

Indonesian Islam between Progressive Islam and Democratic Decline:

Revisiting the Role of NU in the Era of Joko Widodo's Presidency

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Abstract

This presentation examines the ambiguous role of NU in the era of Joko Widodo. On the one hand, NU has played the role of promoting the idea of progressive Islam, such as endorsing pluralism, progressive Islamic interpretation, non-sectarian attitudes, and many others, but on the other hand, NU has been involved in a political stance that supported the emergence of a regressive movement for democracy, human rights, and political freedom. Theologically speaking, NU claims to be an open organization to the progressive ideas of the global world, but domestically speaking, this organization promotes a conservative and non-democratic approach to Indonesian politics. This presentation takes the NU period in the era of Joko Widodo's leadership, especially his second term. This period is considered because NU functions as an organization that depends significantly on Joko Widodo's promise. This presentation also highlights how NU employs many of its followers as political capital to negotiate power-sharing as well as economic resources such as mining concessions with the Jokowi regime. Last but not least, this presentation concludes that this organization intentionally plays inconsistent role to sustain its political presence in the public sphere in the Jokowi era, which probably continues to the era of Prabowo, on one hand, but it remains preserving the idea of Islamic reform to save the image of this organization as moderate and tolerant Islam on the other hand.

Speaker

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His research fields are on fatwa in Muslim and non-Muslim countries, Islamic commodification, democratic life, political Islam, non-violent Islamic extremism, Islamic feminism, and sharia lifestyle. He published books, international journal articles and commentaries, visual commentaries through TV and You Tube Channel. His latest publications include: "Drivers Sharia Compliant Lifestyle in Indonesia: Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)," in Norshahril Saat & Sharifah Afra Alatas (editors), *Shari'ah, Society and Stratification: Muslim Lifestyle in Southeast Asia*, published by ISEAS, Singapore, 2024, pp.46-61, "Prioritising Life over Religion in Indonesia's Covid-19 Fatwas: The Fatwas of NU, Muhammadiyah, and MUI," published by *Studia Islamika*, 2024, *The Shariatization of Indonesia, the Politics of the Council of Indonesian Ulama* (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI), published in the series Islamic Law and Societies of Brill, the Netherlands, 2023 and *Rising Islamic Conservatism* (co-editor with Leonard Sebastian and Alex Arifianto), published by Routledge, London, 2021.