

## DEMOCRATIC ISSUES AS THE BASIS OF MODERN- CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT IN ISLAM

Mursyidan Auzan, A. Izza Azhima, Salman Ismail  
Antasari State Islamic University, Banjarmasin.  
[auzanmursyidan17@gmail.com](mailto:auzanmursyidan17@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *Democracy is an important part of political history in the world, successfully penetrating the political cultural base of each region from Europe, America, to Asia, in the history of its development democracy has touched many historical events that occurred in the scope of global politics and continues to provide and spread its wings of influence until now, which eventually gave birth to contemporary issues. The existence of democracy even touches Islam, Islamic political systems, Islamic countries, and all Islamic societies around the world. This of course invites a lot of attention from political observers, academics, activists, and religious leaders who study current issues and the influence of the democratic system. This paper will focus on the relationship between democracy as a political regime and Islam as well as its issues as the basis of contemporary Islamic thought with the research method of literature review and data analysis as well as a deeper examination of the references obtained*

**Keywords:** *Democracy; Contemporary issues; and Political Islam*

## Introduction

In practice, democracy is understood as a system known as *Power Of People*, meaning that the power point of democracy is from the people for the people and by the people. The people are the ultimate power holders in a democratic society. During the initial introduction of the democratic system in the classical Greek era, many underestimated and classed this system, as a bad and wordy system, even the philosopher Aristotle said that the weakness of democracy with power fully in the hands of the people was a fatal mistake made by democracy. Because it will allow people who do not understand the political structure to take power. For one of these reasons, Aristotle created a 'counter' system which he named Aristocracy, in which political power was fully controlled by intellectual and competent individuals.

However, as time goes by. Democracy as a 'political product' has always evolved over time, giving birth to various forms and increasingly widespread practice in various countries. It is undeniable that today many developed countries have made democracy their political system. The more rapid the flow of political globalization, the faster democracy spreads its wings in the public sphere. Islam is no exception. Islam, which has been known for centuries to have the concept of Khilafah/Kingdom/Monarchy, meets with a concept that is completely opposite to what has been engraved in Islamic history. The result of the meeting of these two aspects, gave birth to issues from various perspectives in various circles, modern Muslim scholars in Indonesia in particular also pay more attention to this issue. In this context, Islamic political thought is in the middle of the crossroads of political ideology.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The results of this discussion and discussion use the *library research* method by analyzing literature from experts and examining textual and contextual histories of books, journals, articles, accredited online media and several other references. This method also emphasizes that research on literature is the basis for the normative footing of academics in conducting scientific studies which is a hereditary tradition carried out by previous scholars.

## Result and Discussion

Referring to the results of the research, this discussion will raise five main topics in discussing the issues of democracy as the basis of modern contemporary Islamic thought

### 1. Democracy at a Glance

Etymologically, democracy is taken from the Greek words *demos* which means people or population, and *cratein* or *cratos* which means power or sovereignty. So *demoscratos* means that the power of government is controlled

by the sovereignty of the people, the supreme power is with the people, and decisions are made on the basis of people's votes, government from the people and interests for the people.<sup>1</sup>

The term democracy was first introduced by Herodotus, in Ancient Egypt around 3000 years ago. Later, it developed further into Ancient and Classical Greek thought and was practiced in the 6th century BC to the 4th century BC, the democratic system applied at that time was the *direct democracy* system or also known as direct democracy, which is a political decision carried out directly by the community with the majority opinion. Democracy is a response to the bad government system that was practiced in the cities of Athens (Greece).<sup>2</sup>

Entering the modern era, ideas and notions of democracy began to develop in Europe in the 16th to 20th centuries. These ideas were a response to the absolute monarchy that ruled the world political system in medieval times. In the course of modern times, the significance of the development of democracy was seen after the American Revolution (1776) and the French Revolution (1789). In the current century, the concept and idea of democracy has spread its wings and is almost accepted by all governments in the world with diverse concepts and practices. The leadership of authoritarian and tyrannical heads of state has resulted in a shift in the meaning of democracy itself and made it only a political symbol claim, hence the birth of various terms that describe such democracy, including liberal democracy, popular democracy, guided democracy and socialist democracy., di antaranya demokrasi liberal, demokrasi kerakyatan demokrasi terpimpin dan demokrasi sosialis. Examples of such leaders include Hitler (Germany), Lenin and Stalin (Russia), Mao Tse Dong (China) and Soeharto (Indonesia).<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Islam and Democracy

The relationship between Islam and democracy is a contemporary discussion today, between the reality of both there is a proportion that causes overlapping understanding of experts, resulting in many differences of opinion among scholars and observers. Through the normativity approach, Islam is a divine teaching that is divine and comes from His words and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, while from a historical perspective, Islam is a civilization phenomenon. Islam does not only talk about divinity, prophethood, metaphysics and others, in reality, Islam also internalizes its teachings in social space, creating peace and morality that is universal. With such integration, Islam historically does not recognize the term democracy. However, this does

---

<sup>1</sup>Raudhatul Jennah, Surawan, dan M. Athaillah, *Isu-Isu Dunia Islam Kontemporer: Sebuah Pendekatan Multi Perspektif* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit K-Media, 2021), 106-107

<sup>2</sup>Welis Santana. *Demokrasi Dalam Islam Studi Analisis Pemikiran Muhammad Quraish Shihab*, Tesis (Jakarta: Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Institut PTIQ, 2018), 41

<sup>3</sup>Moh. Anas Kholis dan Yulianto. "Dialektika Pemikiran Islam dan Demokrasi *Manhaj* Indonesia: Sebuah Potret Historitas, Kontinuitas, dan Perubahan." in <https://www.semanticscholar.org>, accessed on 21 February 2023

not mean that Islam does not recognize its practice, in Islam political life is termed *deliberation / shura* in which it is directly in contact with politics and is related to democratic practices in general.<sup>4</sup>

The similarities between the *Shura* theory in Islam and democracy in general can be seen from the principles that have been explained in the Qur'anic verses, such as freedom of opinion, equality, participation, mutual cooperation, and tolerance of differences in decision making, not only in the state government system, but also starting from the smallest social space, namely the family<sup>5</sup>. However, in fact, the meeting between Islam and democracy does not only produce similarities, but also differences in views between Muslim scholars, and finally this theme is always discussed in an actual and contemporary manner.<sup>6</sup>

History has recorded the relationship between Islam and the democratic system since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Although the term democracy was not yet born at that time, the application carried out by the prophet Muhammad SAW gave birth to the values that are now contained in the concept of democracy. One of the evidences of democracy applied by the prophet Muhammad SAW was when he migrated from the city of Makah to Medina, changed the order of the city of Medina, lived as neighbors with three large Jewish tribes, and even applied the executive, legislative and judicial systems indirectly.<sup>7</sup> Written evidence of the establishment of democracy is the existence of the Medina charter which was then held as a written agreement to realize peace between Muslims and Jews in Medina. Furthermore, in the caliphate era, the appointment of Sayyidina Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq RA was also on the basis of deliberation which became the foundation of democratic politics, the next change of caliph, Sayyidina Umar bin Khattab RA, made laws for the common good by upholding the principle of deliberation, the principle of justice, the principle of principle responsibility, the principle of equality, the principle of trust and obedience in government regulations at that time as well<sup>8</sup> even Sayiidina Umar bin Khattab RA rejected the monarchical system by appointing his son, Abdullah bin Umar as the next caliph, the tradition of appointing leaders on the basis of deliberation of the Muslim people continued until the caliphate of Sayyidini Ali bin Abi Talib ended, then Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan took over the seat of the caliphate and implemented a monarchical system in the Islamic political system.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>See Welis Santana. *Demokrasi Dalam Islam Studi Analisis Pemikiran Muhammad Quraish Shihab*, 62

<sup>5</sup>See Raudhatul Jennah, Surawan, dan M. Athaillah, *Isu-Isu Dunia Islam Kontemporer: Sebuah Pendekatan Multi Perspektif*, 111

<sup>6</sup>Lutfie Assyaukanie, *Ideologi Islam dan Utopia: Tiga Model Negara Demokrasi di Indonesia*, terj. Samsudin Berlian, (Jakarta: Freedom Institute, 2011), 75-80.

<sup>7</sup>Abdul Chalik, *Islam, Negara dan Masa Depan Ideologi Politik* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2017), 15..

<sup>8</sup>Ahmad Sukardja, *Hukum Tata Negara & Hukum Administrasi Negara Dalam Perspektif Fikih Siyasah* (Jakarta: Sinar Grafika, 2012), 112

<sup>9</sup>St, Halimang, *Praktik Hukum Umar bin Khatab dan peluang implementasinya di Negara Hukum Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2017), 115.

### 3. Principles of Democracy in Islam

The verses of the Qur'an have a lot to do with the theory of democracy, although the term has never been heard before in Islam itself, but through the Qur'an, Islam also has the same line of discussion in democracy, in describing this there are at least four verses in the Qur'an, namely.

1. The Principle of Unity in Q.S. al-Hujurat/49: 13, reads:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Translation: "O mankind, indeed we created you from a male and a female. Then, we made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the nobles among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Verily, Allah is All knowing and all absorbing."

2. The principle of mutual aid in Q.S. al-Balad/90: 12-16, reads:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Translation: "There is no compulsion in (embracing) the religion (Islam). Indeed, the right way is clear from the wrong way. Whoever disbelieves in tagut and believes in Allah has indeed held fast to a very strong rope that will not break. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

3. The Principle of Enforcing the Law of Justice in Q.S an-Nisa/4: 58, reads:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

Translation: "Verily, Allah enjoins you to deliver the trust to its owner. And when you judge between men, judge justly. Verily, Allah teaches you best. Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing."

4. The principle of deliberation/Syura in Q.S as-Syura/42:38, reads:

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

Translation: "(Also better and more lasting) are those who accept (obey) the call of god and perform the prayer, while their affairs (are decided) by deliberation among them. They spend part of the wealth that is bestowed upon them."

#### 4. Democratic Issues in Islam

Islamic political thought in the modern-contemporary era that developed in the 20th century has always caused heated discussions among political experts, observers and Muslim scholars, due to the many conflicts from the clash of these two entities<sup>10</sup> Orientalists in the West even give their opinions, such as the Western scientist Samuel P. Huntington who said that when Muslims are introduced to the democratic system, they will tend to reject it, because they feel that the influence of democracy cannot dominate the influence of Islam on them. He added that in some Muslim countries, democracy is rejected outright because it comes from Western liberalism<sup>11</sup>. So this time three issues will be raised in academic discussions.

##### 1. Religion Versus Democracy

In this case, religion and democracy cannot be brought together. The meeting of the two actually causes conflict between the two camps, so they must be separated and not interfere with each other. Among the reasons for this is that people always associate the laws that apply in democracies with the power of God, which in this case means religion. Many Muslims still think that democracy can destroy from within what Islam has brought. Theologically, this assumes that Islam shackles human reasoning and freedom, while democracy has a system of freedom. So if this happens, we will see the phenomenon of a democratic society on the one hand and a society with religious authority on the other.

##### 2. Secularization of Politics

In this case what is meant is neutralization. That religious affairs and political affairs run separately according to their respective concepts. This secularization occurs at various levels, whether in small communities to state institutions. In general, democratic entities will tend to be more visible in social reality than religion, which is considered as the privacy and personal beliefs of each individual.

##### 3. Theo-Democracy

This third view is the view when looking at theological and sociological perspectives, theo-democracy fully supports the process of political democracy. Historically, all Abrahamic religions fully support and uphold human dignity and status by improving morality. So that politics built with democracy looks moral and ethical when practiced in the social space. Although religion comes from God with a vertical line of descent, the teachings that come down also discuss horizontal issues, such as economics, politics, social, culture, state, etc. The role of

---

<sup>10</sup>Haedar Nashir, "Kajian Pemikiran Politik Islam Kontemporer," *Al-Jamiah Research Center UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta: E-Jurnal Fakultas Syariah dan Ilmu Hukum*. Dalam oai:ojs.pkp.sfu.ca:article/1209, accessed on 21 February 2017

<sup>11</sup>See Raudhatul Jennah, Surawan, dan M. Athaillah, *Isu-Isu Dunia Islam Kontemporer: Sebuah Pendekatan Multi Perspektif*, 113

contemporary mufassirs in interpreting religious texts is very important to continue this kind of understanding from time to time.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Contemporary Muslim Scholars' Thoughts on Democracy

The modern-contemporary era should be led by those who are competent and experts in their fields. Here two Muslim scholars of the 20th century whose thoughts on Islam and Democracy are still relevant today will be highlighted.

### 1. Nur Cholis Madjid's Thoughts on Democracy

According to Nur Cholis Madjid, democracy must have two main components. The first is the civic, political and social component, which includes life, liberty and property. The second is the political component as a citizen who focuses on the democratic system.

Democracy, which was born in the West and has developed to this day, has different concepts. In fact, Nur Cholis Madjid considers it difficult to define the concept of democracy itself in general. Because various countries have blended their governments with the concept of democracy, it requires changing some aspects to adjust to the country's structure. In general terms and concepts, democracy is a system where people make decisions based on majority rule, but majority rule must be coupled with guarantees of human rights protection, including the protection of minority rights. Nur Cholis Madjid added that democracy is not a political system with a single concept, but all nations and countries have their own understanding and concept in practice, differences in educational and social economic progress, cultural demands and traditions also affect the prevailing concept of democracy<sup>13</sup>.

### 2. Muhammad Quraish Shihab's Thoughts on Democracy

As an exegete in the contemporary era, a professor in the field of tafsir often uses Qur'anic verses as a paradigm lens to understand democracy. In thousands of verses, Quraish Shihab associates the term democracy with the word Shura in the Qur'an. While the sunnah perspective, Quraish Shihab took a lot of history of democratic practices in the era of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, until the Khalifaturrasyidin era. Quraish Shihab said that Islamic teachings have a universal concept, so that arguments about democracy can be found in the Al-Quran and Sunnah.

In his tafsir Al-Misbah, he elaborates on the meaning of the word shura, which he considers to be the definition of democracy in Islam. Shura is taken from the Arabic word Sya-Wa-Ra which means to squeeze honey from a beehive. There is an analogy or qiyas here, that the honey in question is an opinion that is full of benefits, and deliberation is an effort to achieve this honey.

---

<sup>12</sup>Saifullah Idris, "Islam dan Demokrasi: Respon Umat Islam Indonesia Terhadap Demokrasi," in <https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/2204/> accessed on 21 February 2023

<sup>13</sup> Ahmad Faqihuddin, "Demokrasi Dalam Pemikiran Nur Cholis Madjid," *Tahdzib Al-Akhlaq: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*. Vol. 5, No. 2, 202

In other words, taking an opinion should look at the substance of the opinion regardless of who said it.

According to Quraish Shihab, there are three main views that are elements of Islamic democracy. First, equality. Second, the burden of responsibility on all individuals in upholding the laws of justice based on the practice of deliberation/shura. Third, clear and indiscriminate legislation.

Basically, Quraish Shihab identifies democracy with shura. Although on the other hand, he also recognizes the differences between democracy and shura. However, these differences are not so big and influential, he still emphasizes that it is Islam that forms the idea of democracy which contains the principles of equality, shura, and responsibility<sup>14</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

The issues of democracy continue to develop until today, but Muslim scholars are still trying to make what has been taught by Islam can be relevant to globalization in the contemporary era, even expected to be able to be a problem solving for a conflict. Democracy as a political system that can apply at various levels of society, has experienced many significant changes that depend on the situation and conditions of social society, including Indonesia, which is currently believed to have the largest Muslim population in the world, on the other hand, the Indonesian state adheres to a democratic system of government which ultimately must also require Muslim scholars and the younger generation to always guard and maintain the teachings of Islam, and democracy in the country.

From the beginning, the arrival of Islam as a religion of rahmatan lil 'alamin has democratic values that can finally be dialogued with normative global political currents. Basically, the practice of a state system is not only guided by normative rules, but also looks at its interests and benefits. Democracy gave birth to many issues in its development in the Islamic world, and Islam managed to respond to it all through verses of the Quran even before the issue surfaced.

## **Bibliography**

Assyaukanie, Lutfie, *Ideologi Islam dan Utopia: Tiga Model Negara Demokrasi di Indonesia*, terj. Samsudin Berlian, Jakarta: Freedom Institute, 2011

Chalik, Abdul, *Islam, Negara dan Masa Depan Ideologi Politik*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2017.

Faqihuddin, Ahmad, "Demokrasi Dalam Pemikiran Nur Cholis Madjid," *Tahdzib Al-Akhlaq: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*. Vol. 5, No. 2, 2022.

---

<sup>14</sup>See Welis Santana, *Demokrasi Dalam Islam Studi Analisis Pemikiran Muhammad Quraish Shihab*, 124

Idris, Saifullah, "Islam dan Demokrasi: Respon Umat Islam Indonesia Terhadap Demokrasi," in <https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/2204/> accessed on 21 Februari 2023

Jannah, Raudhatul, Surawan, dan M. Athaillah, *Isu-Isu Dunia Islam Kontemporer: Sebuah Pendekatan Multi Perspektif*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit K-Media, 2021.

Kholis, Moh. Anas dan Yulianto. "Dialektika Pemikiran Islam dan Demokrasi *Manhaj* Indonesia: Sebuah Potret Historitas, Kontinuitas, dan Perubahan." in <https://www.semanticscholar.org> , accessed on 21 Februari 2023.

Nashir Haedar, "Kajian Pemikiran Politik Islam Kontemporer," *Al-Jamiah Research Center UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta: E-Jurnal Fakultas Syariah dan Ilmu Hukum*. In [oai:ojs.pkp.sfu.ca:article/1209](http://oai.ojs.pkp.sfu.ca:article/1209), accessed on 21 Februari 2017

Santana. Welis Demokrasi Dalam Islam Studi Analisis Pemikiran Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Tesis* (Jakarta: Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Institut PTIQ, 2018).

St, Halimang, *Praktik Hukum Umar bin Khatab dan peluang implementasinya di Negara Hukum Indonesia* Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2017

Sukardja, Ahmad, *Hukum Tata Negara & Hukum Administrasi Negara Dalam Perspektif Fikih Siyasah* Jakarta: Sinar Grafika, 2012