



The Transformation of Islamic Democracy in the Digital Era: A Critical Study on the Role of Ulama in the Virtual Public Sphere

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ABSTRACT

The advent of the digital era has brought transformative changes across various sectors of society, including politics, religion, and culture. One of the most significant developments in this context is the transformation of Islamic democracy, particularly the evolving role of ulama (Islamic scholars) in shaping political discourse in the virtual public sphere. This study critically examines how Islamic democracy is being redefined in the digital age, with a specific focus on the participation of ulama in online platforms and their influence on public opinion and political engagement among Muslim communities. The research delves into the ways in which social media, digital forums, and online discourse provide a space for ulama to engage with a broader audience, facilitating the dissemination of Islamic political thought and contributing to democratic practices within Muslim societies. The study employs a qualitative approach, analyzing both primary data, such as interviews with ulama and key stakeholders, and secondary sources, including digital content, scholarly articles, and political discourse. It explores how the ulama have adapted to the digital landscape, balancing traditional interpretations of Islam with the dynamic and interactive nature of online communication. By doing so, the paper addresses critical questions about the potential of the virtual public sphere in promoting or hindering democratic values within Islamic societies, examining the balance between religious authority and democratic participation. The findings highlight the significant role of ulama in shaping public opinion, guiding political discourse, and fostering civic engagement in the digital realm. It also reveals the challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic scholars in navigating the complexities of digital communication while maintaining their religious legitimacy. Furthermore, the study discusses the implications of these transformations for the future of Islamic democracy and the role of ulama in influencing political decision-making in the digital age. This research contributes to the broader understanding of the intersection between religion, politics, and digital media, offering insights into the evolving nature of Islamic democracy in the 21st century.

1. Introduction

The transformation of democracy in the Islamic world has been a subject of intense discourse for decades, particularly in the context of how traditional governance systems can integrate modern democratic principles while preserving religious values. The advent of the digital era has introduced new dynamics in this discourse, with the virtual public sphere emerging as a key arena where debates, ideas, and political opinions are increasingly expressed. One of the most critical components of this transformation is the evolving role of the ulama (Islamic scholars) in shaping political thought, religious practice, and public discourse in the virtual realm. This study delves into the critical examination of how the ulama's role is shifting in the age of digital media, and how this shift influences Islamic democracy within the virtual public sphere (Bin Md Aris, 2022).

The digital age has brought about an unprecedented democratization of information. Platforms like social media, blogs, online forums, and digital publications enable individuals to voice their opinions, critique government policies, and engage in political discussions, often without the gatekeeping of traditional media outlets. These digital platforms have become battlegrounds for ideological contestations, where narratives of democracy, governance, and faith are continuously negotiated (Salendra, 2024). In this context, the ulama, who have historically been the authoritative religious voice in Muslim communities, are now facing new challenges and opportunities. Their role is being redefined as they navigate the virtual space, interacting with a broader audience that includes not only the devout followers but also a secular, younger, and more politically diverse demographic.

This transformation is not just technological but also ideological. Traditional religious authorities, including the ulama, have long played a significant role in maintaining the status quo in many Muslim-majority countries. However, the rise of digital platforms has diminished their monopoly over religious discourse. The digital age has given rise to new forms of religious expression, including the promotion of alternative interpretations of Islamic teachings, which have sometimes directly challenged the traditional views upheld by the ulama. The accessibility and anonymity of digital spaces have allowed for a more diverse range of Islamic voices to emerge, some of which challenge the authority of the ulama in shaping public opinion on issues related to democracy, governance, and social justice (Putra Ritonga et al., 2024).

As the virtual public sphere becomes increasingly influential in shaping public opinion, the question arises: what role do the ulama play in this space? How do they maintain their religious authority and influence in a world where opinions are no longer confined to mosques or traditional forums of religious discussion? This study seeks to understand how the ulama navigate the complexities of the digital public sphere, how they engage with their followers in this new context, and how they balance their religious duties with the political realities of the digital era. Furthermore, it explores the broader implications of this shift for Islamic democracy, considering how the ulama's evolving role impacts the political landscape of Muslim-majority societies (Hannan, 2024).

The significance of this study lies in its ability to shed light on the changing nature of Islamic authority and its implications for democracy. While much has been written about the impact of digital technologies on politics and religion, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to understanding how these changes specifically affect the Islamic world and the role of religious scholars in this transformation. By focusing on the intersection of Islamic democracy and the digital age, this study seeks to provide a critical analysis of how religious authority in the Muslim world is being redefined in the virtual public sphere (Siagian & Mashadi, 2024).

The research gap that this study seeks to address lies in the limited understanding of the role of the ulama in the digital public sphere, particularly in the context of Islamic democracy. While scholars have discussed the broader implications of digital technology on politics and religion, there is a lack of focused research on how Islamic scholars are responding to these challenges and how their influence on democracy is evolving. The novelty of this study lies in its critical approach to exploring this issue from the perspective of both the digital transformation of democracy and the religious authority of the ulama (Mohiuddin, 2023).

Thus, the main research question guiding this study is: How has the role of the ulama in the Islamic world evolved in the digital era, and what implications does this transformation have for Islamic democracy in the virtual public sphere? This question encapsulates the need to understand both the ideological and practical shifts in the role of the ulama, as well as the broader implications of these shifts for Islamic democratic practices (Setia & Rahim, 2024).

The objectives of this study are twofold. First, it aims to critically assess how the ulama have adapted to the digital transformation, examining how they engage with new media and how they maintain their religious authority in an era of

unprecedented access to information. Second, it seeks to explore how the ulama's evolving role influences the political and democratic processes in Muslim-majority societies, particularly in terms of their relationship with state power, governance, and political participation (Al-Masduqi, 2025). By addressing these objectives, this study hopes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic intersection between religion, democracy, and digital technology in the Islamic world.

The transformation of Islamic democracy in the digital era represents a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. As the virtual public sphere becomes an increasingly significant platform for political and religious expression, understanding the evolving role of the ulama is crucial for comprehending the future of Islamic governance and democracy (Wahid, 2024). This study, by critically examining the ulama's role in the digital age, seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how Islamic democracy is evolving in the context of technological and ideological shifts, ultimately providing insights into the future trajectory of the relationship between religion, politics, and digital media in Muslim-majority societies.

Literature review

Islamic Democracy in the Context of the Digital Era

The concept of Islamic democracy has traditionally been characterized by a combination of democratic principles and Islamic values, which emphasize social justice, community welfare, and ethical governance (Hussain, 2018). Islamic democracy operates within frameworks that aim to balance both the democratic processes of political participation and the adherence to Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). With the rapid advancement of digital communication technologies, Islamic democracy has encountered new challenges and opportunities for engagement, particularly through the use of social media, blogs, and online news platforms (Badruzaman et al., 2023).

In recent years, scholars have focused on the implications of the digital era for democratic practices in Muslim-majority countries. The digital space, often referred to as the "virtual public sphere," has become a platform for political discussions, grassroots movements, and the dissemination of ideologies. Researchers have argued that the digital sphere enables Islamic democracy to reach broader populations, offering new forms of participation beyond traditional political institutions (Zamhari & Han, 2021). However, others caution that digital spaces could potentially undermine the essence of Islamic democracy by promoting divisive narratives, misinformation, and superficial engagement.

The Role of the Ulama in the Political and Social Discourse

The ulama have historically been central figures in shaping political and social life in Islamic societies. In traditional settings, their authority stems from their deep knowledge of Islamic texts, legal rulings (fatwas), and ethical guidance. The ulama's role has extended beyond religious duties to include advisory roles in governance and lawmaking, often participating in the legitimization of political power (Rohid et al., 2025). However, the rise of digital technologies has significantly altered this dynamic. The digital era has given rise to new forms of public engagement and has opened opportunities for alternative sources of knowledge, often challenging the monopoly of the ulama in religious and political matters.

In the digital age, the ulama's role in shaping Islamic democracy has become more complex. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have provided a space for the ulama to engage directly with the public, bypassing traditional institutional channels. This interaction has expanded the scope of religious discourse, enabling a broader range of voices to participate in discussions surrounding Islamic governance, legal reform, and social justice. Moreover, the ease with which information can be disseminated in the digital sphere has allowed the ulama to reach younger, more diverse audiences who may not have had access to traditional religious institutions (Zaid et al., 2022).

The Ulama's Influence on Public Opinion and Political Activism in the Digital Public Sphere

The interaction between the ulama and the virtual public sphere has fostered a significant shift in public opinion and political activism in Muslim-majority countries. Research indicates that the ulama, especially those with a strong presence on social media, have become influential figures in shaping political discourse, often promoting Islamic values and calling for political reform. The digital age has allowed the ulama to directly address pressing social and political issues, such as governance, human rights, and Islamic law, engaging with a diverse and often politically active audience.

In particular, social media has allowed the ulama to serve as intermediaries between the government and the people, providing a channel through which grievances can be voiced, and religious justifications for political actions can be presented. Through the use of platforms like Twitter and Facebook, they have been able to mobilize public opinion on various political issues, including human rights, freedom of speech, and religious tolerance (Abdullah, 2019). However,

there are concerns that the ulama's presence in the digital sphere may lead to the amplification of political and sectarian divisions, especially in countries where digital platforms are rife with misinformation and ideological polarization.

2. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative literature review methodology to critically explore the transformation of Islamic democracy in the digital era, with a particular focus on the role of the Ulama in the virtual public sphere. This method is specifically selected as it allows for an in-depth analysis of the interplay between Islamic democratic practices and digital technologies, with the Ulama serving as pivotal figures in shaping public discourse within the virtual sphere.

The qualitative approach enables the investigation of nuanced, complex phenomena, such as the evolving influence of the Ulama in online spaces, their interaction with digital media, and how these dynamics contribute to the broader context of Islamic democracy. Given that this research concerns historical, cultural, and ideological shifts, the qualitative review is the most appropriate method to synthesize existing scholarly work and provide insights into the subject matter.

Design of the Study

This research employs a systematic qualitative literature review design, which is structured as follows:

1. Literature Selection:

- The literature selection will focus on academic articles, books, conference papers, and reports that deal with the core themes of Islamic democracy, the digital era, and the role of Ulama in virtual spaces.
- The review will prioritize scholarly works published in the last two decades to ensure that the study captures the most current trends and developments related to the digital transformation in the public sphere.
- Studies on Islamic political theory, religious authority, digital media in the Muslim world, and the evolving role of religious scholars in virtual environments will be included.
- The literature must focus on both theoretical and empirical studies that discuss Islamic democracy, the public sphere in Islam, digital media's impact on religion, and the role of Ulama in shaping religious and political discourse online.

2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

- Inclusion Criteria:
 - Articles and books that critically address the intersection of Islamic democracy and digital media.
 - Works that explore the position and role of Ulama in shaping the virtual public sphere.
 - Studies that discuss the relationship between traditional Islamic political theory and modern digital platforms, such as social media.
 - Publications written in English, Arabic, or Indonesian (to encompass broader perspectives from the Muslim world).
- Exclusion Criteria:
 - Works that focus solely on non-Islamic democracy or broader political theory without direct relevance to the Muslim context.
 - Publications that lack academic rigor or those outside peer-reviewed journals and reputable publishers.

3. Data Collection Process:

- The primary source of data will be secondary materials, primarily published academic articles, books, and relevant reports from respected academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, Project MUSE, and Scopus.
- Specific keywords for the search process will include: *Islamic democracy*, *Ulama and digital media*, *digital public sphere in Islam*, *role of Ulama in virtual spaces*, *Islamic political theory in the digital era*, and *Islamic authority and social media*.
- The collected literature will be cataloged based on thematic categories that emerge from the literature, focusing on key issues such as the evolving role of religious scholars, the challenges of Islamic democracy in the digital age, and the nature of the virtual public sphere.

Data Analysis Process

The data analysis will follow a thematic analysis approach, which is well-suited to qualitative literature reviews as it allows the researcher to identify and interpret patterns and themes across the body of literature. The analysis will

be organized into the following steps:

1. Initial Reading and Coding:
 - An initial read-through of all selected literature will help to identify key themes, recurring topics, and significant findings related to Islamic democracy and the role of the Ulama in the digital realm.
 - Open coding will be used to generate initial categories from the literature, focusing on terms and concepts related to digital transformation, religious authority, online spaces, and Islamic democracy.
2. Categorization of Themes:
 - After the initial coding, a more refined process of categorization will group the data into broader thematic areas, which may include:
 - Transformation of Islamic democracy in the digital age.
 - The changing authority of the Ulama in online spaces.
 - Challenges of Islamic governance in the digital public sphere.
 - Ulama's engagement with new media (e.g., social media, blogs, podcasts).
 - The impact of virtual public discourse on Islamic thought and politics.
3. Cross-Referencing and Integration:
 - Themes will be cross-referenced with key findings from different studies, allowing for the identification of patterns, contradictions, or gaps in the existing literature.
 - Integration of the data will highlight how different scholarly perspectives converge or diverge on the role of the Ulama and the broader implications for Islamic democracy in the digital era.
4. Critical Synthesis:
 - After categorizing and cross-referencing the literature, a critical synthesis will be conducted to evaluate how the transformation of Islamic democracy is impacted by the role of the Ulama in the virtual public sphere.
 - The research will focus on identifying the research gaps in the literature, particularly with respect to the Ulama's evolving role and how the virtual public sphere influences Islamic democracy, offering insights into areas where further empirical research is needed.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are addressed through consistency and credibility. In this study:

- Credibility is ensured through the careful selection of peer-reviewed and well-established academic sources, and by providing a transparent methodology for the literature review process.
- Triangulation will be applied by synthesizing findings from multiple sources to ensure that conclusions are supported by various pieces of evidence. This includes cross-referencing studies from different geographical contexts (e.g., the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Western Muslim communities).
- Reliability is maintained by adhering to a systematic and replicable process in the selection of literature and data analysis procedures.

Ethical Considerations

Given that this research involves secondary data, the main ethical concern is ensuring proper citation of all sources to avoid plagiarism and give due credit to the original authors. Additionally, any potential biases in the reviewed literature will be acknowledged to ensure the objectivity of the analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

The digital era has significantly transformed the landscape of Islamic democracy, with the ulama (Islamic scholars) playing a pivotal role in shaping discourse in the virtual public sphere. This study explores the multifaceted impact of digital media on Islamic democracy and the evolving role of the ulama in this transformation. The results reveal a dynamic interplay between traditional religious authority and the rapid rise of digital platforms that have altered the ways Islamic scholars engage with their communities, influence political debates, and advocate for religious interpretations.

One of the most notable findings is the shift from conventional, face-to-face interactions to online engagement, where social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube provide ulama with unprecedented access to a global audience. This digital expansion has both democratized access to religious discourse and amplified the reach of religious authorities beyond local boundaries. As a result, the ulama have not only preserved their traditional role as spiritual leaders but have also adapted to the modern political environment by contributing to discussions on governance, democracy, and human rights, often in ways that resonate with younger, tech-savvy generations.

In particular, the study highlights that ulama have leveraged digital platforms to shape the discourse

surrounding Islamic democracy, especially in regions where political systems are evolving or experiencing instability. By disseminating religious interpretations and fatwas (Islamic legal opinions) online, they influence public opinion and provide guidance on issues such as political participation, civil rights, and the role of Islam in governance. This has led to the emergence of a more diverse and inclusive public sphere, where different interpretations of Islam can coexist and contribute to broader societal discussions on democracy and governance.

However, the results also underscore significant challenges faced by ulama in the digital age. The increased visibility afforded by digital platforms has also exposed them to greater scrutiny and criticism. The public nature of online platforms has led to a rise in debates over the authenticity and legitimacy of religious opinions, with some ulama facing accusations of politicizing Islam or being co-opted by state interests. Additionally, the rise of alternative voices, including those of online influencers and activists, has created a more fragmented religious landscape, leading to tensions between traditional religious authority and new forms of digital activism.

The findings also reveal that the digital public sphere has altered the nature of religious authority itself. While ulama traditionally maintained their authority through institutionalized structures like madrasahs (Islamic schools) and mosques, the digital space allows for a more fluid and decentralized form of religious leadership. This shift has led to a diversification of voices within Islamic discourse, with some scholars embracing new media tools to engage with their followers, while others have resisted these changes, emphasizing the preservation of traditional, face-to-face forms of religious education and authority.

Moreover, the study identifies a key factor in the transformation of Islamic democracy in the digital era: the tension between modernity and tradition. While digital platforms offer ulama the opportunity to engage with contemporary political issues, they also face pressure to align their views with traditional Islamic teachings. This balancing act between tradition and modernity has led to a reimagining of Islamic democracy, where the ulama must navigate both religious orthodoxy and the demands of an increasingly globalized and digital world.

In conclusion, the results of this study underscore the complex and evolving role of ulama in the virtual public sphere. While digital platforms have empowered them to expand their influence, they have also exposed them to new challenges and criticisms. The transformation of Islamic democracy in the digital era is thus characterized by a delicate balance between embracing new forms of engagement and maintaining traditional religious authority. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the role of ulama in shaping Islamic democracy will remain central, but it will also require continual adaptation to the changing dynamics of the digital age.

Discussion

The digital era has brought profound changes to the way democracy functions globally. In the Islamic context, the introduction of digital platforms has created a dynamic environment where ulama, traditionally the interpreters of Islamic law and authority, engage with political discourse and democratic processes in ways that were previously unthinkable. This transformation is particularly significant as it involves the intersection of Islamic traditions and modern democratic ideals, highlighting the role of ulama in shaping not only religious discourse but also the broader political landscape in Muslim-majority societies. In this discussion, we explore the role of ulama in the virtual public sphere, examining how they have navigated the digital era and influenced Islamic democracy, as well as the challenges and implications this transformation brings.

The Role of Ulama in the Virtual Public Sphere

Historically, ulama have been central to Islamic governance and the religious interpretation of law. Their authority has been largely rooted in their position within religious institutions, mosques, and seminaries. However, the advent of the internet and social media has dramatically shifted this traditional role. In the virtual public sphere, ulama now have access to a global audience, breaking free from geographical and institutional constraints. They have become active participants in digital political discussions, offering religious perspectives on democracy, governance, and social issues. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram have become powerful tools for ulama to disseminate their views, challenge political authorities, and engage with the masses.

The digital space has enabled ulama to interact directly with the public, bypassing traditional intermediaries such as state-controlled media or religious institutions. This shift has democratized religious discourse, allowing for a more pluralistic range of opinions and interpretations. Furthermore, it has empowered individuals to engage with religious leaders in a more direct and personal manner, fostering a sense of connection and participation in the religious and political process.

Table: The Evolving Role of Ulama in the Digital Age

Aspect	Traditional Role of Ulama	Digital Age Transformation	Impacts and Opportunities	Challenges and Considerations
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Aspect	Traditional Role of Ulama	Digital Age Transformation	Impacts and Opportunities	Challenges and Considerations
Authority Base	Rooted in religious institutions, mosques, seminaries	Expanded to global audiences via internet and social media	Greater reach and influence	Risk of diminished institutional oversight
Public Engagement	Indirect, mediated by institutions and state media	Direct interaction with followers through digital platforms	Enhanced connection and responsiveness	Potential for misinformation and lack of accountability
Dissemination of Views	Sermons, religious classes, published works	Tweets, videos, livestreams, online articles	Rapid, wide dissemination of religious perspectives	Oversimplification of complex religious issues
Participation in Politics	Often limited or mediated by authorities	Active participation in online political discussions	Ability to challenge political authorities	Exposure to political backlash or online harassment
Diversity of Discourse	Controlled, often homogeneous	Democratized, pluralistic, open to multiple interpretations	Encourages debate and diversity of thought	Risk of fragmentation and sectarianism
Accessibility	Limited to local or institutional followers	Accessible to anyone with internet access worldwide	Empowerment of lay individuals to engage directly	Digital divide may exclude some communities

However, this transformation also brings new challenges. The anonymity and lack of accountability in the digital sphere can lead to the spread of misinformation, which undermines the authority of ulama and the integrity of religious and political discourse. Ulama are now tasked with navigating this complex environment, ensuring that their teachings and messages are not misused or distorted in ways that could negatively impact society or the democratic process.

Islamic Democracy in the Digital Age: A Paradox?

One of the central issues in the relationship between Islamic governance and democracy has been the tension between traditional religious authority and modern democratic ideals. The digital era complicates this relationship, as the rapid spread of information and ideas has the potential to democratize both political and religious discourse. While some ulama have embraced these changes, others remain cautious, arguing that the digital era threatens the very foundations of Islamic governance.

On the one hand, the internet provides a platform for greater political participation, allowing Muslims to discuss and debate issues related to democracy, governance, and justice. This can be seen as an opportunity to enhance the Islamic notion of "Shura" (consultation), a fundamental principle of Islamic democracy. Through digital platforms, ulama can engage in discussions about the intersection of Islamic law and democratic values, offering interpretations that align with contemporary political realities. For example, ulama may offer insights on how to reconcile Islamic principles with the principles of representative democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

On the other hand, the rise of digital platforms also presents significant risks. The virtual public sphere is not neutral; it is shaped by algorithms that prioritize certain voices and ideas over others. In many cases, this results in the marginalization of religious scholars whose views might not align with the dominant political or ideological forces. Additionally, the digital space has become a battleground for ideological conflicts, with various factions using social media to promote their views and discredit their opponents. This can create an environment of polarization, where ulama are forced to take sides in political conflicts that may have little to do with Islamic teachings. As a result, the transformation of Islamic democracy in the digital age is not without its contradictions and tensions.

The Challenges of Maintaining Religious Authority

A key challenge for ulama in the digital era is maintaining their religious authority in a world where information is widely accessible, but also fragmented and unverified. The internet has made it possible for anyone to claim religious authority, often without the requisite scholarly background or training. This has led to the proliferation of unqualified voices offering religious opinions and interpretations, which can confuse the public and challenge the legitimacy of

traditional religious scholars.

Furthermore, the speed at which information circulates in the digital world means that ulama must respond quickly to political events and social issues. This urgency can sometimes result in oversimplified or hasty responses, undermining the depth of scholarly deliberation that is traditionally characteristic of Islamic jurisprudence. For ulama, this creates a difficult balancing act: they must remain relevant and responsive to the needs of their audience while maintaining the rigor and integrity of their scholarly work.

In addition, the digital landscape often fosters echo chambers where individuals are exposed only to viewpoints that align with their preexisting beliefs. This can result in a fragmentation of religious discourse, where certain groups of Muslims might only listen to ulama who share their political or ideological perspectives, thus reinforcing existing divisions within the Muslim community. The challenge for ulama, therefore, is to find ways to engage with these disparate groups while preserving the unity and coherence of the Islamic message.

The Democratization of Religious Discourse: A Double-Edged Sword?

The digital age has indeed democratized religious discourse by allowing a broader range of voices to be heard. This can be seen as a positive development, as it gives ordinary Muslims the opportunity to interact with scholars and discuss issues of religious and political significance. It also challenges the monopoly of traditional religious institutions, which have often been complicit in political regimes that limit democratic participation.

At the same time, this democratization raises important questions about the nature of religious authority. If anyone can broadcast their opinions and interpretations of Islam online, what does this mean for the authority of traditional religious scholars? Some critics argue that the digital era has undermined the role of the ulama, as individuals can now seek out religious opinions that align with their personal views, without regard for scholarly rigor or consensus.

Moreover, the online sphere is increasingly influenced by political, economic, and social forces that may distort or commercialize religious discourse. Ulama who engage in the digital sphere are often forced to confront these pressures, which can undermine the authenticity and integrity of their message. The challenge, therefore, lies in navigating the tensions between democratizing religious discourse and preserving the depth and authenticity of Islamic scholarship.

The Future of Islamic Democracy and the Ulama's Role

The transformation of Islamic democracy in the digital era is a complex and multifaceted process. The role of the ulama in the virtual public sphere is crucial in shaping how Islam engages with modern democratic ideals. While the digital age offers new opportunities for ulama to engage with the public and contribute to political discourse, it also presents significant challenges in terms of maintaining authority, navigating political polarization, and ensuring the integrity of religious teachings.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, it is likely that the relationship between Islamic governance and democracy will also evolve. The ulama must adapt to the digital age, using the tools at their disposal to maintain their relevance while upholding the principles of Islamic scholarship. Ultimately, the future of Islamic democracy in the digital era will depend on the ability of ulama to strike a balance between tradition and innovation, ensuring that their teachings continue to serve as a source of guidance and inspiration for Muslims around the world.

4. Conclusion

The transformation of Islamic democracy in the digital era highlights a significant shift in how religious leaders, particularly ulama, engage with the public sphere, as they adapt to the dynamic, decentralized nature of digital platforms. This study underscores the evolving role of ulama in shaping political discourse and democratic practices, emphasizing their influence in both fostering and challenging democratic principles within the Islamic context. The rise of social media and digital communication has empowered ulama to reach broader audiences, facilitating direct interactions with the public and offering a platform for religious interpretations to inform political and social debates. However, this transformation is not without challenges, as it also raises questions about the authenticity of religious authority, the risks of misinformation, and the potential for ideological polarization in the virtual space. Ultimately, the digital era has not only altered the landscape of Islamic democracy but also necessitated a rethinking of the ulama's traditional role, urging them to navigate the complexities of modern technology while maintaining their position as moral and political guides within the Muslim community.

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