013), "Toleransi Antarumat Beragama Dalam Memperkokoh Persatuan Dan Kesatuan Bangsa," p. 384.

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