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Amanda tho Seeth

Renegotiating the Islam-Development Nexus in Indonesia: Fikih Peradaban as a Middle Ground between Local and Global Development Paradigms

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Abstract

In 2015, the United Nations introduced the *2030 Agenda*, a new development paradigm that aims at globally achieving concrete Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Today, sustainable development has become the dominant development narrative in international cooperation discourse, despite criticism of its top-down approach and secular bias. This explorative article discusses the potential of Indonesian Islamic concepts, such as Nahdlatul Ulama's Islam Nusantara and Fikih Peradaban, to contribute to the sustainable development discourse from an Islamic perspective. By mapping the current intellectual debate on Fikih Peradaban, I demonstrate that Fikih Peradaban is a particularly suited approach as epistemologically and conceptually it occupies a middle ground position that mediates between local and global development paradigms. I further argue that Fikih Peradaban's focus on the concepts of humanism, humanist Islam (or Islamic humanism), and Islamic legal reasoning in the service of all people regardless of religious affiliation may contribute to its global appeal and effectiveness. The article draws on notes taken at a conference on "Islam Nusantara and World Peace" (February 5, 2023) in Surabaya as well

as notes taken at the first Fikih Peradaban conference (February 6, 2023) in Surabaya. It is also based on a close reading of official material that accompanied the latter conference. Furthermore, I embed the discussion on the nexus between Indonesian Islamic concepts and sustainable development into the broader academic and policy debate on the role of religion within sustainable development. Hence, this article is connected to the research project "Freedom and Development? Religious Actors, Freedom of Religion and Belief, and Sustainable Development" conducted by the German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Hamburg, from 2020 to 2023.

Keywords: Indonesia, Fikih Peradaban, humanist Islam (Islamic humanism), sustainable development

Abstrak

Pada tahun 2015, Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa memperkenalkan Agenda 2030, sebuah paradigma pembangunan baru yang bertujuan untuk mencapai Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs) yang konkret secara global. Saat ini, pembangunan berkelanjutan telah menjadi narasi pembangunan yang dominan dalam wacana kerja sama internasional, terlepas dari kritik atas pendekatan top-down dan bias sekulernya. Artikel eksploratif ini membahas potensi konsep Islam Indonesia, seperti Islam Nusantara dan Fikih Peradaban Nahdlatul Ulama, untuk berkontribusi pada wacana pembangunan berkelanjutan dari perspektif Islam. Dengan memetakan perdebatan intelektual saat ini tentang Fikih Peradaban, saya menunjukkan bahwa Fikih Peradaban adalah pendekatan yang sangat cocok karena secara epistemologis dan konseptual ia menempati posisi jalan tengah yang memediasi antara paradigma pembangunan lokal dan global. Saya lebih jauh berpendapat bahwa fokus Fikih Peradaban pada konsep humanisme, Islam humanis, dan penalaran hukum Islam dalam melayani semua orang terlepas dari afiliasi agama dapat berkontribusi pada daya tarik dan efektivitas globalnya. Artikel ini selain digali dari konferensi tentang Islam Nusantara dan Perdamaian Dunia (5 Februari 2023) di Surabaya, juga catatan yang diperoleh dari Konferensi Fikih Peradaban (6 Februari 2023) di kota yang sama. Artikel ini juga didasarkan pada pembacaan secara dekat tentang data-data resmi yang menyertai konferensi berikutnya. Disini saya memperkaya dengan pembahasan tentang mata rantai antara konsep Islam Indonesia dan Pembangunan berkelanjutan dalam perdebatan akademik dan kebijakan yang lebih luas tentang peran agama dalam Pembangunan. Oleh karena itu artikel ini terkait dengan proyek riset ""Freedom and Development? Religious Actors, Freedom of Religion and Belief, and Sustainable Development" yang dilakukan oleh German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Hamburg, dari tahun 2020 hingga 2023.

Kata Kunci: Indonesia, Fikih Peradaban, Islam Humanis, Pembangunan Berkelanjutan

الملخص

في عام 2015، طرحت الأمم المتحدة خطّة عام 2030، وهي نموذج التنمية الجديدة يهدف إلى تحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة الملموسة على مستوى العالم. واليوم، أصبحت التنمية

المستدامة هي السرد التنموي المهيمن في خطاب التعاون الدولي، على الرغم من الانتقادات الموجهة إلى نهجها من أعلى إلى أسفل وتحيزها العلماني. يناقش هذا المقال الاستكشافي إمكانات المفاهيم الإسلامية الإندونيسية، مثل إسلام نوسانتارا وفقه الحضارة لجمعية نهضة العلماء، للمساهمة في خطاب التنمية المستدامة من منظور إسلامي. ومن خلال رسم خريطة للنقاش الفكري الحالي حول فقه الحضارة، أبين أن فقه الحضارة هو نهج مناسب بشكل خاص لأنه يحتل، من الناحيتين المعرفية والمفاهيمية، موقعا وسطا يتوسط بين نماذج التنمية المحلية والعالمية. كما أذهب الى أن تركيز فقه الحضارة على المفاهيم الإنسانية، والإسلام الإنساني، والتفكير القانوني الإسلامي في خدمة جميع الناس، بغض النظر عن انتماءاتهم الدينية قد يساهم في جاذبيته وفعاليته على المستوى العالمي. ولم يقتصر هذا المقال على استخلاصه من مؤتمر إسلام نوسانتارا والسلام العالمي (5 فبراير 2023) في مدينة سورابايا، بل يسلّط الضوء أيضا على نتائج أعمال مؤتمر فقه الحضارة (6 فبراير 2023) في نفس المدينة. كما يستند هذا المقال أيضا على قراءة متأنية للبيانات الرسمية المصاحبة للمؤتمر اللاحق. وهنا أقوم بإثرائه بمناقشة العلاقة بين مفهوم الإسلام الإندونيسي والتنمية المستدامة خلال نقاش أكاديمي وسياسي أوسع حول دور الدين في التنمية. لذلك يرتبط هذا المقال بالمشروع البحثي "الحرية والتنمية؟ القادة الدينيون، حرية الدين والمعتقد، والتنمية المستدامة" التي أجراها المعهد الألماني للدراسات العالمية والمحلية، هامبورغ، من 2020 إلى 2023.

الكلمات الأساسية: إندونيسيا، فقه الحضارة ، الإسلام الإنساني، التنمية المستدامة

Introduction

Over the past years, Indonesia has experienced an intensified debate on how Islam may contribute to the national and international common good. In this context, the year 2015 marked an important momentum: the two largest and most important civil Islamic organizations Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah introduced new Islamic labels defining their specific Islamic identity and guiding their outlook and practices in domestic and international affairs. While not explicitly articulated, in their essence, these Islamic labels—Islam Nusantara (Islam of the Archipelago) and Islam Berkemajuan (Progressive Islam)—speak to questions of societal development. While NU's Islam Nusantara focuses on the legitimacy of religious diversity and the promotion of peaceful religious coexistence, Muhammadiyah's Islam Berkemajuan comes with a more obvious agenda for society's development, which includes an economic dimension.[1]

Also in 2015, global development discourse was reoriented by the introduction of a new development paradigm: the United Nations (UN) introduced the *2030 Agenda for*

1 On the economic dimension of Islam Berkemajuan, see Muhammadiyah. *Risalah Islam Berkemajuan: Muktamar Muhammadiyah Ke-48, Surakarta*, (Jakarta: Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2022), p. 46–49; and 57–58; Mark Woodward. "Islamicate Civilization and National Islams: Islam Nusantara, West Java and Sundanese Culture," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 9, no. 2 (2019), p. 148–187.

Sustainable Development, a detailed action plan to further development globally by achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030. The *2030 Agenda* constitutes a new paradigm of development as it replaces the UN's former *Millennium Development Declaration* (2000–2015) and promotes an innovative holistic approach towards development. Notwithstanding its sustainable and more comprehensively sensitive approach towards the contested concept of "development," the *2030 Agenda* also has limits, shortcomings, and blind spots. It has, for example, been criticized for its secular bias on development that fails to acknowledge local communities' religious and spiritual perspectives on development.[2]

Against the backdrop of critical voices' call for a stronger inclusion of locally inspired approaches on sustainable development into the global *2030 Agenda*, this article discusses the potential of locally grown Indonesian Islamic concepts to contribute to sustainable development. I zoom in on the developmental notions of Fikih Peradaban (Islamic Jurisprudence of Civilization), a new Islamic concept NU is publicly promoting at the international scale since February 2023. I argue that Fikih Peradaban is better suited than Islam Nusantara to meaningfully contribute to the global sustainable development's broad and practically oriented agenda. Through its focus on Islamic law, Fikih Peradaban can bring concrete Islamic notions to the secular-inspired sustainable development debate and legitimize the *2030 Agenda* by Islamic legal reasoning. In contrast to discursive approaches such as Islam Nusantara, Islamic law has concrete societal effects. Hence, using the tool of Islamic jurisprudence, Fikih Peradaban can concretely contribute to sustainable development and its interdependent economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Furthermore, rooted in a humanist understanding of Islam, Fikih Peradaban has the potential to directly link with the UN's SDG discourse emphasizing a globally shared human identity and value. As Fikih Peradaban aims to contribute to all humanity regardless of religious affiliation, it may be truly compatible with and practically relevant to global developmental projects, such as the *2030 Agenda*. The Fikih Peradaban movement has already publicly legitimized the UN Charter and by that the latter's ethics of global peace and human equality. Fikih Peradaban is an interesting concept as it connects local and global development paradigms and therefore bottom-up and top-down perspectives and approaches. It interlinks Islamic and secular-humanist epistemologies, values, and ethics, and their objectives. In doing so, I argue, Fikih Peradaban constitutes a developmental paradigm located at a middle ground position between local developmental discourses (i.e., Islam Nusantara) and global ones (i.e., UN's *2030 Agenda*).

My analysis is based on the still young and evolving public discourse on Fikih Peradaban. As the Fikih Peradaban movement is a new initiative, this paper is limited to preliminary observations and food for thought on how Fikih Peradaban potentially connects to the global discourse on sustainable development. I first lay out the discontents of the UN's sustainable development agenda concerning its lack of religious perspectives on development. To contextualize the article's topic within Indonesia's historical trajectory,

2 Öhlmann, Philipp et al. Religion and Sustainable Development: The "Secular Distinction" in Development Policy and its Implication for Development Cooperation with Religious Communities. *Religion & Development (3), Discussion Paper Series of the Research Programme on Religious Communities and Sustainable Development*, Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2018.

I proceed by providing a brief historical overview on the relationship between development policy and Islam in Indonesia. I then turn to discussing the limited contribution of Islam Nusantara to sustainable development drawing from my notes taken while attending a conference on "Islam Nusantara and World Peace" (February 5, 2023) in Surabaya. Finally, I unravel the potential fruitful nexus between the Fikih Peradaban movement and sustainable development referencing notes I made during the first Fikih Peradaban conference (February 6, 2023) in Surabaya and from official material that accompanied the conference.

The UN's *2030 Agenda* and its Discontents

"Development" is a fuzzy, contested, and controversial term, as reflected in the paradigm shifts global development discourse has experienced over time. Moreover, countries may have different specific homegrown perspectives on development as showcased by China, Japan, and Malaysia.[3] However, the understanding of development as "the process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced"[4] is commonly accepted. In 2015, the UN introduced the resolution *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The latter had been implemented in the year 2000 and focused on raising living standards in the Global South through the achievement of eight MDGs by 2015: 1. eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; 2. achieving universal primary education; 3. promoting gender equality and empowerment of women; 4. reducing child mortality; 5. improving maternal health; 6. combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7. ensuring environmental sustainability; 8. developing a global partnership for development. The MDGs, however, showed uneven progress and they have been criticized for their inherent limitations on content, structure, and implementation.[5]

The *2030 Agenda* set out to complete what the MDGs had not achieved. The new agenda also broke with existing developmental narratives as it follows a more holistic, inclusive, people-centered, and decolonized understanding of the term "development" targeting the Global South *and* the Global North. Its program asserts that by the year 2030, 17 interlinked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets shall be realized.[6] The SDGs are informed by a perception of development collectively addressing economic, social, and environmental dimensions and their integration to create a long-term sustainable future for humanity. The idea of sustainable development is not new: it can be traced back to

3 Derichs, Claudia. "Asiatische Zeitenwende? Von der bipolaren zur polyzentrischen Weltordnung." In Franziska Müller and Cord Jakobeit ed. *Entwicklungstheorien: weltgesellschaftliche Transformationen, entwicklungspolitische Herausforderungen, theoretische Innovationen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014), p. 42–66.

4 Cambridge Dictionary. "development," online: https://dictionary.cambridge.org-/de/worterbuch/englisch/development (accessed February 16, 2023).

5 Maya Fehling et al. "Limitations of the Millennium Development Goals: a Literature Review." *Global Public Health* 8, no. 10 (2013), p. 1109–1122.

6 See United Nations. *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations, 2015; the 17 SDGs are the following: SDG 1: No Poverty; SDG 2: Zero Hunger; SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being; SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation; SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy; SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; SDG 10: Reduced Inequality; SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 12: Responsible Production and Consumption; SDG 13: Climate Action; SDG 14: Life below Water; SDG 15: Life on Land; SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16 is often divided into SDG 16 I: Peace and SDG 16 II: Justice and Strong Institutions); SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

public discourses on resource scarcity in the eighteenth century. It resurfaced in the 1950s, then again in the 70s. Today's institutionalization of the sustainable development concept within the UN is the result of increased contemporary debate around the limits of growth and ideas of de-growth. The UN defines sustainable development as based on a 1987 UN-formulation as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[7]

Through its emphasis on regional and local development as well as the global partnerships-approach that includes exchange of expertise between global stakeholders, local nongovernmental organizations, and civil society in general, the *2030 Agenda* provides opportunity for the localization of developmental praxis. The agenda's focus on societal inclusivity and outreach to the poorest and most vulnerable groups adds to the possibility of implementing localized perspectives on development.[8] Furthermore, each UN membership country is responsible for the implementation of the SDGs on its national territory, opening up potential for context-specific sustainable development. These locally inspired approaches may be particularly relevant in the Global South. Observers of the work of Western-based international development agencies have noted that top-down "one size fits all"-policies often do not work in the Global South. Rather, it is careful context sensitivity, the consideration of local wisdom and customs, and the inclusion of local languages and terminologies as well as translation processes that may help to put global ethics, like the human rights, into effect across countries and cultures.[9]

A localized understanding of development may also help to decolonize the development narrative. The dominant perception of "development" still suffers from a Western bias, the juxtaposition of "developed" and "less developed" countries, and the asymmetrical global power hierarchies that have survived colonialism. By also explicitly targeting the Global North with their SDGs, the sustainable development agenda makes a significant step towards a decolonized understanding of development. However, the agenda has its remaining discontents and biases. Critics lament that it is still informed by a growth-oriented model of development and thus embedded in neoliberal thinking.[10] Another point of critique concerns the lack of inclusion of bottom-up and self-empowering approaches from the Global South into the UN discourse. Ubuntu, an African philosophy, ethic, or worldview, and its core concept of "I am because we are" is often referred to as a local epistemology the globalized sustainable development discourse might learn from,[11] as is the Latin American

7 United Nations/World Commission on Environment and Development. *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

8 United Nations. *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 6.

9 Christoph Grüll and Erin K. Wilson. "Universal or Particular … or Both? The Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief in Cross-Cultural Perspective." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16, no. 4 (2018), p. 88–101.

10 Susan Baker. "Sustainable Development: Between Reformist Change and Radical Transformation." In Basil Bornemann, Henrike Knappe, and Patrizia Nanz, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Democracy and Sustainability*, (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2022), p. 35–50.

11 Raphael Sartorius. Ubuntu and "Development": Decolonizing Epistemologies. *Religion & Development (2), Discussion Paper Series of the Research Programme on Religious Communities and Sustainable Development*, Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2021; Nisbert Taringa. "The Potential of Ubuntu Values for a Sustainable Ethic of the Environment and Development." *BiAS – Bible in African Studies* 25 (2020), p. 387–399.

concept of "Buen Vivir" (Good Life).[12] These alternative notions of sustainability showcase that humanity does not exist in a universe, but a pluriverse where different ideas of modernity and development coexist.[13]

The lack of acknowledgement of human diversity and non-Western epistemologies lies at the heart of the post-development critique on the *2030 Agenda*. This critique includes the questioning of the neglect of religion in global development discourse. In this context, the *2030 Agenda* has been criticized for its secular bias. Only two references to religion are found in the 35-page document of the UN's expectations: all states will promote and protect human rights regardless of, amongst other statuses, religion;[14] social, economic, and political inclusion shall be empowered and promoted irrespective of, for instance, religion.[15] The neglect of a religious dimension of development contrasts with the fact that 84 percent of the world population adhere to a faith.[16] Furthermore, intense debate on the potential contribution of faith communities to sustainable development exists. For instance, it has been argued that Islam can support sustainable development through its Islamic economic system.[17]

Existing data shows mixed results on religion's effects on sustainable development, however. The relationship between the two is complicated, complex, and ambivalent. It has been found that religious ideas and practices, religious identities and actors, and the organization of religious groups can significantly promote or hinder the process of sustainable development. Therefore, the relationship between religion and sustainable development is multidimensional: sometimes the relationship is positive and sometimes negative, sometimes strong and sometimes weak, and the relationship is often embedded in non-religious contexts. Moreover, development often affects religion, or there is a process of mutual influence.[18] These findings support the argument that a "right-sizing" of the role of religion in development is needed as religion does not exist within a vacuum, but always interrelates and interacts with other factors.[19]

As the nexus between religion and development is complex and at times unclear, it is helpful to focus on the concrete agency of religious actors in specific country contexts

12 Natasha Chassagne. "Sustaining the "Good Life": Buen Vivir as an Alternative to Sustainable Development." *Community and Development Journal* (January 2018), p. 1–19.

13 Kimberly Hutchings. "Decolonizing Global Ethics: Thinking with the Pluriverse." *Ethics & International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2019), p. 115–125; Ashish Kothari et al. ed. *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2019; Arturo Escobar. *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.; Federico Demaria and Ashish Kothari. "The Post-Development Dictionary Agenda: Paths to the Pluriverse." *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 12 (2017), p. 2588–2599.

14 United Nations. *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 6.

15 United Nations. *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 21.

16 Pew Research Center. *The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010*. Washington: Pew Research Center, 2012.

17 Mohd Zuhdi Marsuki, "Religious Agendas towards Sustainable Development: An Islamic Perspective." *Malaysian Journal of Science and Technology Studies* (January 2009), p. 22–38.

18 Matthias Basedau, Simone Gobien and Sebastian Prediger. The Ambivalent Role of Religion for Sustainable Development: A Review of the Empirical Evidence. *GIGA Working Paper no. 297*. Hamburg: German Institute for Global and Area Studies, 2017.

19 Peter Mandaville. "Right-Sizing Religion and Religious Engagement in Diplomacy and Development." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19 (sup. 1; 2021), p. 92–97.

and whether and how these actors engage for and contribute to sustainable development. Religious actors may unconsciously support sustainable development simply by practicing their already institutionalized social work which often converges with the objectives of the *2030 Agenda*. Against this backdrop, a comparative analysis of the activities of faith-based nongovernmental organizations (FBOs) in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, India, Indonesia, and Sudan in 2021–2022 in selected SDG-fields (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being; SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities; SDG 13: Climate Action; SDG 16 I: Peace; SDG 16 II: Justice and Strong Institutions) concludes that religious actors engage in many of these fields. While key activities and the level of professionalization vary between countries and FBOs, most of the 55 analyzed FBOs are highly engaged in contributing to social, economic, and environmental development. The top three SDGs across countries are: SDG 4 (44 out of 55 FBOs active in this field), SDG 16 I (40 out of 55), and SDG 10 (35 out of 55). The FBOs' engagement for sustainable development correlates with the political context of a country. The higher the civil and political liberties—according to the Freedom House Index 2021—the stronger do FBOs work towards sustainable development. Therefore, in Burkina Faso, India, and Indonesia, FBOs show a qualitatively stronger involvement in SDG-relevant activities than in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan. In Ethiopia and Sudan, political instability during the period of the study additionally hampered the quality, outreach, and effect of religious FBOs' sustainable development work.[20]

Concerning the Indonesian case study, the comparative analysis confirms this country's high level of "civil Islam."[21] The two largest and oldest Islamic FBOs, NU and Muhammadiyah, have established professional facilities that, since long, offer a wide range of SDG-related social services such as education institutes with secular study programs (SDG 4), health care facilities (SDG 3), and wide-ranging philanthropical support for the poor and marginalized (SDG 10).[22] An emerging trend of both FBOs is environmental protection and climate action (SDG 13) through initiatives such as awareness-raising workshops and freely downloadable publications on the topic, garbage collection campaigns, the establishment of eco-mosques and eco-*pesantren*, disaster management facilities, or the publication of so-called "green fatwas" that call for the protection of the planet.[23] This environmental spirit is also reflected in the slogan *Merawat jagat, Membangun peradaban!* ("Caring for the Earth, Developing Civilization!") that will accompany the upcoming festivities of NU in 2026, the year that marks NU's 100th anniversary according to the Gregorian calendar. The slogan is a discursive tool for mobilizing NU followers and wider society to engage for the

20 Amanda tho Seeth and Matthias Basedau. Beeinflusst Religionsfreiheit die Handlungsfähigkeit religiöser Nichtregierungsorganisationen für die Erreichung der SDGs? *GIGA Brief*, Hamburg: German Institute for Global and Area Studies, 2023; unpublished data from GIGA research project "Freedom and Development? Religious Actors, Freedom of Religion and Belief, and Sustainable Development."

21 Robert Hefner. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

22 Richma Sholawati et al. "Pengelolaan Dana ZIS Untuk Meningkatkan Kesejahteraan Mustahik Dalam Mewujudkan Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." *Proceedings of Islamic Economics, Business, and Philanthropy* 1, no. 2 (2022), p. 522–541.

23 On NU: Sarah Anabarja and Ahmad Safril Mubah. "The Islamic Environmentalism in Eco-Pesantren Initiatives: Integrating the Sustainable Development Values in Islamic Boarding School." *Journal of International Studies on Energy Affairs* 2, no. 1 (2021), p. 75–90; Moh Mufid. "Green Fatwas in Bahtsul Masā'il: Nahdlatul Ulama's Response to the Discourse of Environmental Crisis in Indonesia." *al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial* 15 no. 2 (2020), p. 173–200.

achievement of the UN's SDGs.[24] Furthermore, both NU and Muhammadiyah contribute to SDG 16(I) (Peace) through their engagement towards the mainstreaming of moderate and peaceful interpretations of Islam, such as Islam Wasathiyah, Islam Berkemajuan, Islam Nusantara, and, most recently, Fikih Peradaban.[25]

As international stakeholders have become convinced that religion will continue to play a key role in social and political affairs, particularly in the Global South, they increasingly opt for FBOs as partners, powerful for implementing development projects. For instance, in 2016 the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) launched within its Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) an office for the multilateral network International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) "to highlight religiously motivated actors as positive forces towards sustainable development."[26] The same year, the BMZ published a strategy paper explaining its approach towards religious actors in development cooperation. The paper outlines the importance of including religious actors as partners in development strategies, provided these are "change agents" who adhere to the values and principles of human rights, focus on improving the living conditions of society, possess the competence and capacity to implement the desired measures, sustain a wide societal network and outreach, and enjoy societal trust as a moral authority. Criteria for the exclusion of religious actors as partners within development cooperation are any kind of discrimination and missionary activity.[27] Elsewhere in the Global North, the rethinking of the religion-development nexus started much earlier. In 1998, the president of the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury initiated the World Faiths Development Dialogue, followed by significantly increased funding of FBOs by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). Then, in 2009, the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations for Sustainable Development was formed.[28]

The widely held perception of a current mainstreaming of the religious factor into international development cooperation has been questioned, however. First of all, there is evidence that international agencies are not all aware of the potential religious actors have as development partners. Many religious actors stay disconnected from, and unconscious of, the global sustainable development discourse, leaving their resources and potential to contribute untouched.[29] Moreover, there has been criticism that despite the growing

24 Mitsuo Nakamura. "Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia: A New Era with the 'New Gus Dur'." *Islam Nusantara: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture* 4, no. 1 (January 2023), p. 19–27.

25 Amanda tho Seeth and Matthias Basedau. Beeinflusst Religionsfreiheit die Handlungsfähigkeit religiöser Nichtregierungsorganisationen für die Erreichung der SDGs? *GIGA Brief*, Hamburg: German Institute for Global and Area Studies, 2023.

26 Ulrich Nitschke and Bennet Gabriel. "The International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development/PaRD: A Global and Inclusive Partnership to Harness the Positive Impact of Religion in Development and Humanitarian Assistance." *The Ecumenical Review* (2017), p. 379. Indonesia is increasingly getting involved in PaRD: in 2022, the PaRD Annual Forum was hosted on Bali; in 2023, Indonesia, as the first government of the Global South, became PaRD member.

27 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Religious Communities as Partners for Development Cooperation. *BMZ Paper 02/Strategy Paper*. Bonn: Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (2016), p. 11–12.

28 Paul Freston. "Religion and the Sustainable Development Goals." In: Simon Dalby et al. ed. *Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: Global Governance Challenges*. (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 154.

29 Emma Tomalin and Jörg Haustein. Keeping Faith in 2030? Religions and the Sustainable Development

inclusion of religious actors into global development policy, the latter insists on a distinction between the religious (or the sacred/spiritual) sphere and the secular (or profane). In this dualistic framework, the concept of development is still situated in solely the secular sphere. This distinction assumes that the activities of religious communities can be separated into spiritual and non-spiritual activities. As a consequence, global development policy tends to focus on the means by which religious actors' non-spiritual competences can contribute to realizing predefined secular development goals, thus tending to functionalize religious actors to work within a secular development framework. This approach neglects that for many religious actors, spiritual development is a central element within their larger concept of development. By leaving out references to spiritually, belief systems, norms, ideas, values, and aesthetics, powerful bottom-up approaches of development that suit local contexts are undermined.[30]

A historical look at the Indonesian case study exemplifies that religion can be a driver of and an important element within developmental processes, depending on the development narratives propagated by the political forces in power as well as the agency of civil actors. As a result of its mercurial political history, Indonesian society has experienced a tense relationship between development policy and religion, oscillating between the inclusion and exclusion of Islam as a locally rooted source of progress given that political actors have made development of society a central concern throughout Indonesian history. The following presents a non-exhaustive and selective brief historical account on the nexus and tensions between Islam and development narratives in the Indonesian context. As the field of education constitutes a key element in development discourses, I particularly touch upon how education, especially Islamic higher education, has been managed by the political authorities. This historical overview provides the contextual backdrop for the currently ongoing renegotiation of the relationship between Islam and development in Indonesia. NU is pushing forward this renegotiation and I argue that Fikih Peradaban presents a middle-ground development paradigm that connects local Islamic and global secular epistemologies, values, and ethics, and their objectives.

Islam and Development Policy in Indonesia: A Selective Historical Sketch

Under Sukarno and Suharto, development became the key political theme and Islam was incorporated in a pragmatic manner. Sukarno (1945–65), facing state- and nation-building challenges, had to carefully invoke Islam to mobilize the Muslims of the Indonesian archipelago for his political projects while making sure to keep control over Islam. First and foremost he promoted a developmental nationalism that aimed at economic independence and the construction of a technical infrastructure to interconnect all regions and islands and unite the nation.[31] As a bottom-up grassroots developmental action he promoted *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) to be practiced in villages and neighborhoods. Sukarno

Goals. *Policy Brief (4), Research Programme on Religious Communities and Sustainable Development*, Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2021.

30 Philipp Öhlmann et al. Religion and Sustainable Development: The "Secular Distinction" in Development Policy and its Implication for Development Cooperation with Religious Communities. *Religion & Development (3), Discussion Paper Series of the Research Programme on Religious Communities and Sustainable Development*, Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2018.

31 Joshua Barker. "Beyond Bandung: Developmental Nationalism and (Multi)Cultural Nationalism in Indonesia." *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2008), p. 521–540.

saw universities as concrete development actors as reflected in the third principle of the concept *Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi* (three pillars of higher education): *Pengabdian pada Masyarakat* (service to society).[32]

To include an Islamic notion into the campus-based development agenda, Sukarno established several state-sponsored Islamic higher education institutes: the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) with several campuses. For this Islamic academia, Sukarno popularized the idea of *ulama intelek*, that is, Islamic scholars capable of combining classical Islamic and modern Western epistemologies. In doing so, he emphasized the need for pragmatic application of Islamic academic thought for resolving contemporary real-world problems and empowering the young state and its populace in a patriotic manner. Sukarno aimed for establishing a competitive, forward-oriented nation and a modern nationalist ethos which Islamic intellectuals had to represent by accepting the supremacy of the state ideology, Pancasila. By the inclusion of Islamic academia as a development actor, he also sought to counter Islamist forces who fought for the establishment of an Islamic state, as well as the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which made vigorous use of education institutes to teach communism-based ideas of development and modernity to empower the lower class.[33] The, until today, deeply established Indonesian tradition of sending students and staff from Islamic academia to Western countries to "modernize" Islam and Islamic scholarship, can be traced back to Sukarno's presidency although he followed a leftist and anti-imperialist rhetoric. In this context, the first cohorts of Indonesian Muslim students were sent to the Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS) at McGill University in Montreal in the 1950s. This institute aimed to "modernize" Islam and Muslim elites and had a developmentalist mission. It had strong effects on the dissemination of a forward-looking and pragmatic Islam in Indonesia.[34]

Suharto (1966–98) built on several of Sukarno's Islamic developmental legacies but twisted them to his advantages. Indeed, his New Order was a "developmental regime." He legitimized his authoritarian rule through the achievement of developmental goals, a means supported by the international environment of the Cold War. Development policy was articulated in the five-year *Repelita* (development plans) and gave priority to high economic growth through agricultural development and industrialization, and by opening up for international investments. Over time, significant changes in development policy concerning growth and distribution policies emerged, ranging from liberalism during the economic recovery of 1966–69, to nationalism, socialism, and familism during the oil boom of 1974–82, liberalism during the structural adjustment period of 1983–88, and nationalism and familism during the high-growth period of 1989–96.[35]

Suharto made rationalist Islam a tool for his national developmentalist agenda *Pembangunan Nasional* which aimed at a thorough societal modernization after the Western, capitalist model. Interestingly, in contrast to the Indonesian term *perkembangan*, which translates as development associated with flowering and expansion, *pembangunan* is

32 Gerhard Junge. *The Universities of Indonesia: History and Structure*, (Bremen: Bremen Economic Research Society, 1973), p. 87.

33 Ruth McVey. "Teaching Modernity: The PKI as an Educational Institution." *Indonesia* 50 (1990), p. 5–27.

34 David Webster. *Fire and the Full Moon: Canada and Indonesia in a Decolonizing World*, (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 2009), p. 92–100.

35 Koichi Kawamura. Indonesia's Development Policy in Historical Perspective. *Background Paper no. 2*. (Jakarta: Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2008), p. 2–6.

more holistic as it means development as a physical act of building or constructing as well as a mental process of awakening or becoming conscious.[36] The term *pembangunan* was made a key narrative of the Suharto regime, as seen in the naming of all cabinets over its 32 years of rule as "Development Cabinets;" Suharto himself claimed to be Indonesia's *Bapak Pembangunan* (Father of Development).

Suharto constructed the link between Islam and development by several measures also via the Islamic intellectual sphere. Generally, in his view, university graduates, academics, and intellectuals had to reproduce a modern, capitalist development outlook. Against this backdrop, members of the so-called "Berkeley mafia," a cohort of US-educated, Indonesian economists, were given key technocratic positions in Indonesia. In the Islamic intellectual milieu, Suharto enlarged the state Islamic higher education system by building new campuses across the country and recruited its alumni to serve in schools and the state bureaucracy. The aim of the strategic production of an official Islamic intellectual discourse on developmental issues at the Islamic campuses was to help build a modernized Indonesian society in line with Western modernity. For this purpose, Suharto knit close ties between Indonesian Islamic academia and Western campuses, particularly through intense exchange with McGill University and the University of Chicago. In the 1970s, the latter initiated an "Islam and Change Project" which analyzed how Muslims across the globe responded to modernization, and Indonesian Muslim students were offered scholarships to study in Chicago. The "Chicago School" of the study of Islam had a strong impact on Indonesian Islamic intellectualism through its promotion of the contextualization of Qur'anic statements for contemporary application.[37] In the last period of his rule, together with Minister of Religious Affairs Munawir Sjadzali (1983–93), Suharto promoted the idea of *ulama plus*—Islamic intellectuals with a broad range of expertise in religious as well as worldly matters. In 1990, the regime backed the establishment of Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia (Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals, ICMI) to spread the favored development-oriented, middle-class "bourgeois Islam." The spread of regime-supported Islamic banking in the 1990s was another specifically economic dimension of the deepening relationship between Islam and development under Suharto.

The Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 and the subsequent breakdown of Indonesian authoritarianism in 1998 were game-changers for the Islam-development nexus as they provided leeway for the redefinition of development. In this context, from 1998 onwards, the public slogan *pembangunan* was replaced by *reformasi* (reform period) and its pro-democratic agenda. Civil groups now enjoyed the liberty to promote their particular understandings of development, resulting in the diversification and competition of developmental ideas. This not only included openings for societal groups and reformist politicians who pushed forward stronger social protection, welfare schemes, and safety nets for the greater masses of the Indonesian population, which have become a central feature of the post-1998 state.[38] It also led to the further spread and growth of Islamic banking

36 Joshua Barker. "Beyond Bandung: Developmental Nationalism and (Multi)Cultural Nationalism in Indonesia." *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2008), p. 523.

37 Megan Brankley Abbas. "Between Western Academia and Pakistan: Fazlur Rahman and the Fight for Fusionism." *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 3 (2017), p. 736–68.

38 Eve Warburton. "A New Developmentalism in Indonesia?" In Hal Hill and Siwage Dharma Negara, ed. *The Indonesian Economy in Transition: Policy Changes in the Jokowi Era and Beyond*. (Singapore: Yusof Ishak Institute,

and Islamic microfinancing programs as alternative and ethically framed development approaches[39] that gained prominence due to the generally greater societal identification with Islam and Islamic consumption patterns. Finally, the Islamic higher education system gained status by the introduction of state-funded Islamic universities with the mandate to also offer non-religious faculties, thus placing them into direct competition with secular campuses.

However, a focus on developing the country to make it competitive within the global capitalist economy has remained a core focus for policy makers. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–14) launched a massive infrastructure program that developed a number of power plants and roads across the archipelago to improve connectivity in the country. While in the second term of his presidency, Yudhoyono lost his focus on infrastructure development, his successor Joko Widodo (2014–24) re-intensified and extended existing infrastructure plans targeting investment into four key sectors: the maritime sector, food self-sufficiency, roads and railways, and increase of energy supply.[40] Widodo's development policy which created an Indonesian "economic nationalism" has been labeled "new developmentalism," referring to an activist, intervening state with a strong will to move up global rankings.[41]

The countrywide infrastructural modernization initiated by Yudhoyono and Widodo has been accompanied by a foreign policy approach aiming to promote Indonesia as a modern, moderate, and democratic nation that may serve as a role model for other Muslim-majority countries. Both governments have seen Islam, and especially a moderate "Indonesian" Islam, as a progressive force that has the potential to contribute to developing Indonesia as well as the global Muslim community. As has been the case throughout Indonesian history, Islamic universities are given a crucial role in this developmental policy outlook with the building of new international campuses such as the Universitas Islam International Indonesia (UIII) in Depok. Islamic academics act as diplomats tasked to communicate the developed image of Indonesia and its Muslim society to the world. Furthermore, this soft power approach deeply interacts with the increasing global outlook of NU and Muhammadiyah and their specific concepts of moderate Islam, such as Islam Nusantara and Islam Berkemajuan.[42] By drawing on them, NU and Muhammadiyah have shown concrete efforts to foster peace in Indonesia as well as abroad.[43] Islam Berkemajuan

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2019), p. 44–45.

39 Umar Juoro. "The Development of Islamic Banking in the Post-Crisis Indonesian Economy" In Greg Fealy and Sally White, ed. *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), p. 229–250.

40 Wilmar Salim and Siwage Dharma Negara. "Infrastructure Development under the Jokowi Administration: Progress, Challenges and Policies." In Hal Hill and Siwage Dharma Negara, ed. *The Indonesian Economy in Transition: Policy Changes in the Jokowi Era and Beyond*, (Singapore: Yusof Ishak Institute, 2019), p. 239–265.

41 Eve Warburton. "A New Developmentalism in Indonesia?" In Hal Hill and Siwage Dharma Negara, ed. *The Indonesian Economy in Transition: Policy Changes in the Jokowi Era and Beyond*, (Singapore: Yusof Ishak Institute, 2019), p. 37–39.

42 Amanda tho Seeth. Indonesia's Islamic Peace Diplomacy: Crafting a Role Model for Moderate Islam. GIGA Focus Asien 2, Hamburg: German Institute for Global and Area Studies, 2023; Delphine Allès and Amanda tho Seeth. "From Consumption to Production: The Extroversion of Indonesian Islamic Education." *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and National Studies of Southeast Asia* 9, no 2 (2021): p. 145–61; James Bourke Hoesterey. "Public Diplomacy and the Global Dissemination of 'Moderate Islam'." In Robert W. Hefner ed. *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Indonesia*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 406–416; Delphine Allès. Transnational Islamic Actors and Indonesia's Foreign Policy: Transcending the State, London and New York: Routledge, 2015.

43 Muhammad Najib Azca et al., *Dua Menyemai Damai: Peran dan Kontribusi Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul*

in particular manifests developmental notions with its forward-oriented, progressive outlook that includes both economic progress and improvements in social welfare as key elements of its agenda.[44]

Islam Nusantara and Sustainable Development: Contributions and Limits

In contrast to Islam Berkemajuan, NU's Islam Nusantara refers less directly to development. While NU is a strongly engaged developmental actor in many fields—such as education, health, and environmental protection—its developmental work is not necessarily based within the Islam Nusantara narrative. However, NU's engagement for peace is deeply embedded within the Islam Nusantara discourse and therefore, Islam Nusantara is strongly connected to SDG 16 I (Peace), which aims to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies."[45] Peace is a central element of sustainable development and provides the basis for the achievement of all other SDGs. As Islam Nusantara promotes an understanding of Islam that is inclusive of local religious interpretations and cultural practices, it supports both diversity and a peaceful coexistence of religions and beliefs—direct contributions to SDG 16 I. NU consciously deploys the concept of Islam Nusantara to discursively counter intolerant, radical, and extremist Islamic groups in Indonesia as well as at the global scale.[46] Moreover, Islam Nusantara has become an integral element of Indonesia's wider public diplomacy strategy and serves to internationally brand the country as a moderate and peaceful Muslim-majority nation.[47]

While the Islam Nusantara concept can be identified as a specific local-Indonesian Islamic approach that underpins a peaceful development of society, it also has its limits within the broader sustainable development agenda wherein SDGs cover a wider range of developmental issues. Sustainable development is defined by the intersection of social, economic, and environmental development. As Islam Nusantara is a very discourse-based concept and focuses on interfaith peace, it effectively contributes to the social dimension of development yet offers no concrete approaches for economic and environmental development. Furthermore, through its very localized, Indonesian conception, Islam Nusantara is limited in its international appeal and practicability. The problem of appeal and practicability also concerns Islam Nusantara's perception within the archipelago: it comes with an inherent Java-centrism which makes it less attractive for Muslims based on

Ulama dalam Perdamaian dan Demokrasi. Yogyakarta: Pusat Studi Keamanan dan Perdamaian Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2019.

44 Muhammadiyah. *Risalah Islam Berkemajuan: Muktamar Muhammadiyah Ke-48, Surakarta*, (Jakarta: Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2022), p. 46–49 and p. 57–58; Mark Woodward. "Islamicate Civilization and National Islams: Islam Nusantara, West Java and Sundanese Culture." *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 9, no. 2 (2019), p. 175.

45 United Nations. *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 14.

46 Leonie Schmidt. "Cyberwarriors and Counterstars: Contesting Religious Radicalism and Violence on Indonesian Social Media." *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5 (2018), p. 32–67.

47 James Bourke Hoesterey. "Public Diplomacy and the Global Dissemination of Moderate Islam", In Robert W. Hefner ed. *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Indonesia*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 406–416; Delphine Allès. *Transnational Islamic Actors and Indonesia's Foreign Policy: Transcending the State*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015.

other islands and within cultures other than the Javanese.[48]

The role of Islam Nusantara in and beyond Indonesia is further complicated by the lack of a clear definition and conceptualization. This point was raised by Martin van Bruinessen, Professor Emeritus of Comparative Studies of Modern Muslim Societies at Utrecht University, in his keynote speech "The Character of Islam Nusantara as a Scientific Paradigm: Historical Tracking of Sufism, Fiqh, and Local Traditions" at the international seminar Islam Nusantara and World Peace on February 5, 2023 at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya. According to van Bruinessen, the phenomenon of Islam Nusantara may be roughly compared to the idea of an "European Islam" or "Euro-Islam," introduced in 1992 by Bassam Tibi and later rearticulated by Tariq Ramadan, to provide a template on how Muslims could integrate into European culture while keeping Islam relevant for their daily life in the Western context. However, Euro-Islam became a highly contested term as its interpretation ranges from a secularized understanding of Islam to one that is based in the sharia and Islamic ethics;[49] it has now vanished from European public discourse, showcasing how quickly such concepts may appear and disappear.

The core problem with Islam Nusantara, van Bruinessen argued in his keynote speech, is that it has not yet presented a conceptualization of itself. This circumstance leaves the boundaries of Islam Nusantara unclear. Van Bruinessen stressed that a conceptualization is necessary as the term has long existed within the archipelago, used by many different actors, not only of NU background. For instance, Azyumardi Azra (1955–2022), a Muhammadiyah affiliate, was one of the first book authors referring to an "Islam Nusantara" existing in Indonesia, although Azra did not specifically link it to NU.[50] Hence, van Bruinessen asked who may call himself or herself an Islamic scholar representing Islam Nusantara, and on what basis? He went on to ask what exactly is the contribution of the Islam Nusantara project to Indonesian society? Van Bruinessen proceeded to elaborate that a starting point could be to acknowledge that Islam in Indonesia has specific features due to the history of its localized Islamization process. As a result of the localized Islamization process, two dimensions of Islam in Indonesia are identifiable: first, local culture is used to express Islam, which is seen, for instance, in the strong Sufi and *pesantren* tradition; second, Islam links up to debates on human rights, the protection of minorities, and gender equality.

These two dimensions may provide a base for the much-needed conceptualization of Islam Nusantara.[51] In a following panel at the Surabaya seminar, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, head of NU's Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumberdaya Manusia (Institute for Research and Development of Human Resources, Lakpesdam), affirmed van Bruinessen's observations on the fuzziness of the Islam Nusantara concept. He posed the question whether "Nusantara" is supposed to be understood as an adjective (*Islam yang bersifat Nusantara*: "Islam with

48 Mark Woodward. "Islam Nusantara: A Semantic and Symbolic Analysis." *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 6, no. 2 (2017), p. 181–198.

49 Moch Faisal Karim. "Integrating European Muslims Through Discourse? Understanding the Development and Limitations of Euro-Islam in Europe." *Int. Migration & Integration* 18 (2017), p. 993–1011.

50 Azyumardi Azra. *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global dan Lokal*. Bandung: Mizan, 2002.

51 Author's notes on Martin van Bruinessen's keynote speech "The Character of Islam Nusantara as a Scientific Paradigm: Historical Tracking of Sufism, Fiqh, and Local Traditions" at the international seminar Islam Nusantara and World Peace on February 5, 2023, at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya; author's attendance at conference.

Nusantara characteristics") or a noun referring to a location (*Islam di Nusantara*: "Islam in the Indonesian archipelago"). Also, is Islam Nusantara an ideal existing in the imagination (*Islam Nusantara sebagai cita-cita*), or a concrete project to be achieved? If it is a project to be realized, the project's measures are not clear. Also, according to Abshar-Abdalla, NU's relationship to humankind is not yet well articulated and, he went on to say, NU should avoid giving room for a dichotomy of religion vs. the common (*agama vs. umum*) and for theocentrism (*teosentrisme*). Instead, what NU needs to focus on in its public discourse are anthropocentrism (*antroposentrisme*) and a humanitarian or humanist Islam (*al-Islam al-insaniyah*), or Islamic humanism, as has already been promoted by such figures like Gus Dur, Gus Mus, and Gus Yahya.[52]

I would like to argue that it is exactly with such a widened scope that consciously includes more general and nonreligion-based values like humanity, humanism, and human rights that an Islamic concept has the potential to more broadly connect and contribute to the global sustainable development agenda beyond SDG 16 I alone. Purely religiously defined concepts, such as Islam Nusantara, come with narrow agendas that focus on religious aspects; they lack the appeal and power to lift up peoples' life conditions in worldly matters: social welfare, health, nutrition, poverty eradication, and job access.

Instead, it seems promising that the linking up of a religion to larger value systems with a global approach, like humanism and the human rights, not only broadens its domestic and international acceptance and appeal; it also facilitates direct engagement with a wide range of worldly problems and challenges impeding humankind to live "a good life." As ethics like humanism and the human rights aspire to transcend religious, cultural, social, and national boundaries, they may serve as a moral compass for FBOs' religion-motivated development agendas. Humanism-infused religious programs also facilitate development cooperation and partnerships across religions and nations. A humanist approach does not imply religious actors need to neglect their faith in development work. It rather calls for a recontextualization of said faith within a broader humanity-based frame that guides developmental action for all, thus implying the concrete identification and articulation of humanist values within a religion.

With his comments on a de-emphasizing of religion for the purpose of strengthening a humanist Islam, or Islamic humanism, Abshar-Abdalla hinted at the core message NU was going to publicly spread the following day by the opening of the international conference on Fikih Peradaban (Islamic Jurisprudence for Civilization). The newly created concept of Fikih Peradan needs to be understood as a revision, extension, and adaptation of the initial moderate Islam Nusantara idea, enabling Islam to better contribute to humans' "good life" across the globe. It thus has developmental notions and holds potential for effectively speaking to sustainable development, especially because it is based on the effective tool of Islamic legal reasoning and the articulation of Islamic law. In the following, I argue that Fikih Peradaban positions itself at a middle ground between local and global development paradigms, as it combines Islam with secular objectives and humanist values.

Fikih Peradaban as a Middle Ground between Local and Global Development

52 Author's notes on Ulil Abshar-Abdalla's speech at the international seminar Islam Nusantara and World Peace on February 5, 2023 at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya.

Paradigms

On February 6, 2023, NU celebrated its 100th anniversary in Surabaya.[53] On the occasion of these festivities, NU hosted an international conference on "Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization: Assessing the Legitimacy of the United Nations Charter from Islamic Law," attended by high-profile authorities from across the Islamic world. The conference aimed at publicly positioning NU as a supporter of the UN and its Charter, which emphasizes international peace and cooperation. NU thereby acknowledged the political notion of the nation-state, the existing global political system, and the human rights while rejecting the transnational idea of the caliphate and any alternative Islamist political order.

The conference, which was carried out predominantly in Arabic, constituted an Indonesian kick-off to mainstreaming a peaceful outlook vis-à-vis the international order within the Islamic world. The invitation of international Islamic authorities to Surabaya was the outcome of a self-critical internal NU debate contending that existing Islamic jurisprudence is not in line with the realities of the modern world. According to NU, conventional Islamic jurisprudence has problematic aspects that nurture intolerance, conflict, and violence, particularly between Muslims and non-Muslims. NU argues that it urgently needs reform from within to adapt to the circumstances of twenty-first-century life and to embrace humanist values. Islam, per the conference's narrative, must contribute to solution-finding for today's global challenges instead of being perceived by non-Muslims as a hindrance to peace and prosperity between people and nations.

Against this backdrop, at the 2023 conference in Surabaya NU's leadership introduced to its international Muslim guests the concept of Fikih Peradaban (Islamic Jurisprudence of Civilization) as a new moderate approach within Islamic law that shall contribute to the peace and well-being of all humanity, regardless of religious affiliation. Most centrally, Fikih Peradaban is based in the values of the UN Charter, i.e., peace, freedom, state sovereignty, human equality, and human rights. Furthermore, from NU's standpoint, Islamic rulings that run counter to these aims shall lose legitimacy. NU announced that, as the organization steps into its second century of existence, it is seeking to take over greater responsibility in disseminating a peaceful Islam globally—and that the only effective means of reaching this goal is through reforming Islamic jurisprudence.[54]

I would like to argue that within the context of sustainable development, Fikih Peradaban is an important advancement of Islam Nusantara for two reasons. First, Fikih Peradaban has the potential to reach out to a wider society as it aims to contribute to all humanity's well-being, regardless of religious belief. Second, its aspiration to reform Islamic law goes beyond mere talk only. Instead it seeks to reform Islamic law aims at the implementation of a better rule of law—legitimized by Islamic legal reasoning—in alignment with the values and ethics of the UN Charter, thus further enabling a good life for all. For Fikih Peradaban, Islamic law thereby serves as a tool for creating better life conditions globally. Indeed, law has a crucial role within the context of sustainable development as the SDG-relevant engagement of FBOs depends not only on societal norms, but more importantly

53 NU was founded in 1926, but the recent anniversary is in line with the Islamic calendar.

54 Amanda tho Seeth. Indonesia's Islamic Peace Diplomacy: Crafting a Role Model for Moderate Islam. *GIGA Focus Asien 2*, Hamburg: German Institute for Global and Area Studies, 2023.

on the legal situation of a state and its political and civil liberties: the higher the degree of political and civil liberties in a country, the more FBOs engage in sustainable development activities, and they do so on a qualitatively higher and more professionalized level.[55]

By linking itself to such global institutions as the UN that stand in for freedom and human rights, Fikih Peradaban can, moreover, easily connect to global development paradigms, like the *2030 Agenda*, while fusing in local Islamic perspectives on developmental objectives. It thus can be argued that Fikih Peradaban positions itself at a middle ground between local and global development paradigms, thereby creating a third developmental paradigm that is "in-between."

Issues of development and the promotion of "a good life for all" feature in both the UN Charter and the evolving Fikih Peradaban discourse. Both discourses reflect approaches of a holistic, sustainable development and its economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Amongst others, the UN Charter defines the purpose of the UN as:

> "To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."[56]

Also, the UN is committed to promoting:

> "a. higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; b. solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation; and c. universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."[57]

In the opening speech to the Fikih Peradaban conference, apart from the frequent mentioning of the importance of peace between religions and states, Indonesia's Vice President Ma'ruf Amin referred several times to the issue of development. For instance, he stated that by Allah "humans are given the task (mandate) to manage and build the earth and its civilization;"[58] the human is thus a "*mu'ammirin* (a doer of development)."[59] He went on to say humans must react to grievances everywhere in the world, because "if there is chaos in one place, it will affect humans in other places;"[60] that the world is currently witnessing "a new phase of human civilization, mainly due to the development of science

55 Amanda tho Seeth and Matthias Basedau. Beeinflusst Religionsfreiheit die Handlungsfähigkeit religiöser Nichtregierungsorganisationen für die Erreichung der SDGs? *GIGA Brief*, Hamburg: German Institute for Global and Area Studies, 2023.

56 United Nations. *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*, (San Francisco: United Nations, 1945), chapter 1, article 3.

57 United Nations. *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*, (San Francisco: United Nations, 1945), chapter 9, article 55.

58 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia, *Pidato Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia Pada Muktamar Internasional I Fiqih Peradaban Dalam Rangka Peringatan Satu Abad Nahdlatul Ulama: Kontekstualisasi Pandangan Keagamaan Terhadap Realitas Peradaban Di Era Modern*, (Surabaya, February 6, 2023), p. 91.

59 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023, p. 91.

60 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023, p. 92.

and technology that spreads rapidly throughout the world, in line with globalization."[61] He continued, noting that as a consequence "science and technology must be developed again among Muslims"[62] as "science is the key to civilization."[63] However, he clarified, civilization is not only a ratio-guided progress in matters of science; from the Islamic perspective, civilization has "a divine dimension (*rabbaniyah*/theocentric) and at the same time a human dimension (*insaniyyah*/ anthropocentric)."[64]

As Amin postulated that "In an Islamic perspective, the UN is an institution that has legitimacy,"[65] it can be inferred that the UN's *2030 Agenda* is a legitimate developmental project from an Islamic point of view and deserves support by the Muslim community. In his closing words, Amin said that as the world is confronted with enormous challenges such as poverty and climate change, Islamic scholars must engage to solve these problems.[66] By this Amin, albeit indirectly, addressed SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). As of my observation, Fikih Peradaban offers a potentially useful divine dimension and divine framing of development work. This is reflected in Fikih Peradaban's directive that "The flexible characteristics of fiqh require new fatwas (laws) that are able to respond to the dynamics of society and the times."[67] Amin claimed that "in general, there is compatibility between the principles of modern international law and the principles of Islamic law, especially in the form of treaties, (*'uhud* and *mawathiq*), customs (*'adat*), and ratio (*'aql*)."[68] These takes on Islamic law provide significant leeway for linking up to issues of development, as brought forward by the UN, and adding a religious perspective.

As the conference continued, the speeches presented by Islamic authorities from Indonesia and across the world (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, several African countries, USA, Italy) built on the consensus of the potential compatibility of international secular law and Islamic law—provided that the latter is flexible and based on the premise that all people are interconnected by their shared human identity and value. As speaker Alwi Abdurrahman Shihab declared: "We need rules, the law, and a social system as humans are egoistic."[69] The speakers acknowledged the legitimacy of the UN Charter from an Islamic perspective and emphasized the need that Islamic scholars make use of Islamic jurisprudence to contribute to improving the life conditions of all humans. The speakers often referred to *hadith*-based sayings: "We are all in the same boat—but where are we heading to?" and "We are all in the same boat called planet earth. However, the one who creates a hole in the boat makes everyone sink."[70] In his contribution, Alwi Abdurrahman Shihab particularly referred to the relationship between Fikih Peradaban and development. He declared that a reassessment of Islamic jurisprudence is needed as fear and poverty impede the prosperity of human civilization. By catering for the equality of all humans,

61 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023, p.95.
62 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023, p. 97.
63 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023, p. 98.
64 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023, p. 94.
65 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023, p. 112.
66 Author's notes on the translator's simultaneous translation of Arabic into English at the conference; the speech was originally given in Arabic and is reprinted in Arabic, Indonesian and English in Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023; author's attendance at conference.
67 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023, p. 80.
68 Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia 2023, p. 110.
69 Author's notes on the speech of Alwi Abdurrahman Shihab at the conference.
70 Author's notes on the conference.

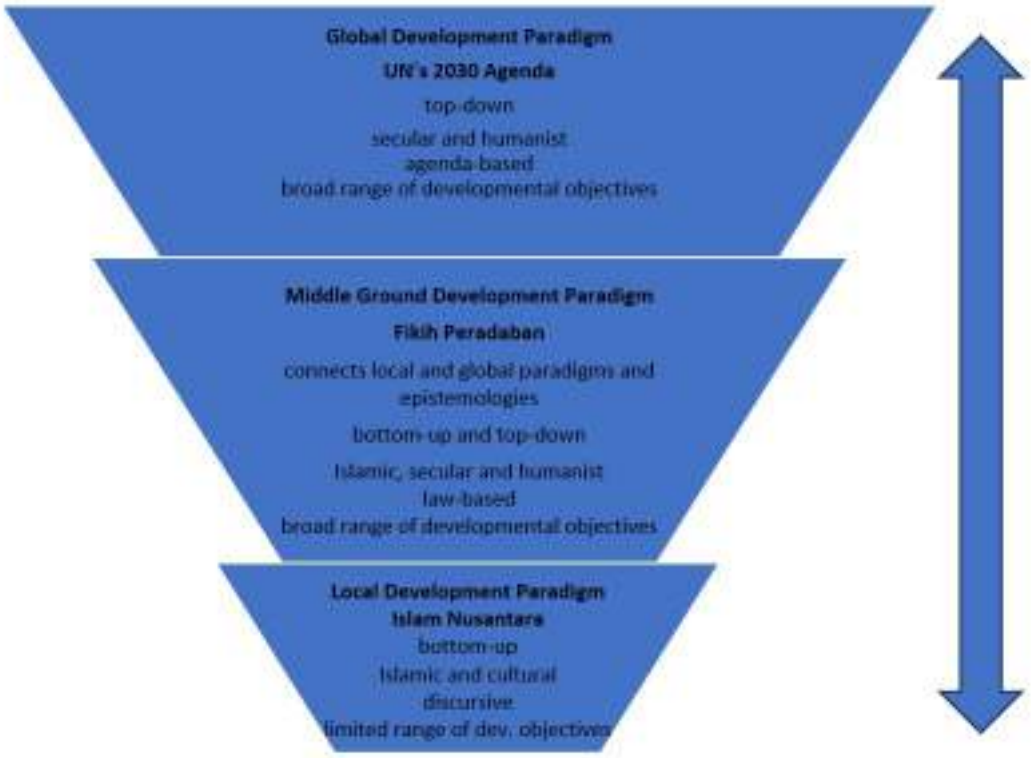
Fikih Peradaban has the potential to create social safety, which will then result in social and economic development.[71]

In their speeches, the conference speakers pursued a narrative that emphasized the need for peaceful relationships between all humans across the globe. This narrative focused on both Islam as a religion of peace, and on the human identity all people on earth share. I would like to argue, based on speakers' statements such as "human identity is the most important identity"[72] or "we all have responsibility as global citizens,"[73] that a certain de-emphasizing of religion as a central marker of identity was observable at the conference. The highlighting of human identity connects to the well-established pro-humanist position of Gus Dur and contemporary NU-authorities like Ulil Abshar-Abdalla and Gus Yahya. As of my personal assessment, the Fikih Peradaban conference thus provided an international platform for a discursive strengthening of an Islamic approach towards humanism. In practice, humanist Islam, or Islamic humanism, must be reflected and manifested in Islamic law—which is possible by rooting it within the humanist values of the UN Charter and the human rights. Accordingly, the official recommendation that was published after the conference announced:

"From NU's perspective, the most appropriate and effective way for realizing the common good of the global Muslim community is to strengthen the well-being and common good of all humankind—Muslim or non-Muslim—as well as to acknowledge the sisterhood and brotherhood of all humans (…) This is why the UN Charter and the UN itself may be the most robust existing foundation for creating a new Islamic jurisprudence to establish a future for human civilization that is peaceful and harmonious."[74]

Based on the evolution of the Fikih Peradaban discourse through mid-2023, I would like to introduce a visualization of Fikih Peradaban's relationship to local and global development paradigms and their characteristics. This is a modest first attempt to better conceptualize Fikih Peradaban as a developmental paradigm—which is open to scholarly debate, critique, and refinement. According to the visualized conceptualization, Fikih Peradaban occupies a middle ground position as it mediates between local and global development paradigms. Influences of local and global developmental epistemologies diffuse in both upward and downward directions, thus constantly traversing the position of Fikih Peradaban which interlinks and balances the various influences and approaches.

71 Author's notes on the speech of Alwi Abdurrahman Shihab at the conference.
72 Author's notes on the speech of an imam of the Washington mosque at the conference.
73 Author's notes on the speech of Alwi Abdurrahman Shihab at the conference.
74 Nahdlatul Ulama 2023, author's own translation.



Author's compilation

Concluding Remarks

As the Fikih Peradaban movement is a new initiative still in the development stage, this paper presents preliminary ideas and food for thought limited to a contemplation of how Fikih Peradaban might connect to the UN-led global discourse on sustainable development. It is up to the NU-leadership and its international Muslim allies whether Fikih Peradaban's potential Islamic contribution to the SDGs will be further considered and then brought into practice. For the future advancement of Fikih Peradaban, it seems particularly necessary to clarify whether Fikih Peradaban should be more narrowly defined, and even canonized, to avoid conceptual fuzziness, while keeping it flexible, dynamic, and relevant for contemporary contexts.

Over the past years, in Indonesia, Islamic concepts such as Islam Nusantara and Islam Berkemajuan have also functioned to reaffirm the social-religious distinction between the traditionalist Muslim community (NU) and modernists (Muhammadiyah). It remains to be seen how Fikih Peradaban positions itself towards Muhammadiyah and how Muhammadiyah perceives Fikih Peradaban. What role Muhammadiyah and modernist Muslims will play within the Fikih Peradaban movement will be a key concern to address as, in its basic aspects and methods, Fikih Peradaban may be interpreted as a *rapprochement* to the modernist understanding of Islam. What will this mean for the relationship between NU and Muhammadiyah and the future of traditionalist Islam in Indonesia? Will we witness a blurring of boundaries between NU and Muhammadiyah or intensified cleavages with discourses and acts that aim at a stronger distinction?

In any case, as the Fikih Peradaban movement showcases, Islamic debate in Indonesia continues to be highly dynamic and open to a wide range of intellectual impulses. As

identified by the NU-leadership—and by pro-humanist Muhammadiyah leaders such as Ahmad Syafii Maarif (1935–2022)—a de-emphasizing of religious identity politics and instead a focus on humanity and a humanist mode of thinking may provide the most suitable way for cross-religious, cross-belief, cross-culture, cross-class, cross-gender and cross-country cooperation in the twenty-first century.

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1. Papers must be typed in one-half spaced on A4-paper size;
2. Papers' length is about 8,000-10,000 words;
3. All submission must include a 200-300 word abstract;
4. Full name(s) of the author(s) must be stated, along with his/her/their institution and complete e-mail address;
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Examples of footnote style:

[1]Ryan Sugiarto, *Psikologi Raos: Saintifikasi Kawruh Jiwa Ki Ageng Suryomentaram,* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Ifada, 2015), p. 139.

[2]Nur Syam, *Tarekat Petani: Fenomena Tarekat Syattariyah Lokal,* (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2013), p. 164.

[3]Syam, *Tarekat Petani*, p. 173.

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[5]Nur Syam, *Tarekat Petani,* p. 99.

[6]M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, vol. 14 (Bandung: Lentera Hati, 2013), p. 167.

[7]Deny Hamdani, "Cultural System of Cirebonese People: Tradition of Maulidan in the Kanoman Kraton," *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences 4,* no. 1 (January-June 2012): p.12.

[8]Hamdani, "Cultural System of Cirebonese People," p. 14.

[9]Deny Hamdani, "Raison de'etre of Islam Nusantara," *The Jakarta Post,* 06 Agustus 2015, p. 5.

[10]Azyumardi Azra, "Islam di "Negeri Bawah Angin" dalam Masa Perdagangan," *Studia Islamika 3,* no. 2 (1996): h. 191-221, review buku Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

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   The strengths and weaknesses of the book.

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   Errors (typographical or other) and usefulness of indices.

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