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Redefining Khilafah: Integrating Islamic Responsibility and Democratic Ethics

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Abstract

This study examines the long-debated relationship between khilafah (caliphate) and democracy, which are often viewed as two opposing political poles. The issue arises because both concepts are frequently interpreted solely as systems or forms of government, leading to a reductive understanding. While democracy has an established framework as a political system, the notion of the caliphate has been shaped by ideological biases. As a result, both supporters and critics of the caliphate have misconstrued its Qur'anic meaning, perpetuating the misconception that the caliphate represents a specific political structure. This research seeks to clarify the original meaning of khilafah beyond political

interests and to explore the possibility of reconciling it with democratic principles. Using the thematic interpretation method to uncover the Qur'anic conception of the caliphate and Kuntowijoyo's Prophetic Social Science as an analytical framework, this study finds that khilafah is not a state system but a divine moral character that reflects human responsibility to emulate God's attributes. Furthermore, the caliphate should be understood as an intellectual and ethical movement grounded in knowledge, rather than as a doctrinal or institutional form of governance.

Keywords: Khilafah; Islamic Responsibility; Democratic Ethics

A. Introduction

Religion and politics have long constituted central pillars of human civilization, profoundly shaping both private spirituality and public life[1]. Politics engages with social reality through policy-making processes that articulate collective aspirations, whereas religion functions as the moral and spiritual axis that guides human existence and nurtures inner tranquility[2]. Although their spheres of influence differ—religion addressing the realm of conscience and morality, and politics governing collective behavior—their intersection at the communal level often gives rise to both harmony and tension. Such tensions cannot be resolved through the mere subordination of one domain to the other, as the nexus between religion and politics is inherently dynamic, complex, and demands multidimensional analysis[3].

[1] Edoardo Ongaro and Michele Tantardini, "Religion, Spirituality, Faith and Public Administration: A Literature Review and Outlook," *Public Policy and Administration* 39, no. 4 (2024): 531–55, doi:10.1177/09520767221146866.

[2] Othman Sqalli Houssaini, "Integrating Spirituality and Politics: Insights from Islam and Christianity on Religiosity and Governance in Contemporary Society," *International Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies* 17, no. 2 (2024): 235–58, doi:10.70908/2232-6022/17.235-258.

[3] Ardhi Khiar and Farid Ahmad Abidin, "Influence of Religion on Resolving Social Conflicts: A Multi-Faceted Analy-Sis," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Humaniora* 13, no. 01 (2024): 53–64, https://journals.ristek.or.id/index.php/jiph/index.

In the contemporary Islamic world, this complexity is vividly reflected in the ongoing discourse surrounding *khilāfah (caliphate)* and democracy[4]. The resurgence of transnational Islamic movements advocating the re-establishment of the *khilāfah*—such as *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr* and its affiliates—has reignited debates over the compatibility between Islamic governance and democratic systems[5]. In Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy, this debate has intensified, particularly following the dissolution of *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr Indonesia* (HTI) in 2017[6]. The discourse raises pressing questions about the boundaries of religious expression, the legitimacy of the modern nation-state, and the role of Islamic political ethics within a pluralistic democracy[7]. Hence, examining the relationship between *khilāfah* and democracy is not merely a theoretical exercise but a necessary response to the pressing socio-political challenges confronting the contemporary Muslim world.

Previous studies on the relationship between *khilafah* and democracy can generally be classified into two categories. The first consists of works by *khilafah* defenders, such as al-Nabhānī's *Niẓām al-Islām*, Sayyid Quṭb's *Maʿālim fī al-Ṭarīq*[8], and Abū al-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī's *al-Khilāfah wa al-Mulk*[9], who frame *khilafah* as a normative system and form of government mandated by Islam. The second category comprises studies by democracy defenders, such as Abdurrahman Wahid[10], *The Illusion of the Islamic State*;

[4] Lili Romli et al., "Azyumardi Azra on Islamic Fundamentalism and Wasathiyah : Insights into Contemporary Islamic Thought in Indonesia," *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 12, no. 1 (2025), doi:10.1080/23311983.2025.2571754.

[5] Elisa Orofino, "Citizenship in the Minds of Political Islamists," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 29–50, doi:10.55831/ajis.v5i2.261.

[6] Hasbi Aswar, Danial Bin Mohd Yusof, and Rohana Binti Abdul Hamid, "The State Response toward the Existence of HTI: An Analysis from Social Movement Study Approach," *Sospol : Jurnal Sosial Politik* 6, no. 2 (2020): 183–200, doi:10.22219/sospol.v6i2.12908.

[7] Arolda Elbasani, "Governing Islam in Plural Societies: Religious Freedom, State Neutrality and Traditional Heritage," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 19, no. 1 (2017): 4–18, doi:10.1080/19448953.2016.1201985.

[8] Sayyid Quṭb, *Ma'ālim Fī Al-Ṭarīq* (Beirut dan Kairo: Dār al-Syurūq, 1979).

[9] Abū al-A'lā Al-Mawdūdī, *Al-Khilāfah Wa Al-Mulk* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1978); Abū al-A'lā Al-Mawdūdī, *Tadwīn Al-Dustūr Al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1981).

[10] Abdurrahman Wahid, ed., "Ilusi Negara Islam: Ekspansi Gerakan Islam

Ainur Rofiq al-Amin[11], *Exposing the Khilafah Project of Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia*; and Mohamed Badara et al., *Modern Extremist Groups and the Division of the World* [12]—who reject the necessity of a political *khilafah* and instead offer theological justifications for democracy. Both streams, however, share a common limitation: they conceptualize *khilafah* primarily as a political system, thereby neglecting its moral and spiritual dimensions.

In contrast, this study adopts an apolitical-redefinition approach that interprets *khilafah* not as a state system but as a divine moral responsibility grounded in the Qur'an. By integrating the thematic interpretation method (as formulated by Muṣṭafā Muslim) with Kuntowijoyo's Prophetic Social Science, this study aims to reconstruct *khilafah* as a framework of ethical responsibility and intellectual movement that can coexist with democratic principles. This approach allows the study to engage both textual and social realities—revealing that many democratic values, such as equality, justice, and accountability, are in harmony with Islamic teachings.

The objective of this research is to reinterpret the concept of *khilafah* in its original Qur'anic meaning and to synthesize it with democratic ethics through the lens of Prophetic Social Science. By doing so, this study seeks to provide a more constructive framework for understanding religion and politics in contemporary Muslim societies, particularly within the context of Indonesia's democratic experience.

Transnasional Di Indonesia," in *Ilusi Negara Islam: Ekspansi Gerakan Islam Transnasional Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Wahid Institute, Maarif Institute dan Gerakan Bhineka Tunggal Ika, 2009).

[11] Ainur Rofiq Al-Amin, *Membongkar Proyek Khilafah Ala Hizbut Tahrir Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2012); Ainur Rofiq Al-Amin, *Khilafah HTI Dalam Timbangan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Harakatuna, 2017).

[12] Mohamed Badar and Masaki Nagata, "Extremist Groups and the Division of the World : A Critique from Islamic Perspective," *Arab Law Quarterly* 31 (2017): 1–33, https://ssrn.com/abstract=2971767Electroniccopyavailableat:https://ssrn.com/abstract=2971767.

This study's novelty lies in its philosophical yet contextual reinterpretation of *khilafah*, moving beyond the binary opposition between *khilafah* and democracy found in earlier "political-definitive" works. Unlike previous research that treats *khilafah* as a prescriptive model of governance, this study offers a fresh reading that situates *khilafah* as an ethical-spiritual principle compatible with democratic participation. In this regard, it aligns with and extends recent scholarly efforts such as *From Khilafah to Modern State: The History of Islamic Political Transformation*,[13] while offering a distinctly normative-reconstructive perspective rooted in the Qur'anic worldview.

B. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a philosophical-normative character, focusing on textual and conceptual analysis[14]. This approach is chosen because the issue under investigation is not empirical, but rather centers on exploring the conceptual meaning and normative values found in the Qur'an and their relevance to contemporary socio-political dynamics. Accordingly, this research aims to reinterpret the concept of *khilafah* within the framework of Islamic moral and spiritual responsibility, while identifying its points of convergence with democratic ethics through theoretical and reflective analysis.

The data sources for this research include primary and secondary materials. The primary data include Qur'anic verses on the concept of *khilafah* and human leadership, classical and contemporary exegesis literatures, and relevant Prophetic traditions (hadith). Meanwhile, the secondary data include books and scholarly articles on Islam and politics, the concept of

[13] Ahmad Khoirul Fata, Adnan Adnan, and Mahfud Fauzi, "FROM KHILÂFAH TO MODERN STATE: The History of Islamic Political Transformation," *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 22, no. 1 (2021): 1–22, doi:10.18860/ua.v22i1.11793.

[14] Sanne Taekema, "Theoretical and Normative Frameworks for Legal Research: Putting Theory into Practice," *Law and Method*, no. Cc (2018), doi:10.5553/rem/.000031.

democracy from an Islamic perspective, and works that elaborate on *Ilmu Sosial Profetik* (Prophetic Social Science) as formulated by Kuntowijoyo. These secondary sources function to reinforce the theoretical framework and provide a socio-historical context for the normative interpretation being developed.

The analytical method employed in this research is the *tafsir maudhu'i* (thematic exegesis) method as formulated by Muṣṭafā Muslim[15]. This method involves several key stages: (1) determining the theme of study, in this case *khilafah*; (2) collecting Qur'anic verses relevant to the theme; (3) examining the *asbābun nuzūl* (context of revelation) and intertextual connections; (4) analyzing the meanings of the verses based on classical and modern exegetical sources; and (5) drawing moral and theological conclusions from the analysis. Through this approach, the study seeks to uncover the essential meaning of *khilafah* that transcends ideological and political biases.

Subsequently, the interpretive findings are analyzed within the framework of Prophetic Social Science (PSS) developed by Kuntowijoyo. PSS offers three foundational principles—humanization, liberation, and transcendence—which serve as analytical tools to bridge Islamic ethical values with modern democratic ethics. Through the principle of humanization, *khilafah* is understood as a moral responsibility to uphold human dignity. The principle of liberation positions *khilafah* as a means of freeing humankind from oppression, ignorance, and injustice. Meanwhile, transcendence serves as a spiritual foundation, ensuring that social and political practices remain oriented toward divine values.

Data analysis is conducted using descriptive-analytic and reflective techniques, which involve describing textual findings, interpreting their meanings, and reflecting them within the socio-

[15] Mustaffa Abdullah et al., "Quranic Exegesis Studies in Malaysia: Realities, Challenges and Future Direction," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 26, no. 1 (2025): 1–30, doi:10.14421/qh.v26i1.5779.

political context of the contemporary Muslim world, particularly Indonesia. Through this approach, the study does not merely produce normative conclusions but also offers a conceptual synthesis between *khilafah* as an ethical-divine responsibility and democracy as a participatory political system in harmony with Islamic values.

C. Discussion

1. Tracing the Genealogy of Khilafah: From Classical Interpretations to Contemporary Muslim Typologies

The modern discourse on *khilafah* emerged from the historical encounter between Islam and the West—an encounter deeply marked by colonialism, intellectual confrontation, and the challenge of modernity. Western domination and progress in various sectors both astonished and unsettled the Muslim world, prompting diverse ideological and theological responses. Abdullah Saeed classifies contemporary Muslim attitudes toward modernity into several typologies[16]. However, in relation to the idea of *khilafah*, four typologies are particularly relevant: puritan-theological groups, political Islamists, liberal-secular Muslims, and progressive *ijtihad* (adaptation of Islamic law to legal ruling) thinkers.

The puritan-theological orientation, exemplified by the Wahhabi movement, interprets *khilafah* as a divine mandate to restore the purity of Islam by returning to its early form. For this group, establishing a *khilafah* is both a religious obligation and a means to protect Islamic authenticity from external influence. In contrast, political Islamists, represented by movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i Islami, regard *khilafah* as an alternative political system capable of resolving global crises

[16] Abdullah Saeed, "Trends in Contemporary Islam: A Preliminary Attempt at a Classification 97 (July 2007)," *The Muslim World* 97 (2007).

created by capitalism, secularism, and nationalism. They view the *khilafah* as an institutional manifestation of Islam's comprehensive social and political vision.

On the other hand, liberal-secular Muslims reject the notion of *khilafah* as a political system, emphasizing instead the ethical and spiritual dimensions of Islam within a plural and democratic framework. For them, the mixing of religion and state power risks undermining both freedom and justice. Meanwhile, progressive ijtihad thinkers—as successors to classical modernists like Muhammad 'Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani—reinterpret *khilafah* as a moral and intellectual responsibility. They argue that the essence of human vicegerent lies not in political domination but in embodying divine ethics such as justice, knowledge, and accountability.

This typological mapping reveals that the debate on *khilafah* is not merely theological or political but reflects broader ideological tensions within the Muslim world regarding authority, modernity, and moral agency. The present study departs from these polarized discourses by proposing an apolitical and redefinition of *khilafah* interpretation—one that situates it as a universal ethical concept rather than a political system.

To transcend these ideological debates, the next section returns to the Qur'anic foundations through a *tafsir maudhu'i* (thematic exegesis) approach, aiming to uncover the essential, non-political, and universal meaning of *khilafah* as envisioned in the Qur'an.

2. Redefinition of the Khilafah

All the Qur'anic verses containing the term *khilāfah* belong to the category of *ibtidā'iyyah* (primary) verses—those revealed without any *asbāb al-nuzūl* (context of revelation) —QS. Al-Baqarah

(2): 30[17], QS. Ṣād (38): 26[18], QS. Al-A'rāf (16): 69 [19],QS. Al-'Araf (16) :74[20], QS. Al-Naml (27): 62[21], QS. Fatir (35): 39[22], QS. Al-An'am (6): 165 [23]. This indicates that the meaning of *khilāfah* should be explored not through historical circumstances but through its linguistic and conceptual depth.

Etymologically, the word *khalīfah* (successor, ruler, or leader) derives from *khalafa*, meaning "to succeed" or "to come after" In its *ṣīghah mubālaghah* (morphological form), *khalīfah* denotes intensity—"one who deeply or continuously succeeds". Linguistically, therefore, *khilāfah* expresses the idea of succession and continuity, referring to humanity's generational renewal and its function as the inheritor of existence[24]. This literal meaning provides the epistemological foundation for understanding the term beyond political or institutional frames.

From this linguistic root, the theological interpretation of *khilāfah* emerges: humanity as the successor or representative of divine will on earth. However, this representation should not be understood as a political mandate but as a reflection of *ṣifāt ilāhiyyah* (divine attributes) entrusted to human nature. Ibn 'Arabī, for instance, argues that all beings mirror divine qualities,

[17] Ibn Kaśīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Aẓīm Vol. 1* (Jizah: Mu'assasat Qurṭubah bekerja sama dengan Maktabat Awlād al-Syaykh li al-Turāṡ, 2000).

[18] Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' Al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy Al-Qur'ān Vol. 20* (Beirut: Markaz li al-Buḥūṡ wa al-Dirāsāt al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Islāmiyyah bi Dār Hajr, 2001).

[19] Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd Al-Zamakhsyarī, *Al-Kasysyāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ Al-Tanzīl Wa 'Uyūn Al-Aqāwīl Fī Wujūh Al-Ta'wīl Vol. 2* (Riyadl: Maktabat al-'Ubaykān, 1998).

[20] Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr Wa Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb Vol. 14* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981).

[21] Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr Al-Manṡūr Fī Al-Tafsīr Bi Al-Ma'ṡūr Vol. 11* (Kairo: Markaz Hajr li al-Buḥūṡ wa al-Dirāsāt al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Islāmiyyah, 2003).

[22] Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' Li Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān Wa Al-Mubayyin Li Mā Taḍammanahū Min Al-Sunnah Wa Āy Al-Furqān Vol. 17* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2006).

[23] Burḥan al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm Al-Durar Fī Tanāsub Al-Āyāt Wa Al-Suwar Vol. 7* (Kairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.).

[24] Ahmad Warson Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir: Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap* (Surabaya: Pustaka Progresif, 1997).

but humans possess their most complete manifestation[25]. Hence, *khilāfah* signifies not simply a delegated task but a divinely endowed capacity. This ontological potential that enables humans to mirror God's attributes such as *al-'adl* (justice), *al-raḥmah* (compassion), and *al-ḥaqq* (truth).

This interpretation contrasts sharply with that of classical and modern exegetes, who have read *khilāfah* in explicitly political terms. For example, al-Māwardī and Ibn Taymiyyah viewed it as the institutional leadership of the Muslim community, while modern Islamists have associated it with the restoration of an Islamic state[26]. The apolitical-redefinition approach adopted here, however, broadens the concept from political sovereignty to existential and ethical responsibility. *Khilāfah* becomes the human vocation to embody divine values in all spheres of life—moral, intellectual, social, and ecological.

The transition from divine nature to moral responsibility thus follows a coherent epistemic logic: because humans are endowed with divine attributes, they are also accountable for realizing them in the world. As al-'Izz ibn 'Abd al-Salām emphasized in his doctrine of *al-takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh* (emulating the morals of God) [27], the essence of *khilāfah* lies in moral imitation, not domination. Similarly, Ḥasan Ḥanafī's call to reinterpret *'aqīdah* (creed) as revolutionary energy reflects an ethical imperative for human action rather than a political ideology[28].

In this sense, the *khilāfah* is not a system of governance

[25] Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyyah Vol. 7* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.); Muhammad Al-Fayyadl, "Teologi Negatif Ibn 'Arabi: Sebuah Kritik Atas Metafisika Ketuhanan" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2009).

[26] Mariam Hussein, *Justice in Classical Islamic Thought : The Perspectives of Al-Māwardī , Miskawayh and Ibn Taymiyya* (Manara : Qatar Research Repository, 2022).

[27] Izzuddin bin Abdussalam, *Kitab Dan Terjemah Syajarat Al-Ma'ārif Wa Al-Aḥwāl Wa Ṣāliḥ Al-Aqwāl Wa Al-A'māl: Tuntunan Qur'an Mengihsankan Pikiran, Perkataan Dan Perbuatan* (Jakarta Selatan: Qaf Media Kreativa, 2020).

[28] Ḥasan Ḥanafī, *Min Al-'Aqīdah Ilā Al-Ṡawrah 5 Volume* (Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nasyr dan al-Markaz al-Ṡaqāfī al-'Arabī li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nasyr, 1988).

but an ontological and ethical principle—the human striving to reflect divine radiance in truth, justice, beauty, and compassion. Even modern pursuits of progress and knowledge, as Yuval Noah Harari's term *Homo Deus* (God humans) suggests, can be seen as manifestations of this intrinsic longing for transcendence[29]. What is condemned, therefore, is not the aspiration for divine likeness, but its distortion through oppression, violence, and injustice.

Ultimately, this redefinition positions *khilāfah* as a universal and moral condition that underlies all human efforts toward betterment. Such an understanding also provides a conceptual bridge between Islamic theology and modern democratic values: both are grounded in human responsibility, moral accountability, and the pursuit of the common good. This ethical-spiritual interpretation thus prepares the ground for the following discussion, which examines how *khilāfah*—understood as human responsibility rather than political rule—can harmonize with the principles of democracy.

3. Harmonizing Democratic Principles with Islamic Law

Democracy derives from the Greek *dēmokratia*, meaning "rule by the people" It entered English in the 16th century and gained global significance as a system based on equality and public participation[30]. Abraham Lincoln's classic phrase—"government of the people, by the people, and for the people"—captures its ideal form, though, as Przeworski notes, democracy in practice refers to "a system in which governmental offices are filled as a consequence of contested elections"[31]. Schumpeter further refined this by

[29] Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: Masa Depan Umat Manusia* (Tangerang Selatan: Alvabet, 2018).

[30] Tasneem Sultana, "The Evolution of Democracy through the Ages: Focus on the European Experience," *Journal of European Studies* 28, no. 1 (2012): 27–50, http://www.political_information.net/encyclopedia/democracy.htm.

[31] Steffen Ganghof, "Taking Democracy Seriously: A Theory and Global Typology of Democratic Forms of Government," *Global Constitutionalism*, 2025, 1–23, doi:10.1017/S2045381725100129.

defining democracy as a competitive method for electing leaders, emphasizing procedure over moral substance[32]. Meanwhile, contemporary theorists such as Habermas and Dryzek introduce deliberative and participatory democracy, where legitimacy arises not merely from elections but from rational discourse and civic participation that produce ethical consensus[33].

Sharia, by contrast, comes from the Arabic root meaning "the path to water"—a metaphor for life, purity, and necessity. Terminologically, it encompasses divinely ordained principles contained in the Qur'an and Hadith that guide the ritual, social, and eschatological dimensions of life. Ideally, therefore, sharia is like water which should be life-giving and restorative[34]. However in practice, it is often perceived primarily as a system of obligations and prohibitions, leading to the impression of coercion that clashes with the human inclination toward freedom. The central question thus emerges: can sharia, as divine law, be reconciled with democracy, a system grounded in human autonomy?

This tension centers on two main points. First, the source of legitimacy: in Islam, divine revelation (the Qur'an) is the ultimate reference, while democracy grounds legitimacy in human-made constitutions and public consent. Second, moral regulation: democracy, through the human rights paradigm, restricts only what harms others directly, whereas Islam also prohibits what is morally improper, even in the absence of tangible social harm (e.g., adultery or indecency). Hence, moral permissiveness in democracy is often viewed by conservatives as moral decay.

[32] Josiah Ober, "Joseph Schumpeter's Caesarist Democracy," *Critical Review* 29, no. 4 (2017): 473–91, doi:10.1080/08913811.2017.1394059.

[33] Marit Hammond, "Deliberative Democracy Without Deliberation," *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* 21, no. 1 (2025), doi:10.16997/jdd.1460.

[34] James L. Wescoat, "Water Law in Muslim Countries Revisited: A Study of the Qur'an," *Religion, Sustainability, and Place: Moral Geographies of the Anthropocene*, 2020, 71–96, doi:10.1007/978-981-15-7646-1_4.

To bridge these paradigms, Kuntowijoyo's concept of *Ilmu Sosial Profetik* (Prophetic Social Science) provides a transformative framework. Rooted in the Qur'anic verse, "You are the best community brought forth for humankind: you enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in Allah" (Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]: 110), Kuntowijoyo reformulates its three imperatives—*amr ma'rūf*, *nahy munkar*, and *īmān billāh*—into humanization, liberation, and transcendence. These three principles offer not only a theological but also a sociological bridge between Sharia and democracy[35].

First, *amr ma'rūf* (humanization) transforms the moral imperative into a human-centered ethic that aligns with participatory democracy. While *amr ma'rūf* traditionally implies obedience to divine command, humanization reframes it as promoting human welfare through rational, inclusive deliberation. It thus democratizes morality, not by relativizing divine law, but by translating its *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law)—justice, dignity, and compassion—into shared civic virtues. In this sense, humanization provides the ethical foundation for participatory engagement, where citizens act not merely as subjects of law but as moral agents contributing to collective well-being.

Second, *nahy munkar* (liberation) redefines prohibition not as theological coercion but as moral resistance to structures of oppression. It resonates with democratic commitments to social justice and equality. Instead of merely prohibiting sin in abstract terms, liberation situates moral prohibition within empirical analysis—opposing corruption, exploitation, and gender injustice because they degrade human dignity and violate the Qur'anic ideal of *mīzān* (balance). Thus, liberation links the Qur'anic imperative of forbidding evil with democracy's emancipatory goal: freeing humans from domination, whether political, economic, or moral.

[35] Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi Untuk Aksi* (Bandung: Mizan, 1991).

Third, *īmān billāh* (transcendence) anchors both democracy and Sharia in a higher moral consciousness. It reminds democratic society that freedom and equality must be guided by spiritual responsibility. Transcendence prevents democracy from devolving into moral relativism while ensuring that Sharia is not reduced to rigid formalism. It calls for a dialogical faith—a belief that inspires humility, care, and accountability in public life. In deliberative democracy, transcendence parallels the ethical horizon of discourse: truth-seeking grounded in *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity) and public reason.

Through these prophetic principles, Kuntowijoyo offers a conceptual synthesis that addresses both sources of legitimacy and moral regulation. Legitimacy in this framework arises from dialogical integration—where divine guidance informs public reason, and constitutional norms embody moral responsibility. Meanwhile, moral regulation is not imposed externally but cultivated internally through civic consciousness shaped by prophetic ethics.

In conclusion, democracy and sharia are not inherently contradictory but complementary when viewed through the perspective of Prophetic Social Science. Both pursue the same *moral telos* or *karāmah insāniyyah* (human dignity) and collective justice. By grounding democratic participation in prophetic ethics and interpreting sharia through rational, inclusive dialogue, both systems converge on a shared principle: collective moral responsibility for the common good. This synthesis situates Islam not as an antithesis to democracy but as its spiritual and ethical partner in nurturing a just, humane, and participatory civil order.

D. Conclusion

The discussion above leads to a deeper theoretical insight rather than merely a summary of findings. This study proposes a paradigm shift in understanding *khilafah* from an institutional and political system toward a moral–ethical framework that integrates

spirituality with democratic practice. Within this reinterpretation, *khilafah* is not a mandate of political authority or a blueprint for state structure, but a manifestation of humanity's *amanah ilahiyyah* (divine vocation) to cultivate justice, compassion, and harmony in both personal and collective life. Thus, *khilafah* is reconceptualized as an ethical responsibility grounded in human dignity and collective moral agency, rather than a formalized political project. In this framework, the reconciliation of democracy and sharia finds its philosophical coherence through Kuntowijoyo's Prophetic Social Science (ISP). The three prophetic values—humanization, liberation, and transcendence—serve as the ethical bridge between divine law and democratic practice. Humanization reorients sharia toward fulfilling human welfare and intellectual growth through participatory engagement; liberation transforms the religious command to "forbid evil" into active resistance against social injustice and moral degradation; and transcendence anchors democratic freedom in spiritual consciousness, ensuring that human autonomy remains guided by divine ethics. Together, these principles form an integrated model where divine revelation informs public reason, and democratic deliberation embodies prophetic morality.

This synthesis contributes to contemporary Islamic political thought by offering a new conceptual framework that aligns the theological dimension of *khilafah* with modern democratic ethics. It challenges the binary opposition between religion and democracy by positing that both rest upon the same foundational principle: collective moral responsibility for the realization of *karāmah insāniyyah* (human dignity). Through this perspective, democracy is no longer viewed as secular autonomy detached from divine guidance, nor is Sharia confined to juridical rigidity; instead, both converge in nurturing a *madaniyyah akhlāqiyyah* (ethical civilization) that harmonizes faith, freedom, and justice.

Methodologically, this framework opens new directions for the integration of ethical theology with democratic governance, suggesting that prophetic values can serve as normative guidelines for policymaking, civic education, and social transformation. Future research should thus advance this theoretical foundation through empirical studies—examining how the principles of humanization, liberation, and transcendence may be conducted across fields such as education, economics, environmental policy, and interfaith relations. By doing so, Islamic political thought can evolve beyond normative abstraction toward a praxis that embodies both spiritual depth and democratic inclusivity.

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