Intra-sectarian Dialogue Within Islamic Communities: Challenges and Opportunities of Nowadays Islam in Indonesia

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Abstract: The tensions between Islamic sects in Indonesia are a serious problem for the unity of Muslims and the integrity of the country. This study resolves religious conflicts that occur in Indonesia. Then, using a wasatiyya Islamic perspective to discover what challenges and opportunities. It can be taken in the modern era. Using the extended review method, this study identifies external factors such as extremism and exclusivity in religion, as well as internal factors such as political agendas that create divided political identities. The sects that are always involved and affected include Ahmadiyah, Shia, Sunni, and Wahabi. Forms of discrimination include expulsion, destruction of mosques, labeling as deviant, and terrorist attacks that are very detrimental and do not fully receive guarantees from local authorities. So, optimizing mosques as symbols of religious authority, social media as innovations in preaching, educational institutions as places of establishment, and international ethics conferences can be used as instruments to realize unity and enable dialogue between religious sects to minimize conflict and foster unity.

Keywords: Intra-sectarian Dialogue; Islamic Wasatiyya; Religious Conflict; Indonesian Islam.

Abstrak: *Ketegangan antar aliran Islam di Indonesia merupakan masalah serius bagi persatuan umat Islam dan keutuhan negara. Studi ini berupaya menyelesaikan konflik keagamaan yang terjadi di Indonesia. Kemudian, dengan menggunakan perspektif Islam wasatiyah, ditemukan tantangan dan peluang apa saja yang dapat diambil dalam era modern. Dengan menggunakan metode tinjauan luas, studi ini mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor eksternal seperti ekstremisme dan eksklusivitas dalam agama, serta faktor-faktor internal seperti agenda politik yang menciptakan identitas politik yang terpecah. Aliran-aliran yang selalu terlibat dan terdampak antara lain Ahmadiyah, Syiah, Sunni, dan Wahabi. Bentuk-bentuk diskriminasi yang terjadi antara lain pengusiran, perusakan masjid, pelabelan sesat, dan serangan teroris yang sangat merugikan dan tidak sepenuhnya mendapat jaminan dari otoritas setempat. Maka, optimalisasi masjid sebagai simbol otoritas keagamaan, media sosial sebagai inovasi dalam dakwah, lembaga pendidikan sebagai tempat pendirian, dan konferensi etika internasional dapat dijadikan instrumen untuk mewujudkan persatuan dan memungkinkan dialog antar aliran agama guna meminimalisir konflik dan memupuk persatuan.*

***Kata Kunci**: Dialog Intra-Aliran; Islam Wasatiyah; Konflik Keagamaan; Islam Indonesia.*

Introduction

Indonesia is a country with the greatest linguistic and cultural diversity in the world. This diversity is something to be grateful for and preserved. Furthermore, Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. Since its arrival in the archipelago in the 7th century, Islam has greatly influenced people's lives, impacting not only worship, but also political, social, and cultural systems. This has resulted in various cultural acculturations and a way of life that embraces diversity.[1] Since ancient times, Islam in Indonesia has thrived and been preserved according to various sects and schools of thought of Islamic preachers from different countries. Examples include Shia Islam from Iran, Sunni Islam from Iraq and Egypt, Ahmadiyah Islam from Pakistan or India, and Salafi Islam from Saudi Arabia.

The diversity of Islamic sects and schools of thought in Indonesia forms a rich mosaic of religious traditions that coexist within a single social space.[2] This plurality includes theological orientations, cultural expressions, social practices, and political attitudes shaped by different interpretations of the Qur'an within specific historical and sociological contexts.[3] Although such diversity reflects the dynamic character of Indonesian Islam, it does not automatically generate harmony and has often given rise to tension and conflict among sects. The rapid influence of globalization has further intensified these tensions by accelerating the circulation of competing Islamic discourses and interpretations. Consequently, serious challenges to social cohesion within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) have emerged, including fundamentalism linked to terrorism, discrimination against the Ahmadiyah community, and the expulsion of Shi'a groups in various regions. At the same time, Indonesia's vibrant Islamic discourse illustrates the efforts of clerics, scholars, and intellectuals to promote peace through context-sensitive and locally grounded interpretations of Islam.[4] These efforts have also been reinforced over the past decade by state-led religious moderation programs initiated through the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

All of these concepts share a common objective, namely revitalizing Islam as a religion of mercy for all (*rahmatan lil-'alamin*) and promoting *wasatiyya* as a middle path. This agenda is closely connected to the rise of terrorism, radicalism, and religious violence carried out in the name of Islam, which largely stem from transnational radical ideologies disseminated through globalization and digital media. Such ideologies circulate rapidly and are easily accessed across geographical and temporal boundaries. In Indonesia, however, efforts to promote religious moderation have predominantly focused on Muslim–non-Muslim relations through interfaith dialogue initiatives. Consequently, the growing threat to harmony within Muslim communities themselves,

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[1] Agus Sunyoto, *Atlas Wali Songo* (2016), https://www.google.comAtlas_Wali_Songo/bUifvwEACAAJ?hl=id, accessed 19 Dec 2024.

[2] Abdullah Saeed, *Islamic thought: an introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), http://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?TCR2;3921288, accessed 19 Dec 2024.

[3] Carool Kersten, *Islam in Indonesia: the contest for society, ideas and values* (Oxford University Press, 2015), https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=92uMCwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=carool+kersten+&ots=gn4JEcMEyO&sig=yd_5_itKWZNHS07C1g6WwQtx3Sc, accessed 3 Nov 2024.

[4] Maftukhin Maftukhin, "Contemporary Da'wah Based on Cosmopolitan Islam", *Indonesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2023), pp. 307–20.

caused by internal fragmentation, has received insufficient attention. Studies by M. Khusna Amal,[5] Mukhsin Achmad, and Yuka Kayane show that Sunni–Shia conflicts are driven by theological, political, and group-based polarizations that lead to discrimination and forced displacement. Similar patterns affect other minority groups, such as the Ahmadiyah, who, following Michel Foucault's perspective on power relations, can be understood as subjects of marginalization and exclusion legitimized by dominant discourses, including the MUI fatwa labeling them deviant.[6] At the same time, Muhaimin Zulhair Achsir's research demonstrates that radical groups,[7] though numerically small, have been able to provoke large-scale tension and violence, as seen in the Surabaya and Sibolga bombings, highlighting the limited space for meaningful intra-Muslim dialogue in Indonesia.[8]

Not all Muslim communities in Indonesia embrace the cosmopolitan dimensions of contemporary Islamic discourse, as resistance often arises from conservative groups who perceive cosmopolitanism as a vehicle for liberal and Western values rather than as an expression rooted in Islamic teachings. This perception has contributed to suspicion and rejection of dialogical approaches within intra-sectarian relations. Such misunderstandings indicate the need for corrective frameworks that are culturally resonant with Indonesian Islam and sensitive to its socio-religious context. In this respect, the present study distinguishes itself from earlier research by emphasizing context-based and culturally grounded approaches. Through a critical literature review, the study shows that multiple conceptual and methodological approaches remain relevant for fostering intra-sectarian dialogue. Accordingly, this research seeks to address existing gaps by examining both the challenges and opportunities of intra-sectarian dialogue in Indonesia. It further explores strategic efforts to reduce tensions among Muslim communities in response to rapid global transformations, while formulating pathways for realizing constructive dialogue within the framework of modern Indonesian Islam.

This research employs a descriptive, literature-based, qualitative approach. First, a large body of literature from books and journals is compiled. Then, it is classified into

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[5] M. Khusna Amal and Ahmad Fajar Shodiq, "Konflik Sunni-Syi'ah di Indonesia Kontemporer: Polarisasi, Diskriminasi dan Kekerasan Agama", *Islamika Inside: Jurnal Keislaman dan Humaniora*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2019), pp. 208–37; Mukhsin Achmad, "The Construction of Discrimination Against the Shi'a Community in Sampang, Madura: A Religious Structural Violence Perspective", *Asy-Syir'ah: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah dan Hukum*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2021), pp. 241–62; Yuka Kayane, "Understanding Sunni-Shi'a sectarianism in contemporary Indonesia: A different voice from Nahdlatul Ulama under pluralist leadership", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 48, no. 140 (2020), pp. 78–96.

[6] Bondan Gunawan, "PELARANGAN AHMADIYAH DI INDONESIA DALAM ANALISIS RELASI KEKUASAAN MICHEL FOUCAULT", PhD Thesis (UIN SUNAN KALIJAGA YOGYAKARTA, 2023), https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/61935/, accessed 8 Nov 2024.

[7] Muhaimin Zulhair Achsin, "Culture and role of woman in terrorism in Indonesia. Case studies: Suicide bombings in Surabaya and Sibolga", *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology*, vol. 8, no. 5 (2019), pp. 873–6.

[8] Dino Krause, Isak Svensson, and Göran Larsson, "Why Is There So Little Shia–Sunni Dialogue? Understanding the Deficit of Intra-Muslim Dialogue and Interreligious Peacemaking", *Religions*, vol. 10, no. 10 (MDPI, 2019), p. 567.

several themes from 2019 to 2024. The theme classification in this case is divided into a discourse on cross-sectarian dynamics in Indonesia, along with an analysis of conflicts that occurred. Next, it explores the discourse of cosmopolitan Islam, particularly in the context of modernization. Finally, it provides an analysis of interfaith dialogue as a paradigm for the realization of cross-sectarianism in Indonesia, exposing the challenges and efforts involved. Due to the complexity of the issue discussed, namely intra-sectarian dialogue in Islam, an extended review approach was chosen. This approach enables researchers to gain in-depth insights into the various approaches taken, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and identify relevant research gaps in the Indonesian context.

Result and Discussion
Sectarians and Its Conflicts in Indonesia

To narrow the scope of the term "sect," the author adopts the Oxford Dictionary's definition: a small group of people who adhere to a particular religion but have beliefs or practices that distinguish them from other groups.[9] This is because the sects that emerged within Islam are distinguished only by differing theological understandings influenced by political elements. Nevertheless, they agree on fundamental beliefs, such as the oneness of God and that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the final messenger.

Historically, divisions within Islam initially emerged from political tensions following the Battle of Siffin between Ali ibn Abi Talib and Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, rooted in disputes over the assassination of Uthman ibn Affan. These events triggered theological debates about faith, sin, and whether killing a fellow Muslim constituted apostasy. The arbitration (*tahkim*) intended to resolve the conflict instead deepened disagreements and led to the fragmentation of the Muslim community. As a result, Muslims split into three main groups: the *Shi'a*, who remained loyal to Ali; the Khawarij, who denounced both Ali and Muawiyah for failing to uphold divine law; and the Murji'ah, who refrained from taking political positions. Over time, these initially political divisions evolved into broader theological discourses involving interpretations of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This process gave rise to various schools and sects such as the Mu'tazilah, Jabariyah, Qadariyah, and Sunni traditions. In the contemporary period, intra-sectarian tensions continue to shape Islamic discourse in new contexts. In Indonesia, these dynamics are evident in relations between Sunni and Shi'a communities, Sunni and Ahmadiyah groups, as well as among traditionalist, conservative, and modernist currents, posing ongoing challenges to social and religious harmony.[10]

The collapse of the New Order regime marked a turning point in the rise of unrest and conflict between ethnicities, religions, and within Islamic society itself. This was a

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[9] *sect noun - Definition, pictures, pronunciation and usage notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com*, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/sect?q=sect, accessed 26 Dec 2024.

[10] Moh Ariful Anam, "Kemunculan Aliran Islam dan Prospek Pluralisme di Indonesia", *INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ISLAM, LAW, AND SOCIETY (INCOILS)*, vol. 1 (2022), https://www.academia.edu/download/91048631/Kemunculan_Aliran_Islam_dan_Prospek_Plur alisme_di_Indonesia.pdf, accessed 15 Dec 2024.

result of the rise of puritanical Islamism, which is associated with the Wahhabi sect and has similar characteristics to movements in the Middle East. Karool Kersten observed that underground religious movements began to emerge during this period. Religious discourses seeking to redefine Islam naturally required greater power; thus, affiliating with political agendas and power became a means of maintaining religious authority.[11] Therefore, it is not surprising that Indonesia, renowned for its pluralistic and diverse society, has had to grapple with terrorism, discrimination, and tensions stemming from differences.[12] Several conflicts that have occurred since the New Order can be analyzed in several categories, including:

1. Theological Differences

Theological differences constitute a longstanding issue in Islamic history and have given rise to various sects rooted in *kalam* debates. In Indonesia, intra-Islamic tensions primarily involve Sunni Muslims as the majority group and Ahmadiyah and Shi'a as minority communities. These differing theological orientations are frequently invoked as sources of conflict, often intensified by misunderstanding and stigmatization. The Ahmadiyah movement originated in India within a context of colonial domination, socio-economic decline, and intellectual stagnation among Muslims, with the aim of revitalizing Islamic teachings. It entered Indonesia in the 1920s through students from Sumatra and later developed into an officially recognized religious organization with the establishment of the Indonesian Ahmadiyah Community (JAI) in 1953.[13]

Doctrinally, Ahmadiyah theology centers on distinctive interpretations of revelation, the concepts of al-Masih and al-Mahdi, and prophethood. The community holds that its founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, received divine inspiration and fulfilled the role of the promised Messiah, not as a bearer of a new *shari'a* but as a reformer of Islam.[14] The Ahmadiyah understanding of prophethood is structured into hierarchical levels, positioning Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in a role comparable to that of a *mujaddid* in other Islamic traditions.[15] On this basis, Ahmadiyah adherents maintain that their core creed remains consistent with mainstream Islamic beliefs, particularly regarding monotheism, the finality of the Qur'an, and the prophethood of Muhammad.

Shi'a Islam, by contrast, emerged in the formative period of Islamic history and is defined by a theological framework encompassing *tawhid*, divine justice

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[11] Kersten, *Islam in Indonesia*.

[12] J. Mardimin, "ANDIL AGAMA DAN POLITIK KEKUASAAN DALAM KONFLIK-KONFLIK SOSIAL DAN KERUSUHAN-KERUSUHAN MASSAL DI INDONESIA", *KRITIS*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2018), pp. 57–80.

[13] Liputan6.com, "Jejak Ahmadiyah di Indonesia, Kontroversi hingga Persekusi", *liputan6.com* (10 Oct 2022), https://www.liputan6.com/islami/read/5092328/jejak-ahmadiyah-di-indonesia-kontroversi-hingga-persekusi, accessed 27 Dec 2024.

[14] "The Promised Messiah – Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be on him)", *Islam Ahmadiyya*, https://www.alislam.org/articles/promised-messiah-hazrat-mirza-ghulam-ahmad/, accessed 27 Dec 2024.

[15] Tim Ahmadiyah.Id, "Syahadat Ahmadiyah - Artikel Islam dan Khutbah Jumat", *Jamaah Muslim Ahmadiyah Indonesia* (8 Feb 2022), https://ahmadiyah.id/syahadat-ahmadiyah.html, accessed 27 Dec 2024.

(*'adl*), prophethood (*nubuwwah*), imamate, and resurrection (*ma'ad*). The doctrine of the imamate is its most distinctive feature, asserting that legitimate leadership of the Muslim community after the Prophet Muhammad rests with infallible Imams endowed with authoritative religious knowledge. Within Shi'a thought, divine justice is manifested in the appointment of the Imam, while belief in *ma'ad* affirms the afterlife, the Day of Judgment, and ultimate moral accountability. Together, these principles constitute the theological foundations that distinguish Shi'a Islam from other Islamic schools of thought.[16]

2. Fanatism and Overgeneralization

    Like other Islamic traditions, the Shia concept of Tawhid believes in the oneness of God. In the context of Imamate, however, Tawhid emphasizes the importance of the relationship between humans and the Imam, who is considered God's representative on earth. The Imamate is considered the successor to the Prophet's teachings, a source of knowledge, and a leader of the community, which is why this relationship is emphasized. Meanwhile, Shia justice believes that God is all-just. This concept of justice is reflected in the appointment of the Imam, who is considered a manifestation of God's justice in selecting the leader of the community.

    The Shia concept of prophethood, or nubuwwah, recognizes the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the prophets before him. However, Shias have a unique view of the prophets' position and role in Islamic history. Finally, there is the concept of resurrection, or Ma'ad. Shia Muslims believe in life after death, the Day of Judgment, and paradise and hell. The concept of Ma'ad forms the basis of Shia Islamic teachings about the afterlife.[17]

    In Indonesia, the Ahmadiyah and Shia sects are consistently targeted by fanatics and subjected to overgeneralization. Shia adherents have experienced expulsion in Sampang, discrimination in Jambesari and Bondowoso, and attacks in Solo, among other cases. The Ahmadiyah are also frequently discriminated against and criminalized. Their mosques are vandalized, their congregations are disbanded, and they are labeled as deviant and dangerous.

3. Political Tension and Power

    Since their inception in early history, Islamic sects have been inextricably linked to political elements and power struggles. According to Bryan S. Turner, political tension wrapped in religion leads to excessive intensity among religious adherents as a form of piety expression. This is further exacerbated by power relations between the majority and minority groups and by inappropriate government intervention. Many policies implemented by local and central governments fail to protect citizens' livelihoods due to the intervention of those

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[16] Rifai Abubakar, *PERGULATAN SYI'AH DALAM KONSᴛᴇʟASI POLITIK KEAGAMAAN DI INDONESIA* (SUKA-Press UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2020), https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/41899/, accessed 8 Nov 2024.

[17] *Overgeneralisation | Overcoming, signs, impact & affects* (27 Nov 2023), https://cpdonline.co.uk/knowledge-base/mental-health/overgeneralisation/, accessed 26 Dec 2024.

in power with political agendas.[18] This gives rise to what is known as identity politics.

The inconsistency within the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) regarding the heretical status of Shia adherents in East Java and Central Java is a particularly damaging example. It has led to negative stereotypes about them and a life of threats and discrimination.[19] The MUI's heretical fatwa against the Ahmadiyah community demonstrates the failure of clerics and the state to protect citizens. This failure is evident in the violence and destruction of places of worship, a right that should be afforded to all citizens.[20] Furthermore, identity politics, which uses religion to perpetuate political agendas and authority, recur in every election. The 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election and the 2019 presidential election are just a couple of examples of divisions within the Muslim community due to political and power struggles.

The Wasatiyya Islam: Reawakened Perspective

In essence, wasatiyya embodies the concept of moderation, signifying the pursuit of equilibrium and the adoption of a judicious stance. The only verse that touches on this concept is Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 143, which refers to the middle path between two opposing tendencies in religious practice. Classical commentators, including Ibn Kathir, expound on the term *"wasath"* as a middle ground between Jewish spirituality, which tends toward materialism, and Christian spirituality, which predominantly embraces fatalism. A semantic analysis of the term *"wasath"* reveals that it is comprised of three letters: "س" ",و," and "ط." A thorough examination of these letters indicates that they are associated with the concepts of balance and maintaining a middle ground. This meaning consistently conveys a positive connotation because there is no tendency or inclination towards any aspect that eliminates justice or balance.[21]

However, the concept of wasatiyyah has received scant attention in Islamic discourse since the classical period. Indeed, this notion materialized in Egypt only in the late 20th century, coinciding with the Arab Spring. At that time, Al-Azhar, Egypt's oldest educational institution, confronted a Salafi movement that drew inspiration from Wahhabism, orthodoxy, and armed militancy. This movement was closely associated with political parties, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite these tensions, Al-Azhar effectively sustained its reputation and standing as the custodian of a moderate Islamic perspective by conceptualizing the notion of wasatiyyah. As the preeminent institution of Wasatiyyah teachings, Al-Azhar endeavors to establish itself as a central

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[18] Gunawan, "PELARANGAN AHMADIYAH DI INDONESIA DALAM ANALISIS RELASI KEKUASAAN MICHEL FOUCAULT".

[19] Muhamad Nasrudin and Radhial Falah, *Mendebat Fatwa MU: Silang Perspektif Intelektual Muslim terhadap Fatwa MUI tentang Aliran Sesat Keagamaan* (Lintang Rasi Aksara Books, 2016), https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=xrmiEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=aliran+s ekte+keislaman+di+Indonesia&ots=4JoCNpil7J&sig=ncDXnVDLvKUqaNSxnSangRxoZ2o, accessed 15 Dec 2024.

[20] Denden Matin Dayyin and Ahmad Zuhdi Ismail, "Analisis Fatwa MUI Tentang Pelarangan Dan Penyesatan Kepada Kelompok Ahmadiyah Di Indonesia", *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas*, vol. 2, no. 4 (2022), pp. 475–82.

[21] Ridya Nur Laily, "Wasaṭ dan Derivasinya dalam Al-Qur'an: Analisis Semantik Toshihiko Izutsu", *Mashahif: Journal of Qur'an and Hadits Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2021), https://urj.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/mashahif/article/view/782, accessed 5 Oct 2025.

representative of Sunni Islam, offering equitable representation to the multifarious schools of thought within its purview. This is due to the religious approach of Islam, which prioritizes humanity, justice, and flexibility.[22]

The plurality implemented even accommodates Salafi-oriented teachers and students. This has led to an influx of Muslim students from around the world seeking to enroll at Al-Azhar, thereby establishing it as a prominent center for Islamic scholarship and a guardian of Islamic wasatiyya. This theological interpretation, known as Wasatiyya, emerges as a significant alternative in the context of the rise of Islamism and radical Islamist movements. Of particular concern is the legitimization of violence, including acts of terrorism, under the pretext of religious belief.[23] It is widely accepted among scholars that the fundamental principles of Islamic wasatiyya are tawazun, which signifies the equilibrium between worldly existence and the afterlife, i'tidal, denoting equitable placement and evaluation, tawasuth, representing simplicity in religious practice, and tasamuh, embodying tolerance and respect for diversity.[24]

The success of the Islamic wasatiyya discourse, which is able to negotiate with modernization, democracy, and human rights, was not only developed by Sunni groups. Additionally, Shia expounded on the notion of Islamic wasatiyya in the 1980s in Iran, underscoring the tenets of moderation. This notion was initially advanced by Ayatollah Montazeri, who established the Wasatiyya School of Thought. While not as fervent as the Sunni group, this school offered an alternative perspective, positing that Islam, from a Shia perspective, remains consistent with contemporary issues such as politics and human rights. This posed a significant challenge to the government's radical interpretation of religious narratives, including the doctrine of *wilayat-i faqih*, which prioritizes textualism.[25]

The Indonesian government has formally adopted Wasatiyya Islam as a government program through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, with the objective of disseminating the principles of religious moderation across all facets of society. Moreover, prominent Islamic organizations in Indonesia have conceptualized wasatiyya Islam, an ideology that aligns with the principles espoused by entities such as Nahdlatul Ulama's Nusantara Islam, which demonstrates a strong adherence to local cultural traditions, and Muhamadiyah's Progressive Islam, which advocates for the advancement of civilization.[26] This perspective is consistent with the cosmopolitan

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[22] Masooda Bano and Keiko Sakurai (eds.), *Shaping global Islamic discourses: the role of Al-Azhar, Al-Medina and Al-Mustafa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press in association with the Aga Khan University, 2018), https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748696857.001.0001, accessed 30 Sep 2025.

[23] Ahmad Suharto et al., "POSITIONING THE MEANING OF WASATIYYAH IN RELIGIOUS MODERATION", *SANGKéP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2023), pp. 114–30.

[24] Azmi Uwafiq Muhammad and Syakur Wildan, "Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Gerakan Islam Wasathiyah Dalam Menangkal Radikalisme", *Risâlah Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2023), pp. 916–27.

[25] Naser Ghobadzadeh, "Wasatiyya Discourse in Shi'i Islam: Ayatollah Montazeri and Human Rights Jurisprudence", *Religions*, vol. 13, no. 2 (MDPI, 2022), p. 126.

[26] Muhammad Qorib, "MUHAMMADIYAH'S INSIGHT ON TOLERANCE AS CONTAINED IN THE RISALAH ISLAM BERKEMAJUAN", *Berajah Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2024), pp. 61–72.

concept, which advocates for openness, pluralism, and cross-cultural solidarity, emphasizing the importance of mutual respect and appreciation for diversity. In the contemporary Islamic context, these values become salient in response to the challenges posed by globalization, modernity, and increasing polarization. Islam, given its extensive history of interaction across diverse cultures and civilizations, possesses the inherent potential to cultivate a cosmopolitan perspective that is in alignment with its tenets.

The Islamic belief system, particularly within the context of Indonesia, posits the notion that human existence is intertwined within a unified community, thereby fostering a sense of egalitarianism. This phenomenon transcends religious, ethnic, cultural, and racial boundaries, underscoring its universal and inclusive nature. Wasatiyya Islam is a theological framework that can be utilized to achieve justice and human equality.[27] This phenomenon can be traced by examining the Qur'an, which emphasizes calls for unity, the abolition of slavery, the elevation of women's status, and the elimination of the caste system. These principles aim to elevate the status of humanity, emphasizing the glory of humankind and the eradication of the dominance of superior individuals over those considered inferior.[28]

Consequently, Wasatiyya Islam emerges as a particularly suitable paradigm for facilitating intra-sectarian dialogue in the contemporary context. This is since the concept does not draw upon Western thought, which only emerged in the Middle Ages. Rather, it is rooted in Islamic values that have been reinvigorated to align with contemporary needs. The adoption of Islam as a way of life is expected to foster the values of sportsmanship, objectivity, honesty, critical thinking, and solution-oriented thinking. The re-establishment of Islamic values in intra-sectarian dialogue is a proposed solution to the issue of achieving Muslim unity. The re-establishment of these values is believed to result in a minimization of divisions and intolerance caused by biased interpretations. Reflective dialogue is imperative for the establishment of mutual understanding, the attainment of agreement on differences, and, most crucially, the preservation of humanitarian values through discussion.[29]

Intra-sectarian Dialogue: Challenges and Opportunities

Notwithstanding the aforementioned challenges, there are numerous opportunities to advance intra-sectarian dialogue. From a cosmopolitan perspective, Islamic Wasatiyya values such as deliberation (shura), tolerance (tasamuh), and respect for differences (ikhtilaf) can provide a strong foundation.[30] Moreover, local Indonesian traditions, such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and village deliberations (musyawarah desa),

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[27] Jeremiah B. Bautista, "Reexamining Islam and democracy through the Wasatiyya perspective", PhD Thesis (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2014), https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/44518/14Dec_Bautista_Jeremiah.pdf;sequence= 1, accessed 28 Sep 2025.

[28] Mira Fitri Shari, "Konsep Islam Rahmatan lil 'Alamain: Studi Komparatif Pemikiran Fethullah Gullen dan Farid Esack Mengenai Konsep Islam Kosmopolitan", *Jurnal Moderasi*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2022), pp. 1–18.

[29] Teddy Asmara and Muhammad Dzikirullah H. Noho, "Religion and cosmopolitan society: religious conflict settlement based on legal culture", *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 14, no. 3 (UTS ePress Sydney, 2022), pp. 46–60.

[30] A. Mukti Ali et al., *Agama dan masyarakat: 70 tahun H.A. Mukti Ali*, Cet. 1 edition (Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 1993).

offer dialogue practices that can be adapted to resolve intra-sectarian conflicts. The role of ulama, Muslim scholars, and Islamic organizations is also crucial in promoting an inclusive, dialogical approach.

Dialogue, in this sense, is the practical embodiment of the Islamic cosmopolitan concept, aimed at fostering unity and peace. Inter-sect dialogue is predicated on the principle of profound tolerance. Muslims are encouraged to embrace a cosmopolitan perspective, emphasizing the appreciation of diversity as a source of enrichment rather than perceiving it as a form of impediment. The existence of opportunities for openness and information sharing has been shown to naturally encourage honest and warm communication between sects. Such communication is conducive to the discussion of both differences and commonalities. It is imperative that these discussions be conducted in a constructive and respectful manner.[31]

The challenges confronting Islam on the global stage are multifaceted. Muslims, as one of the world's largest religious groups, must prioritize unity and mitigate religious conflict. According to Turner's perspective, political factors represent the most significant challenge to religious harmony. Religion, in this sense, functions as a legitimizing force, facilitating the ascension of political power.[32] The assertion of religious support by rulers has been demonstrated to have the potential to fortify their standing and garner public endorsement. The utilization of religion as a mechanism for mass mobilization is a rational phenomenon, as it possesses the capacity to galvanize large groups and incite the formation of social movements. Religious-based mass mobilization is frequently characterized by emotionalism and a challenging nature to regulate.

A critical factor that complicates inter-sect dialogue relative to interfaith dialogue is its relative lack of relevance. It has been posited that the notion of interfaith dialogue, which is frequently rooted in Western traditions, is incongruent with the Islamic conception of da'wah and truth.[33] It is their conviction that endeavors aimed at establishing common ground with other religious traditions might be perceived as a compromise to the unassailable tenets of Islam. These individuals often opt for alternative means of communication, advocating for the efficacy of informal interactions between individuals or small groups in fostering understanding and tolerance.[34] This approach eschews the often-staid theological debates that characteristically occur in formal settings.[35] Consequently, potential strategies may include:

1. The Optimization of Mosques as Islamic Centers

    Mosques function as communal worship centers. Additionally, they function as institutions and representations of specific sects. The occurrence of mosque

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[31] Ingeborg G. Gabriel, "DIALOGUE ON RELIGIOUS ETHICS: A FORGOTTEN DIMENSION IN INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE", *Asian Horizons*, vol. 13, no. 04 (2019), pp. 557–76.

[32] Bryan S. Turner, "Religious Authority and the New Media", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2007), pp. 117–34.

[33] Daniel Finnbogason, Göran Larsson, and Isak Svensson, "Is Shia-Sunni Violence on the Rise? *Exploring New Data on Intra-Muslim Organised Violence 1989-2017*", *Civil Wars*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2019), pp. 25–53.

[34] Krause, Svensson, and Larsson, "Why Is There So Little Shia–Sunni Dialogue?"

[35] *Ibid.*

vandalism has emerged as a salient issue in various armed conflicts, underscoring the complexity of the dynamics between religious institutions and armed groups. Consequently, the optimization of mosques as platforms for dialogue can exert a substantial influence.[36] Additionally, mosque authorities facilitate the maintenance of equitable conditions for congregations. Inter-sect interaction through mosque collaboration does not necessitate formal activities.

The mosque's primary functions include the dissemination of knowledge concerning the significance of unity and mutual comprehension, the provision of social services, and the assurance of security and protection for local residents. Furthermore, it fosters collaboration in social and humanitarian endeavors. The collaborative pursuit of a collective objective among Islamic sects has the potential to foster a sense of solidarity and fortify the bonds that bind them.

2. Education and Moral Awareness

Education has been demonstrated to be an effective means of introducing Wasatiyya as a religious perspective. An educational framework grounded in cosmopolitan values and pluralism has the capacity to embrace diverse Islamic sects not solely on the basis of creedal distinctions but also with respect to the varied practices that characterize their spiritual traditions. This approach has the potential to contribute to the reduction of prejudice and stereotypes. Consequently, the promotion of religious moderation within educational institutions is instrumental in fostering tolerance among religious communities and respect for theological differences, particularly in the context of existing religious sects.[37]

In the context of education, the cultivation of moral and ethical values through dialogue plays a pivotal role in shaping students' character. This process entails the inculcation of principles of justice and mutual respect, which are fundamental to the development of well-rounded individuals. This approach posits that dialogue between religious sects within a cosmopolitan Islamic framework has the potential to serve as a catalyst for the establishment of more harmonious and productive relationships among various societal groups. Consequently, dialogue becomes an integral facet of their noble culture.[38]

3. Social Media Campaigns

The prevailing consensus among scholars and researchers indicates that social media has become a highly effective platform for "new religious authority" in the global community. This presents an opportunity to promote the values of

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[36] George P. Rawlinson, *Contemporary Sufi-Sunni Revivalism and Sufi-Sunni Mosques in Manchester: Rethinking British Muslim Identities as Discursive and Affective Processes* (The University of Manchester (United Kingdom), 2021), https://search.proquest.com/openview/b225d49b78e39c9e817a96d5b519915d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2026366&diss=y, accessed 13 Oct 2024.

[37] M. Abizar, "Pluralisme dalam Pandangan Mukti Ali", *Ishlah: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin, Adab Dan Dakwah*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2019), pp. 185–212.

[38] Mohammad Ahyan Yusuf Sya'bani, "Culture of religious moderation through the actualization of Islamic education Wasatiyyah to improve religious reconnection and tolerance in Indonesia", *1st UMGESHIC International Seminar on Health, Social Science and Humanities (UMGESHIC-ISHSSH 2020)* (Atlantis Press, 2021), https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/umgeshic-ishssh-20/125961945, accessed 11 Oct 2025.

unity and peace through the creative creation of positive religious content on social media. Islamic cosmopolitanism has been identified as a catalyst for the evolution of a global Muslim identity. The utilization of social media platforms has facilitated a sense of interconnectedness among Muslims, both within their respective local communities and on a global scale. This initiative is expected to foster unity among Muslims in the face of global challenges, including extremism, social injustice, and environmental issues.[39]

4. International Intersectarian Conference

The establishment of open dialogue on an international scale constitutes a highly strategic step. The government and religious organizations play a vital role in this process. With government support, the conference will bring together figures from each sect. This initiative is poised to foster inclusive theological discourse among Muslim leaders and scholars. The congregation will convene to engage in a critical and open discourse on religious teachings. The objective of intersect dialogue within a cosmopolitan Islamic framework is to cultivate peace and harmony in a pluralistic society. This endeavor underscores the universal values inherent in Islamic teachings.[40]

Conclusion

Indonesia is a pluralistic nation encompassing diverse cultures and local wisdom. Within the Islamic context, this phenomenon enables adherents of various religious sects to practice their worship and beliefs in a peaceful manner. However, the presence of external factors, such as radicalism, along with internal factors that are obscured by political agendas, serve to exacerbate the threat posed by sectarian differences. This discourse will no longer revolve around the comparison of one individual or group's Islamic practice with another's in terms of piety or the rigor of their religious observance. In contrast, the tolerance that characterizes Wasatiyya Islam offers a framework for initiating inter-sectarian dialogue, thereby facilitating the maintenance of unity among Muslims and the prevention of internal division. The maintenance of peace in Indonesia is contingent upon the presence of mutual understanding, transparency, and solidarity among its citizens.

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[39] A. Ilyas Ismail and Badrah Uyuni, "The new perspective of interfaith dialogue as da'wah approach in global era", *Journal of Xidian University*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2020), pp. 1540–52.

[40] Muhammad Shafiq, "Intra and Interfaith Dialogue and Peace Building A Muslim Personal Story", *Hum. Rts.*, vol. 16 (HeinOnline, 2021), p. 219.

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