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The Struggle for the Meaning of Islam in the Post-Truth Era: Critical Discourse Analysis of Narratives on the Hidayatullah.com Portal

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Abstract

The effectiveness of new media has transformed Islamic preaching into the digital space, creating a new landscape for Islamic discourse. This phenomenon occurs in the post-truth era, when emotions and subjective beliefs influence public opinion more than facts. Hidayatullah.com, a popular Islamic portal among Indonesian Muslims, actively produces Islamic narratives. However, the texts it publishes often reflect certain ideological interests and social positions. This study examines the relationship between power and ideology in Hidayatullah.com's representation of Islam. The study employs Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, enriched with Foucault's readings. Data were obtained through a literature review of Islamic-themed texts in the portal's article section. The results show that Hidayatullah.com functions as a discursive agent that frames Islamic issues in a way that reinforces conservative ideology. The portal uses discourse to reinforce religious narratives and identities in line with its ideological orientation. This

study contributes to a critical understanding of the formation of religious meaning and authority in the post-truth era.

Keywords: Islamic discourse, religious media, power relations, post-truth

Abstrak

Efektivitas media baru mendorong transformasi dakwah ke ruang digital dan menciptakan lanskap baru bagi produksi wacana keislaman. Fenomena ini terjadi dalam era post-truth, dimana emosi dan keyakinan subjektif lebih berpengaruh dalam membentuk opini public daripada fakta. Hidayatullah.com merupakan portal Islam populer di kalangan muslim Indonesia yang aktif memproduksi narasi keislaman. Namun teks-teks yang dipublikasikannya juga memuat kepentingan ideologis dan posisi sosial tertentu. Penelitian ini menelaah relasi kuasa dan ideologi dalam representasi Islam yang dibangun oleh Hidayatullah.com. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) dari Norman Fairclough yang diperkaya dengan konsep pembacaan Foucault. Data diperoleh melalui studi kepustakaan, dari teks-teks bertema keislaman di rubrik artikel portal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Hidayatullah.com berfungsi sebagai agen diskursif yang membingkai isu-isu Islam dengan kecenderungan memperkuat ideologi konservatif. Wacana digunakan untuk menegaskan narasi keagamaan dan identitas sesuai orientasi ideologis Hidayatullah. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman kritis tentang pembentukan makna dan otoritas keagamaan di era post-truth.

Kata kunci: Media keagamaan, relasi kuasa, post-truth, wacana keislaman

Introduction

This expansion of communication technology has had a considerable impact on changes and shifts in the social structure of society. Its presence has transformed the way people communicate, access news, and consume information (Arora et al., 2022; Hasan, 2020). The Muslim community has also experienced these changes and now relies on social media as a space to access, interpret, and enjoy religious discourse (Slama, 2018). However, information disseminated through new media can also lead to polarization within society (Alam et al., 2025). It is because public perceptions of religious, political, and social issues can be shaped by these forms of communication (Gunawan & Barito, 2021). Hidayatullah.com is one of the prominent Islamic media platforms that plays a role in framing Islamic discourse. The portal offers a distinctive narrative in addressing various issues related to Islam at local, national, and global levels.

This portal is a significant space for examining the process of constructing, distributing, and preserving the meaning of Islam in

the realm of ideological contestation through the production of discourse. Islam exists as a text within the public sphere, open to reading, interpretation, and debate. However, this openness also renders it vulnerable to tensions in meaning. Language is never entirely neutral, every discourse is shaped by interests, social context, and the ideological positions of its agents (Li & Su, 2020). Therefore, the presence of Islamic texts in the public sphere, in this context, is Hidayatullah.com, who articulates them, in what forum, and for whose benefit, which becomes a matter of critical importance. Language functions as a tool of power, capable of producing exclusion or inclusion, authority or resistance, and harmony or conflict (Albury, 2017). The language employed by Hidayatullah.com also has the potential to frame Islamic, political, and social issues in particular ways, for example, by reinforcing dichotomies such as Islam kaffah versus KTP Islam, or Islamic knowledge versus 'Western' or secular science. Through its choice of words, phrasing, and reporting style, the portal acts as a discursive agent that can elevate the position of certain groups while marginalizing others.

Hidayatullah.com is not merely an information medium but a social arena that produces meanings laden with ideological interests. These news publications align with human interest features. Humanitarian and *da'wah* themes dominated the news from January to February, and the portal's publications continued to be influenced by economic and political motivations and calculations (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Meanwhile, a study by Hatta and Sofia (2024) highlights the portal's stance of resistance toward secular actors, liberal thinkers, liberalism, and pluralism. The discourse presented by the portal tends to exclude other perspectives by constructing dualistic social categories such as in-group solidarity versus out-group hostility (Hatta & Sofia, 2024). Hidayatullah.com has then become a popular platform for Islamic preaching in the digital space. This portal delivers messages in a straightforward, communicative language that does not neglect the substance of the message or violate journalistic ethics-something often overlooked by online media outlets in their pursuit of popularity (Wahyudi et al., 2021). Although various studies have examined Hidayatullah.com in terms of its

socio-political reporting and the framing of public issues (Aura et al., 2024; Zahra et al., 2020), there remains an area that has not been thoroughly explored, namely how the representation of the meaning of Islam is constructed and ideologically contested in the post-truth era.

Religious information that circulates widely through digital media today functions not only as a tool for proselytization but also as an arena for contesting meaning, authority, and symbolic power within society (Schmidt, 2021). New media has become a virtual space that allows individuals and organizations to construct religious meanings based on ideological orientations, interests (subjective), and specific struggles (Burhanudin et al., 2019; Fakhruroji et al., 2020; Hanif, 2024), thereby giving rise to contestation, polarization, and fragmentation of views in religious life (Saprillah et al., 2020). This study focuses on power relations in the construction of Islamic discourse as seen through the narratives of Hidayatullah.com. Unlike previous studies that highlight portals within a social framework or employ media framing analysis, this article emphasizes the symbolic and ideological practices behind the editorial room. It also explores the role of portals as discursive actors in contesting Islamic meaning in digital spaces.

This qualitative study adopts a library research framework and employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as outlined by Norman Fairclough. CDA offers a theoretical framework for uncovering the ideological interests underlying discourse texts (George Mwangi et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Fairclough's approach offers analytical tools to uncover the politics of power and interest embedded within the texts produced by the portal (Fairclough, 1992; Munfarida, 2014). This involves analyzing three interrelated dimensions: the structure of the text (textual analysis), the production process or newsroom dynamics (discursive practice), and the broader social context that shapes the discourse (social practice) (Fairclough, 2001).

This portal represents Islam and seeks to establish a regime of truth within its discourse. This discourse leads to efforts to control Muslim subjects while shaping perceptions of what is considered "right" and "wrong." Readers are guided toward a version of Islam constructed through the portal's narrative. This study also employs

Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge as an important framework for understanding the power relations behind the construction of this discourse. (Foucault, 2002). According to Foucault, the discourse produced by this portal organizes the possibilities of interpretation, regulates the boundaries of thought, and determines the form of Muslim subjectivity that is considered valid. By disseminating certain claims of truth, the portal functions as a discursive apparatus that normalizes conservative religious values and shapes how readers understand Islam in the digital space.

This study focused on a discursive apparatus, the Hidayatullah.com portal. Data were collected through documentation methods by classifying articles published by the Hidayatullah.com portal. Selected articles were analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), developed by Norman Fairclough, and Michel Foucault's concept of knowledge power. Researchers revealed the ideological structures that shaped the text and traced the mechanisms of power at work in the discourse produced by the portal. Initially, symbolic and semantic readings were used to identify the text's structure of meaning, followed by three dimensions of CDA analysis text, discourse practice, and social practice. (Fairclough, 1995) Foucault's approach was then employed to reveal how the discourse operates as a mechanism of power (Foucault, 2002).

Digitalization of Hidayatullah's Da'wah: Transformation of Preaching Methods in the Digital Era

Hidayatullah.com is an Islamic news portal created by the development-oriented Hidayatullah mass organization based on the fundamental ideology of the Qur'an and Sunnah. The organization began with the establishment of an Islamic boarding school in Gunung Tembak, Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, by Abdullah Said on February 5, 1973 (Hidayatullah.or.id, n.d.). Said, formerly known as Muhsin Kahar, was a charismatic leader who strongly influenced the direction and ideology of the Hidayatullah movement.

Abdullah Said is remembered by his students as a charismatic kiai. In 1984, he was awarded the Kalpataru Award by President Soeharto in recognition of his success in revitalizing the barren area of Mount

Tembak into a fertile and aesthetically pleasing Islamic boarding school environment. One of his notable achievements was the creation of an artificial lake that remains filled throughout the year, a remarkable feat considering the region's typically dry climate. In addition, Said also had an ideological background aligned with the Muhammadiyah movement, having previously served as a member of its youth cadre. The ideological affinity between Hidayatullah and Muhammadiyah has been acknowledged by various prominent figures, including Din Syamsuddin (Kelana, 2020). Admiration for him came from outside figures, including political actors who called him an icon of East Kalimantan. Abdul Manan even described him as a true ideologue, while other key actors in Hidayatullah' s early history recognized him as a persuasive and inspiring communicator of *da'wah*. The transition of Hidayatullah from a pesantren-based institution to a broader community organization was formally initiated in the year 2000.

This transformation took place during the inaugural national deliberation (Musyawarah Nasional) held in Balikpapan from June 9 to 13, 2000. During this forum, it was officially decided that Hidayatullah would become an Islamic organization with a strategic focus on *da'wah* and the broader Islamic struggle. All of its activities are based on methods rooted in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and revelation. The transformation from pesantren to community organization occurred during the national conference held in Balikpapan from June 9 to 13, 2000. During the conference, the decision was made to officially transform Hidayatullah into an Islamic community organization focused on *da'wah* and Islamic struggle. The organization adheres to the prophetic methodology as its foundation and uses a systematic approach to revelation as the basis for its *tarbiyah* (education) and *da'wah* (preaching) (Hidayatullah.or.id, n.d.).

Hidayatullah's *da'wah* strategy is characterized by a dual focus, the construction of the ummah and engagement with state-related issues. From an ideological standpoint, the movement aims to shape public opinion and contribute to Islamic discourse within the broader social sphere. *Da'wah* is conducted through various methods, both oral and textual as well as through digital platforms.

In recent developments, online media has become the primary channel through which the movement disseminates its messages and influences the Islamic public, particularly through the ideas and opinions published on the Hidayatullah.com portal (Syakur, 2016). Before entering the digital media era, the missionary movement Hidayatullah first channeled its efforts through conventional media by publishing the Suara Hidayatullah magazine, which became the primary medium for disseminating *da'wah* and tarbiyah messages. The creation of Suara Hidayatullah was prompted by a pivotal meeting held at Hidayatullah Pesantren in Balikpapan in the early 1970s. The magazine was formally published in the 1980s as an internal publication of the pesantren. As the organization expanded, production was moved to the Surabaya branch in May 1988 for further development (Syakur, 2016).

The magazine experienced significant growth under the management of PT. Lentera Jaya Abadi. Distribution expanded to various regions in Indonesia, whereas previously it had been limited to East Kalimantan. Despite its expanded reach, Suara Hidayatullah's readership remained dominated by individuals with ideological or organizational ties and failed to reach a broad audience beyond the internal community. In addition to the magazine, the organization established the Hidayatullah.com portal to spread Islamic values to the public.

The Social Construction of Religious Language: Power, Meaning, and Negotiation

Humans are called animal symbolicum because of their ability to use and create symbols during social interactions. Language is the primary symbol that allows humans to transform experiences into something that can be communicated and understood socially, including religious experiences. However, language meaning is not solely determined by linguistic systems; it is also shaped by surrounding social, cultural, and power contexts.

Conceptually, there has been a shift in linguistic studies regarding how language concepts are constructed (Anis, 2022). Structuralists view language as an objective, closed system that can be

understood through the internal relationships between signs. Within this framework, meaning is considered stable and definable in terms of the differential relations between language elements. In contrast, post-structuralism views language as fluid, with meaning constantly undergoing an endless process of negotiation. This school of thought asserts that no text can be separated from the power, ideology, and position of the speaker. In this dynamic framework, language becomes an arena for contesting meaning, laden with social and political dynamics. Understanding language in this context means considering who is speaking, the situation, their interests, and how the discourse shapes or challenges a particular social order (Barry, 2010). This theoretical foundation informs the representation of Islam across diverse narratives.

The word “hijrah” has changed in meaning and is now commonly used to signify a spiritual transformation in individuals or groups. This phenomenon has been observed since the 2000s, though the term "hijrah" was not used as it is today at that time (Hamudy & Hamudy, 2020). The meaning of hijrah has shifted, becoming a symbolic movement among today's millennial generation (Taufiq, 2020). This movement is more an expression of the individual in the public sphere than a reflection of religious substance. This phenomenon goes hand in hand with the increasing commodification of religion (Al Jawi et al., 2023). This shift reflects broader sociocultural transformations where religious identity intersects with consumer culture and personal branding in digital spaces.

Religion can be understood as a linguistic phenomenon that arises from the objectification of human subjective experience. Language in the form of phrases, sentences, or discourse becomes an expression of consciousness of reality. Religious language was initially understood as an objective reality, but it is reinterpreted personally according to subjective experience. This reciprocal process keeps religion moving in social dialectics and related to its historical context. Religious language is not born in a vacuum but is formed through social interactions involving actors, institutions, and historical and cultural

contexts (Udasmoro, 2020). In the view of social constructionism, religious meaning is the result of ongoing negotiations within religious communities. Thus, religious language not only represents beliefs but also shapes the way believers understand God, the world, and their social relationships.

Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework conceptualizes language as fundamentally embedded within social fields marked by complex power relations. In this paradigm, language operates not merely as a communicative tool but as a vehicle of social influence and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991; Haryatmoko, 2019). Religious language, consequently, transcends its ostensive function of conveying transcendental meaning; it emerges as an instrument of symbolic power within competitive social spaces. Bourdieu explains that every utterance or discourse is produced within a specific habitus and field, where agents compete to acquire symbolic capital, namely recognition, authority, and legitimacy (Forchtner & Schneickert, 2016; Lamaison & Bourdieu, 1986). This competition ensures that religious discourse invariably embodies particular ideologies, interests, and power relations. In this case, religious language plays a dual role. First, it is a tool for maintaining symbolic power. Second, it is a medium for challenging the dominance of established religious discourse. Social agents can use it as a means of resisting or maintaining the status quo.

Meanwhile, Michel Foucault expanded this analysis by showing how power operates through discourse itself. Power is productive, not repressive. In this way, knowledge is produced, subjects are shaped, and what can be known and said is determined (Foucault, 2002). Power circulates through discursive practices that construct regimes of truth, namely systems that determine which interpretations are legitimized and which are silenced (Petrus, 2016). In the context of digital *da'wah*, portals such as Hidayatullah.com do not merely convey religious knowledge but also regulate the boundaries of Islamic authenticity by structuring ways of thinking, believing, and acting that are considered valid.

The 2019 elections marked a time of political polarization and the normalization of using the term kafir. The term's meaning has shifted, and it is no longer used solely in a theological context. Rather, it is used in political discourse laden with power relations and ideological interests. Using this word is an attempt to label identities to reinforce certain political positions and the boundaries between "the faithful" and "the others" in the arena of national political struggle.

The dichotomous construction of community groups into two opposing categories is also apparent in the discourse of this portal, especially through the distinction between 'complete Muslims' and 'KTP Muslims'. In this article, the author begins with a critical reflection on the state of Muslim society. Kaffah Muslims are those who adhere strictly to Islamic teachings, but this group is beginning to fade and be displaced by KTP Muslims, who behave in ways that are far from Islamic guidance. The latter term refers to people who are nominally Muslim but whose behavior deviates from Islamic teachings. Conversely, kaffah Muslims are idealized as the standard for authentic and comprehensive Islam (Hibri, 2019).

> *The term 'Islam KTP' is used to describe individuals who claim to be Muslim but do not follow Islamic teachings (Hibri, 2019).*

This article distinguishes not only between 'Islam kaffah' and 'Islam KTP', but also establishes a regime of truth that judges one version of Islam as valid and the other as inferior. This assertion creates a symbolic boundary between 'right' and 'wrong' and encourages readers to accept the conservative Islamic norms of the website.

> *They pray, give zakat, fast, and perform the hajj. However, when they are not engaged in these religious activities, they are familiar with sin (Hibri, 2019).*

This discourse functions as a mechanism of power that operates through the production of knowledge, thereby directing readers toward a pre-established ideological framework (Kurniawan, 2020). Thus, this article can be seen as part of a discursive apparatus that regulates its Muslim subjects, not only providing a narrative but also dictating how a

Muslim should think, speak, and act within the framework of kaffah Islam.

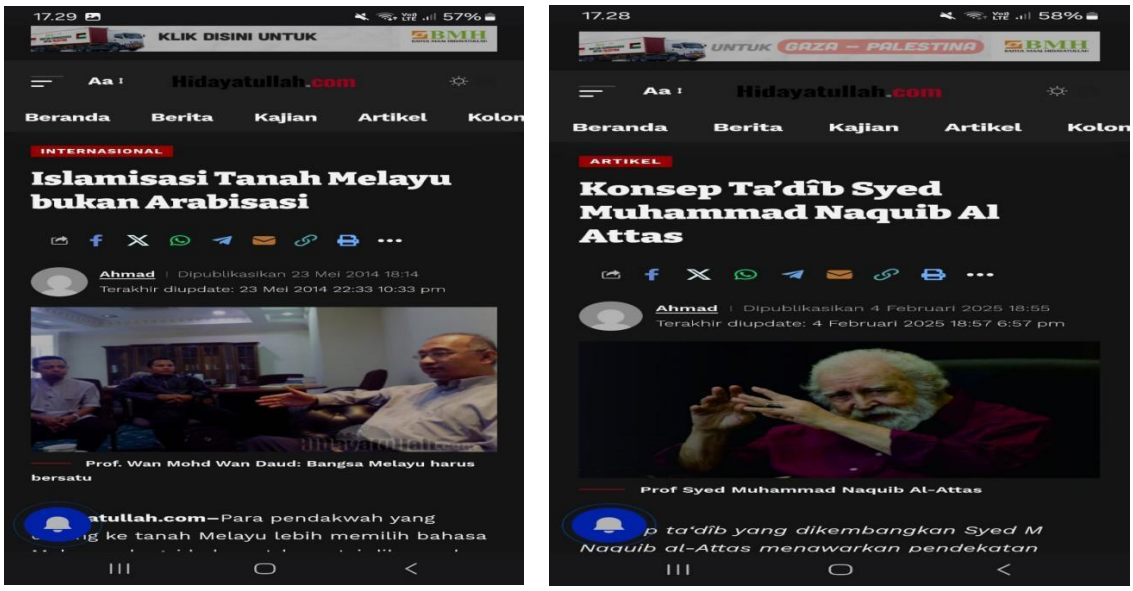
In addition to the rules of grammar and punctuation, language is also shaped by the people who use it and the contexts in which it is used. As active subjects, humans are involved in constructing meaning and are bound to episteme, the framework of knowledge that shapes a person's way of thinking and acting (Haugaard, 2022). Therefore, linguistic meaning is never neutral; rather, it aligns with the epistemic horizon of its social agents. The meaning of Islam is constructed through the understanding and interaction of subjects with the surrounding discourse.

While many within Muslim communities perceive religious language as fixed and immutable, often accepting doctrinal terms as absolute and unquestionable, the construction of religious meaning is in fact a complex sociolinguistic process imbued with power dynamics and social negotiation. Various actors, including media institutions, religious authorities, and public figures, engage in strategic discursive practices that effectively redefine core Islamic concepts such as *jihad*, *hijrah*, and *shariʿa*. This semantic reconfiguration frequently occurs subtly, without widespread awareness of the conceptual shifts taking place. Such transformations carry profound implications for both religious interpretation and practice, as they reshape communal understandings while maintaining an appearance of doctrinal continuity.

The discourse articulated on Hidayatullah.com cannot be understood as an isolated textual phenomenon; it is fundamentally shaped by the distinctive ideological framework of its parent organization, Hidayatullah. This Islamic mass movement (ormas) operates within a reformist Salafi paradigm that emphasizes the purification of Islamic doctrine, categorical rejection of secularist worldviews, and comprehensive implementation of sharīʿa principles across all societal domains. Consequently, the portal's narrative production systematically reflects this ideological orientation while demonstrating alignment with Indonesia's mainstream religious

authorities, particularly the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and internationally influential Islamic thinkers, including Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud (Malaysia), and Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi.

Image 1. Illustration of the intellectual network of the Hidayatullah.com portal



This tendency makes the editorial content on *Hidayatullah.com* relatively homogeneous, leaving no room for alternative perspectives. In terms of sociocultural practice, the editorial team exhibits characteristics of intertextuality by repeating and reinforcing established views within the network of conservative Islamic thought. These discursive practices are hegemonic, presenting narratives that reinforce the institutionalization of ideology through the selection of issues, religious diction, and text framing that support the *da'wah* agenda. Furthermore, this portal positions discourse as a disciplinary regime that regulates readers' moral behavior, forming a regime of piety in line with conservative Islamic truths. Thus, *Hidayatullah.com* functions as an ideological instrument that shapes Islamic opinion in accordance with the Hidayatullah organization's vision.

Representation and Contestation of Islamic Discourse: An Analysis of Narratives in *Hidayatullah.com*

The Indonesian community presents a complex demographic and ideological landscape shaped by the nation's diverse historical and cultural developments. While Islamic expression in Indonesia has conventionally been analyzed through the traditionalist-modernist dichotomy, a framework that continues to inform patterns of religious activism, socio-political engagement, and public discourse. Contemporary scholarship reveals a far more nuanced reality (Kersten, 2018; Nastiti & Ratri, 2018). The emergence of new religious movements, including community-based organizations, digital networks, and social media influencers, has generated dynamics that transcend these conventional categories.

This evolving landscape is now characterized by competing Islamic discourses in continuous dialogue, the decentralization of religious authority, and ongoing contestation over authentic representations of Islam within Indonesia's pluralistic society. These intersecting forces create a dynamic environment where established typologies blur and new hybrid forms of Islamic practice emerge, reflecting both local traditions and global influences.

Debates among Indonesian Muslims frequently revolve around how Islamic teachings should be actualized within social and national contexts. At the heart of this debate lie two primary approaches. The first is the Islamization approach, which seeks to apply Islamic doctrines directly to social realities. The second is a more contextual approach, often referred to as Indonesianizing Islam, which involves adapting Islamic values to fit within the framework of local culture. These two approaches represent distinct discursive typologies, differing significantly in both conceptual foundations and methods of practical implementation. Within this framework, examining how Hidayatullah.com positions itself along this ideological spectrum is both relevant and important, as it influences the direction, strategy, and narrative of the *da'wah* it promotes in the public sphere.

In the discursive contestation surrounding Islam's role in Indonesian society, Hidayatullah.com demonstrates clear alignment with the Islamization of Indonesia project rather than the

Indonesianization of Islam paradigm (Hasib, 2018). This ideological positioning becomes evident through critical discourse analysis of the portal's publications, which consistently frame Muslim intellectual groups as advocating liberal, secular, and pluralist positions, position these groups as oppositional to authentic Islamic values, and employ rhetorical strategies that construct a binary between pure Islam and compromised interpretations. The portal's editorial stance thus functions as a discursive mechanism for boundary maintenance within Indonesia's Islamic public sphere.

Mun'im Sirri has demonstrated a propensity to endorse unorthodox perspectives, which he has chosen to pursue and amplify (Ahmad, 2024). He is recognized as a prominent liberal Islamic thinker in Indonesia. The narrative constructed by Hidayatullah.com tends to exhibit a degree of suspicion toward Islamic discourse emerging from progressive intellectual circles. Such discourse is often portrayed as a deviation from the true teachings of Islam and is perceived as potentially harmful to the faith. This stance reflects the portal's *da'wah* orientation, which rejects relativism in religious interpretation and emphasizes unwavering loyalty to the normative sources of Islam, the Qur' an and Sunnah, as the foundational framework for establishing an Islamic society.

It is widely acknowledged that both extreme and liberal interpretations of Islam have the potential to undermine the integrity of faith by deviating from its core principles. The Indonesian Council of Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*) emphasizes the importance of maintaining unity within the ummah by adhering to the teachings of the Qur' an and Hadith as the primary and authoritative sources of Islamic guidance (Ahmad, 2025).

A historical analysis reveals that the efforts of prominent figures such as Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid to provide a contextual framework for Islam have significantly shaped the development of Islamic thought in Indonesia (Akmaliah et al., 2024). This intellectual tradition is marked by an emphasis on inclusivity, pluralism, and renewal. However, such a narrative has also faced notable resistance. In recent decades, a counter-current has emerged in the form of a counter-discourse propagated by religious groups aiming to uphold Islamic puritanism. Within the typology

proposed by Martin van Bruinessen, this group is classified as part of the "conservative wave", a movement that seeks to challenge liberal and progressive Islamic discourses by prioritizing textual authority and promoting an exclusive religious identity (Azra, 2016).

Image 2. Counter discourse from *Hidayatullah.com*

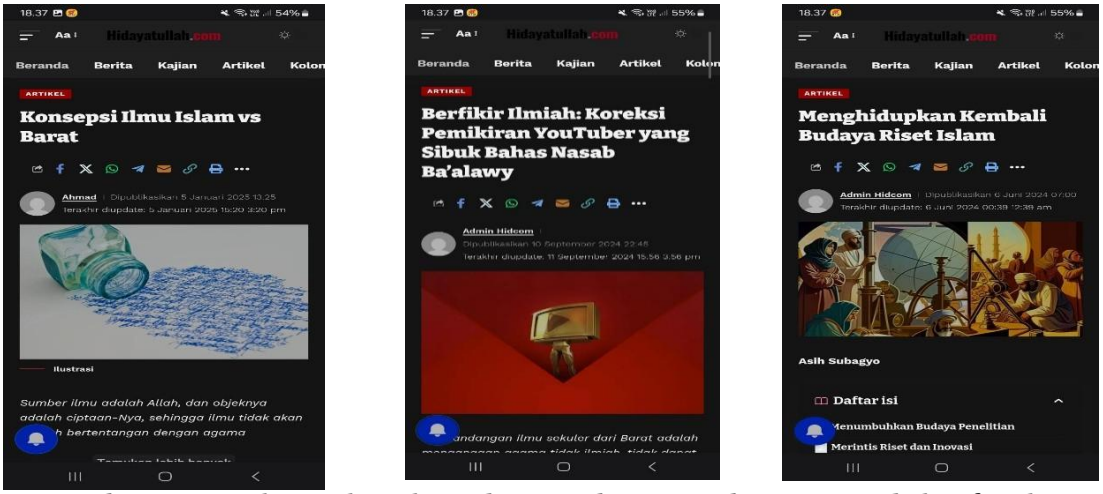
The conservative movement views the contemporary image of Indonesian Islam as being tainted by what it describes as a "virus" of foreign ideologies. This perspective aligns with the established editorial stance of *Hidayatullah.com*, which has consistently critiqued the ideas of several prominent contextualist Muslim intellectuals.

Therefore, if we are to draw a conclusion regarding Professor Mahfud's perspective, it can be posited that the Indonesianization of Islam encourages the emergence of both inclusivism and pluralism. In contrast, the process of Islamization in Indonesia has given rise to a more exclusivist form of religious expression. However, this interpretation contains several conceptual ambiguities, particularly in the use of terminology (Hasib, 2018).

This group of intellectuals is viewed as proponents of a doctrinal approach that situates Islam within the paradigm of local history and culture. Their perspective rests on the assumption that Islam is either equivalent to or indistinguishable from culture. From the standpoint of Hidayatullah.com, this view is considered problematic, as it is believed to obscure the distinction between ushul

(fundamental, immutable values) and furu' (derivative, adaptable principles), which are subject to ijtihad (Hasib, 2018). Critics argue that contextualist thinkers often blur the boundaries between these two categories, thereby undermining the authority of Islamic teachings rooted in divine revelation. As a result, critiques of the contextualist approach are grounded in fundamental differences in epistemological frameworks used to understand Islam. These differences reflect contrasting views of Islam, one perceives it as a stable, transcendent value system, while the other regards it as a historically situated phenomenon that continually evolves through cultural interpretation.

Image 3. Scientific vs. Islamic Contestation



This portal explicitly adopts the prophetic model of Islamic preaching as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), emphasizing an Islamization paradigm while rejecting alternative approaches, particularly the indigenization of Islam. The portal maintains that the historical dissemination of Islamic teachings across the Arabian Peninsula and subsequent regions should be preserved in its original form. Crucially, it distinguishes between the Prophet's objective to Islamize Arab society through universal teachings and any attempt to Arabize Islam itself. This position is normatively grounded in the concept of Islam as *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (a mercy to all worlds), which the portal interprets as not limited to Arab contexts (*rahmatan lil-'Arab*) and not reducible to regional particularisms, such as *rahmatan li nusantara*.

The portal consequently advocates for strict adherence to the Prophet's methodology, positioning Islamization rather than contextual adaptation as the essential framework for Islamic propagation (Hasib, 2018). However, the principle of Islam's universality is interpreted differently by contextualist scholars. These intellectuals reinterpret Islamic teachings to align with local cultural and socio-political contexts, presenting Islam in public discourse as a religion characterized by adaptability, cultural harmony, and social politeness. Hidayatullah.com, however, criticizes this approach, arguing that it dilutes core Islamic principles and blurs the normative boundaries between Islam as a divinely revealed religion and culture as a human construct.

The portal asserts that such contextualization risks compromising the theological integrity of Islamic doctrine by prioritizing cultural accommodation over scriptural fidelity. This stance reflects Hidayatullah.com's commitment to preserving a distinctively Islamic framework, resisting interpretations that, in its view, may lead to doctrinal ambiguity. Furthermore, Hidayatullah.com draws parallels between the preaching methodology of the Walisongo (the nine revered saints of Java) and that of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The portal asserts that the Walisongo employed an Islamization strategy rooted in the prophetic model-one that facilitated the widespread acceptance of Islamic teachings while preserving their doctrinal purity (Hasib, 2018). This approach, as framed by Hidayatullah.com, emphasizes the transmission of Islam in its unaltered form, rejecting syncretic adaptations that might compromise its fundamental principles. By aligning the Walisongo's legacy with the Prophet's method, the portal reinforces its ideological stance that authentic *da'wah* requires adherence to normative Islamic teachings rather than cultural accommodation.

Linguistic evidence demonstrates the profound Islamic influence on the Indonesian language, particularly through the assimilation of Arabic vocabulary. This linguistic adoption challenges contextualist perspectives by revealing how Islamization extended beyond religious spheres into cultural and linguistic domains. For instance, the Indonesian word *musyawarah* (deliberation) derives directly from the Arabic word *syura*, from the root word *syawara*.

Such lexical borrowings illustrate that the Islamization process in Indonesia was not limited to spiritual practices and rituals but permeated everyday language and cultural expressions. As highlighted by Hasib (2018), this phenomenon underscores the multidimensional nature of Islamization, which operated simultaneously at spiritual, cultural, and linguistic levels, ultimately shaping the development of Indonesian national identity while maintaining Islamic linguistic roots (Hasib, 2018). The phenomenon of Arabization has generated considerable debate in Indonesia, where it is often perceived negatively as the uncritical adoption of Arab cultural practices. While some observers conflate the spread of Islamic teachings with Arab cultural influence, Hidayatullah.com firmly rejects this association.

The portal maintains that authentic Islamic propagation (*da'wah*) should not be equated with Arab cultural fanaticism but rather represents a selective process guided by Islamic principles. In practice, this approach involves careful discernment, preserving local cultural elements compatible with Islamic teachings while modifying or replacing those that conflict with core religious values. This methodological framework demonstrates the portal's nuanced position: advocating for the preservation of Islamic orthodoxy while allowing for contextual sensitivity, provided such adaptation does not compromise fundamental doctrinal principles. The discourse reflects an ongoing negotiation between maintaining religious authenticity and engaging with local cultural realities. Additionally, Islamization was achieved by adapting to the local language. This process did not entail replacing everything with Arabic (Fazeri, 2018).

This process involves translating pre-Islamic terms and concepts into an Islamic framework of understanding. Semantic structures are modified, whereby words or symbols that previously held local or secular meanings are redefined or replaced with terms imbued with Islamic values. As a result, this *da'wah* paradigm seeks to cultivate public awareness through the reconfiguration of linguistic, cultural, and social meanings grounded in an Islamic epistemological framework. Contextualist groups view Islam as a doctrine that is continuously present and manifested within the social sphere,

thereby rendering its significance temporal and contingent upon specific historical and cultural contexts. From this perspective, the truth of Islam is not regarded as immutable within social praxis; rather, it is open to interpretation and adapts to the lived realities of individuals. Consequently, in the process of contextualizing Islam, sensitivity to other civilizations and cultures is considered essential without necessarily altering the core substance of Islamic teachings. This approach enables the development of an inclusive and contextually grounded form of Islam, while still maintaining its foundation in universal principles.

From the perspective of Hidayatullah.com, the contextualist view outlined above is considered to be laden with fundamental inaccuracies. This critique is rooted in the concept of dynamic stabilism, which posits that Islamic civilization is characterized by a unique attribute, the ability of Islamic teachings to adapt to the changing times while remaining grounded in enduring principles (*tsawabit*) (Syakur, 2019). Within this framework, Islam is understood to accommodate aspects that are subject to change (*mutaghayyirat*), while preserving the core substance of its essential and non-negotiable teachings. This perspective serves as the epistemological foundation for Hidayatullah.com's position on social transformation and its engagement with contemporary Islamic discourse.

Hidayatullah.com's perspective aligns with the aforementioned principle. The da'wah approach that adopts the role model of Indonesianizing Islam is viewed as problematic, as it has the potential to shift the very foundation of Islamic orthodoxy. Such an approach opens the door to the reevaluation of components traditionally regarded as fundamental tenets of Islamic teaching. Moreover, it risks blurring the boundaries between what is tsabit (immutable) and furu' (derivative), particularly in the realm of ijtihad pursued by scholars open to diverse perspectives. A thorough examination of the Prophet Muhammad's model of da'wah reveals a paradigm for Muslims to emulate across all aspects of life, including the dissemination of religious teachings. This examination suggests that the ideal method is not merely the adaptation of Islam to local cultural norms, but rather the Islamization of society. Accordingly,

the portal emphasizes that a prophetic model of da'wah involves instilling Islamic values into the social fabric of Indonesian society, not conforming Islamic principles to local cultural constructs. Da'wah, in this view, is understood as a process of Islamizing society, rather than simple acculturation. The grounding of Islam in the Indonesian context is thus not a unidirectional process but a symbiotic relationship one, in which Islam is integrated into society and culture while maintaining its normative essence.

Conclusion

The *Hidayatullah.com* portal functions as an active discursive agent, conveying Islamic values and deliberately framing social and religious realities through an ideological lens aligned with the missionary vision of the Hidayatullah mass organization. It employs various discursive practices, such as news content, headlines, word choice, and narrative structure, to reproduce the meaning of Islam within a conservative framework. Additionally, the portal actively engages in counter-discourses aimed at challenging contextualist and pluralist interpretations of Islamic thought.

The religious language employed in this text serves two key functions, it operates both as a symbol and as a performative act. These functions contribute to shaping public perception, affirming the boundaries of religious identity, and reinforcing the dominant narrative of Islamic orthodoxy. Within the ongoing discourse surrounding the competing projects of Islamizing Indonesia versus Indonesianizing Islam, the portal unequivocally rejects the contextualist approach. Instead, it promotes a *da'wah* model rooted in Islamization, one that is predicated on orthodoxy and the purification of Islamic teachings.

These findings suggest that the digital space is not a neutral arena. Rather, it constitutes a contested domain for religious meaning and authority, laden with ideological undertones. Therefore, it is imperative to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the processes through which interpretations of Islam are constructed, contested, and sustained within Indonesia's contemporary religious landscape, particularly in the context of the post-truth era. In the context of development, further research should focus on studying religious discourse on social media platforms, emphasizing audience reception. This approach is important for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of religious narratives in the

digital space. This stems from the fact that, in the media age, meaning is produced and reproduced through interactions on social media.

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