

# THE IDEA OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIAN NEW ORDER AND THE REFORM ERA

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**Abstract:** *Indonesia is neither a religious state nor a secular state though the majority of its population is Moslem. The relations between Islam and the state have once experienced strong tensions until it finally reached a consensus. However, this consensus had historically experienced distortions and complexities among Moslems themselves and between the Moslems and the government (state), during the New Order Era and the Reform Era. This article tries to describe the development of the idea of religious moderation in the New Order and the Reform Era and explore the views of the Moslem elites in relation to religious moderation policies and their implementation during the era of President Soeharto and in the era of open democracy after the fall of the authoritarian New Order regime. This research relies on an in-depth analysis of academic references and literature. The study shows that there are differences in the aspects of thinking and configuration of Moslem actors in relation to the policy and implementation of religious moderation in the two eras. The research showed that the efforts of the majority of religious people in Indonesia in campaigning for religious moderation intellectually, culturally, and politically by any means, models, modifications and different actors according to the context, challenges, and the spirit of the times had never been faded away so it can not be extinguished.*

**Keywords:** *Religious Moderation; New Order; Reform Era; Comparative study*

**Abstrak:** *Indonesia bukan negara agama dan bukan negara sekuler, tetapi mayoritas penduduknya adalah Muslim. Relasi Islam dan negara pernah mengalami ketegangan, hingga akhirnya mencapai konsensus. Namun, konsensus itu secara historis mengalami distorsi dan kompleksitas di antara kaum Muslim sendiri maupun dengan pemerintah (negara), baik di masa Orde Baru maupun di Era Reformasi. Artikel ini mendeskripsikan perkembangan paham moderasi beragama di era Orde Baru dan Era Reformasi dan menelusuri pandangan elit Muslim dalam hubungannya dengan kebijakan moderasi beragama dan implementasinya pada era Presiden Soeharto dan di era demokrasi terbuka pasca jatuhnya rezim otoriter Orde Baru. Penelitian kepustakaan ini bertumpu pada analisis mendalam terhadap referensi dan literatur akademik. Studi ini menunjukkan adanya perbedaan dari aspek pemikiran dan konfigurasi aktor-aktor Muslim terkait dengan kebijakan dan implementasi moderasi beragama di kedua era tersebut. Seperti dipotret dalam riset ini, usaha-usaha mayoritas umat beragama di Indonesia dalam mengkampanyekan moderasi beragama, baik secara intelektual, kultural, dan politik, kiranya tidak pernah redup dan padam dengan cara, model, modifikasi dan aktor-aktor yang berbeda-beda sesuai konteks, tantangan, dan semangat zaman.*

**Kata kunci:** *Moderasi beragama; Orde Baru; Era Reformasi; Studi Komparasi*

## **Introduction**

Indonesia is a country that stretches from Sabang to Merauke with diverse ethnic groups, religions, and races. Diversity is a blessing for the Indonesian people. However, such diversity has been in fact akin to a double-edged sword. On the one hand it is the wealth of the nation, but on the other hand it can be a source of a lot of conflicts. As a religious country, Indonesian citizens adhere to the teachings of their respective religions consistently and do good with fellow believers.

In Islam, human relationship (*ukhūwah bashariyah*) must be based on an attitude of tolerance and respect for existing differences. Tolerance does not mean that other people who have different faiths from us must also to believe in our religion and or to force us to believe in other people's religions.<sup>1</sup> To take a deeper look, the Prophet Muhammad had given an example of the culture of tolerance when he built a political entity in Medina. The Prophet and the non-Muslim groups entered into a treaty or constitution, which is called the Medina constitution (Medina Charter). The Prophet did not force non-Moslems to embrace Islam unless they take it sincerely and consciously.<sup>2</sup>

Indonesia, which adheres to the ideology of democracy, gives freedom to its people to express and convey their will and aspirations as long as they are positive and do not cause any disturbance to other groups of the society. In addition, Indonesia is neither a religious state in the sense that Indonesia

does not apply norms and laws which are affiliated with a particular religion nor a secular state like those in Western Europe that separate religious life from political and public life. Indonesia is a nation state that recognizes religious pluralism in its constitution, and such religious pluralism also rooted in the spirit of the governmental administration, the nation and the state.

Indonesia's founding fathers' consensus to take Pancasila as the foundation of the state should be seen as an extraordinary effort in making Indonesia a pluralistic, inclusive and tolerant nation state. Indonesia is a big house for all people living in it. They can live and develop their respective potentials in harmony and peace and have the same rights and obligations as Indonesian people and citizens.<sup>3</sup>

The essence of the religious moderation movement has actually started in the New Order era. Although at that time the term "religious moderation" had yet to emerge, various government regulations issued by the Department of Religion (currently the Ministry of Religious Affairs) have consistently carried out discourse mainstreaming movements and the implementation of religious moderation, according to which in addition to be consistently obedient (*istiqāmah*) in carrying out the religious teachings of their own, people shall respect other religious groups. In other words, religious moderation is a middle ground in the midst of religious diversity in Indonesia.<sup>4</sup>

### **What is Religious Moderation?**

In a discussion forum or seminar there is a "moderator" in the sense of "someone who mediates" in the discussion. The word "moderate" or "moderation" in English (*moderation*), Arabic (*wasat* or *wasatīyah*), or Latin (*moderateio*) by and large means to promote balance in terms of beliefs, morals, and characters both when treating others as individuals and when dealing with state institutions.<sup>5</sup> In Islam, moderation is known in the term of *wasatīyah*. In fact, *wasatīyah* (moderation) is one of the basic characters of Islam.

Linguistically, it means to be in the middle, instead of being in the right or left extremes, and not to be superfluous (*al-ghulūw*) in applying religious teachings. Any form of extreme attitude can be judged as out of characters in Islam. That is why the Qur'an criticizes the extreme attitudes of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians): "O People of the Book, do not be *ghuluw* (extreme) in your religion ..." (Surah An-Nisa' 4:171). The Qur'an also states that Moslems are *ummatan wasatan* (Q.S Al-Baqarah 2:143), namely, people who have a moderate attitude, so that they can

become the role models for others.<sup>6</sup>

Sayyid Quṭb, noted Muslim scholar, in interpreting the meaning of the QS. Al-Baqarah 2:143, as quoted by Quraish Shihab, said that Islam itself is moderation in the sense that moderation is the basic characteristic of its teachings. Therefore, its adherents must also be moderate. They must be moderate in their views and beliefs, moderate in their thoughts and feelings, and moderate in their attachments.<sup>7</sup>

Actually, religious moderation is a strategic paradigm and step to strengthen the characters of Islam which always upholds the values of humanity and nationalism. Fundamental rights inherent in human beings must be upheld without discrimination in terms of religion, ethnicity, race, class, and gender.<sup>8</sup>

Talking about moderation in Islam, we can never be separated from the treasures of pearls of knowledge that have been inherited by the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* scholars, the good early generations.<sup>9</sup> It is through them the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jamā'ah* traditions become a kind of platform for the attitude of moderatism in Islam, which is known in the terms of *tawāzun* (balanced), *tasāmuḥ* (tolerant), and *tawassuṭ* (moderate).<sup>10</sup> These three terms are the principles of the middle way which is referred to in the Qur'an as *ummataṅ wasaṭan* and, in the sense of a society, as *khayra ummah* (the best of society).<sup>11</sup>

In the same line with some of the above meanings of moderate, Juan Cole, a Professor of History in the University of Michigan, United States, in his work *Muhammad: Peacemaker Amidst the Clash of Great World Empires* (2019) said that during his stay in Mecca the Prophet Muhammad saw people of the two great civilizations, namely Roman civilization and Sassanian civilization (Persia), which have different characters. While priests of the Roman civilization tend to be ascetic or hostile to the world, people in the Sassanian civilization tend to be hedonistic. The two great empires were often involved in terrible wars. In this condition, according to Cole, the Prophet Muhammad often contemplated, especially in the cave of Hira, located on a hill near Mecca. The Prophet wanted to propose an alternative ideology that was neither too hedonistic nor too ascetic until finally, after the Prophet received Islam as a new religion in the Arabian Peninsula, the Prophet saw that Islam could be an "alternative path" that mediates between capitalistic and socialistic ideologies. This shows that Islam is a moderate ideology, instead of the right or the left extremes.<sup>12</sup> In economic and socio-political life, Islam can play very active, but flexible, roles: in what context it becomes capitalist and in what context it becomes socialist.

## Religious Moderation in the New Order Era

The birth of the New Order could not be separated from the issuance of the Eleven March Order in 1966 (*Supersemar*) from President Soekarno to Lieutenant General Suharto, who served at that time as the Commander of the Army. The letter mandated to take all necessary and important actions under the circumstances at that time so that the submission of the letter meant an unlimited delegation of power in order to deal with the situation strategically.<sup>13</sup>

This letter was then confirmed by the Decree of the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly (MPRS) No. IX/MPRS/1966, dated June 9, 1966, which then became the political foundation for the emergence of the New Order regime. Subsequently, the Special Session of the MPRS in 1967 revoked the presidential mandate granted to President Soekarno who was deemed unable to account for the G30S/PKI rebellion. By virtue of Decree of MPRS No. XLIV/MPRS/1968, Suharto was sworn in as the second President of the Republic of Indonesia.

The New Order government rehabilitated the economy which was followed by gradual economic development. In other words, immediately after his inauguration as the Second President of the Republic of Indonesia, President Soeharto launched a development program, that prioritized the economic development of the community, due to the fact that the Old Order left an almost collapsing economic legacy. As President Soekarno was anti-Western, anti-American, and anti-Western Europe, he rejected any economic investment or loan from them. Sukarno preferred only Russia and China, which had communist ideology, to be the ally.

Since the beginning of his leadership, President Suharto had a negative view of the Islamic movements due to the trauma of the DI/TII movement. The movement triggered President Suharto's negative sentiments towards Islamic groups in the early days of the New Order Regime. The New Order Regime considered this Islamic group as political Islam, desiring the replacement of Pancasila as the philosophical basis of the state. Therefore, the Suharto's administration prioritized and sanctified Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the one and only state ideology prohibiting any other interpretation. It was only the legitimate government's interpretations which shall prevail.

What's worse, in the 1970s, "Islamic" acts of terrorism such as bombing and burning of Christian houses of worship, nightclubs, and cinemas emerged. The terrorism perpetrators were related to the so-called *Komando Jihad* (Jihad Command). In fact, the tension continued escalating, especially ahead the General Elections. *Komando Jihad*, which included

the Darul Islam movement, the Indonesian Islamic State/Indonesian Islamic Army, turned to be a frightening specter until the mid-1980s.<sup>14</sup>

In this context, Afif Muhammad said that since the New Order government prioritized economic development, stability received more emphasis. Therefore, it is not surprising that in carrying out and achieving its economic development mission, the New Order government applied repressive measures against every movement launched by Muslims by exercising repressive control over Islamic socio-political organizations, watching Islamic sermons and lectures, and banning and preventing a number of Islamic figures from leaving the country.<sup>15</sup>

The illustrations above suggest that the New Order government required people to have moderate, instead of radical, understandings about religious teachings because it is only moderate people who can accept differences, and such acceptance to differences will in turn create stability as the main requirement for continuation of the developments. Once again, religious movements which have a very scripturalist or even radical characters, were seen as the enemies of the New Order's version of development and modernization projects. The scriptural and ideological styles of religion tend to be rigid and intolerant. Therefore, it is obvious that what the government requires are moderate, open, and rational religious attitudes in line with the spirit of developmentalism.

Although the term of religious moderation has only emerged recently, efforts – made by the government and more specifically by the Ministry of Religious Affairs - to campaign for the idea and practice of religious moderation have actually started since the 1960s in different terms. In 1967, in the opening speech for *Musyawarah Antar Umat Beragama* (Inter-Religious Forum), which gave birth to the Interfaith Contact Agency, the then Minister of Religious Affairs K.H. M. Dachlan revealed the term of religious harmony.<sup>16</sup> But, unfortunately, the project of inter-religious forum failed. The Minister Dachlan was considered unable to follow the rhythm of the developmentalism of the New Order government. It was actually due to the fact that Dachlan came from the NU Party, politically desiring the Ministry of Religious Affairs to support NU's political agenda which was different from the agenda of the New Order government in realizing the development orientation in all sectors. Finally, the government appointed Mukti Ali, a modernist religious figure, to replace K.H. M. Dachlan.<sup>17</sup>

During his term of service as Minister of Religious Affairs, Mukti Ali put more concern on fostering religious harmony by inviting religious leaders, scholars, and religious organizations to sit together to have a series of inter-religious dialogues and discussions with the slogan “to agree in

disagreement".<sup>18</sup> The concept offered by Mukti Ali was very moderate and very much in line with what the government expected.<sup>19</sup> In relation to this matter, Faisal Ismail said that Mukti Ali was urgently needed by the government to manage the relations between religious communities at a time when religious issues became very sensitive and the dynamic momentum of national stability needed to be kept and maintained.<sup>20</sup>

Subsequently, in 1980, during the era of Minister Alamsjah Ratu Perwiranegara, the Forum for Inter-Religious Deliberations (WMAUB) was formed. During this period, three pillars of harmony emerged, known as the Harmony Trilogy; 1) Internal religious harmony, 2) inter-religious community harmony, and 3) Harmony between religious communities and the Government.<sup>21</sup> Again, the trilogy of harmony was expected to provide a huge and significant contribution to the realization of good national stability and to the implementation of national development programs.

Likewise, having the same concern with the development of religious harmony, the former Minister of Religion Munawir Sjadzali came up with the idea of Substantive Islam, known as justice, egalitarianism for all. According to him, religious harmony in Indonesia was not an option, but it is a necessity. In his view, religions came into Indonesia in peaceful process, causing no negative impacts to the life of the nation as a whole.<sup>22</sup>

At this time, the activities of the Forum for Inter-Religious Deliberations (WMAUB) continued to increase. The Government via the Minister of Religion provided a lot of funds for various activities, ranging from visiting to regions, coordination, communication, and consultation, as well as dialogues between religious communities in order to build a conducive and harmonious atmosphere. Although Munawir Sjadzali was often taken as a liberal figure in campaigning for the Re-actualization of Islamic Law (equality of men and women in inheritance), Munawir Sjadzali's great contribution to the process to instill moderate Islam in Indonesia was apparent when as the Minister of Religion he sent lecturers of State Islamic Institutes (IAIN) to countries in the West - also to Egypt and Turkey - in the 1980s as a major project between the *Canada International Development Agency (CIDA)* and IAIN and between Leiden and IAIN.<sup>23</sup> Those lecturers sent to study in developed countries are expected to later return to their homeland as moderate, open and progressive Muslim scholars.

Munawir's successor as Minister of Religion, Tarmizi Taher, was also concerned with the issue of radicalism and, therefore, associated the term to religious movements (Islam) which tend to reject pluralism models. Movements of radical religious groups, according to Tarmizi,

were characterized by the desire to apply the teachings of religion (Islam) totally in family life, economy, politics and culture in radical way. In fact, according to Tarmizi, in the future, pluralism and interdependence between people would become the social principles and facts that can no longer be rejected. Therefore, dialogue and willingness to share is a must to maintain the principles of togetherness.<sup>24</sup>

Tarmizi Taher also emphasized the importance of religious tolerance. On various occasions at both national and international forums, he called for the need to build harmonization between religious communities in Indonesia based on Pancasila. He believed that the pattern of harmony built in Indonesia with Pancasila as its umbrella can become an example and model of harmony to be adopted and actualized by other countries.<sup>25</sup> The projects carried out by the Ministers of Religion during the New Order Regime were indeed the “taste” of the Government, which at that time prioritized national stability for the sake of development by building a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere for all religious communities. In the current context, these steps are what is called as “religious moderation”.

What are very important to reveal are the great efforts and services made by moderate and progressive Muslim scholars in campaigning for moderate and open religious ideas while, at the same time, supporting modernization and development. Over the period from the 1970s to 1990s, Indonesian Moslem scholars created a progressive Islamic formula to encouraged the progress of Indonesia. Nurcholish Madjid came up with “Islamic renewal” and “Islamic civilization”; Harun Nasution with “rational Islam”; Abdurrahman Wahid with “cosmopolitan Islam” and “indigenous Islam”; Jalaluddin Rakhmat with “actual Islam”; Adi Sasono, Mansour Fakih, Muslim Abdurrahman and Dawam Rahardjo with “transformative Islam” and “progressive Islam”, Amin Rais and Syafi’i Ma’arif with “modern Islam”, and Munawir Syadzali with “Reactualization of Islamic Law”, among others. Not only in campuses and to educated people, these figures also did not hesitate to campaign for their Islamic ideas to the grassroots community in Islamic boarding schools as well.

Fauzan Saleh, a Professor of IAIN Kediri, who examined some of the progressive figures above, first mentioned the figure of Harun Nasution. In 1969, Harun Nasution’s return to Indonesia after completing his study at McGill University was coincident with the rise of the New Order under Suharto’s rule which had a jargon of encouraging economic growth and modernity. In responding to the phenomenon, Harun Nasution emphasized that as long as Moslems stick to the fatalistic view of life as in *Ash’ariyah* theology, it can be said that it is impossible for Moslems



to contribute to the development process as desired by the New Order Regime. Therefore, Moslem must abandon the *Ash'ariyah* theology and take *Mu'tazilite* understanding instead. That is why Nasution was known as the founder of the rational theology of *Mu'tazilite* in Indonesia.<sup>26</sup>

Nasution's idea was in fact consistent with the New Order government's movement which requires Indonesian people to have active participation in development. In fact, it would be possible only if people think rationally and do not succumb to a fatalistic (traditional) view. The traditional perspective will not be able to encourage people to develop sciences and technologies as the symbol of modernity and progress.<sup>27</sup> Moslems' understanding about social teachings of religions must reflect their responses to the times. Therefore, Moslems must review their religious understanding so that they remain obedient and *istiqāmah* in the religion while being able to adapt to the demands of modernity.<sup>28</sup>

Nasution's thoughts that broke the fatalistic mindset of Moslems were in fact in line with Nurcholish Madjid's efforts as the locomotive that drive the revival and renewal of Islamic thought. Madjid agreed to support the aspirations of the New Order Government to realize the ideals of building political stability and modernizing Indonesia.<sup>29</sup> Madjid then came up with his thesis on secularization and secularism. According to him, the two are distinctly different. Secularization is a historical process, which is certainly impossible to reverse. Societies and cultures keep moving dynamically and escape the closed confines of religion and metaphysics. Meanwhile, secularism is the name of an ideology, a new closed worldview that functions very much like a new religion.<sup>30</sup> Secularism is thought as incompatible with the teaching of Islam, and the Qur'an describes the adherents of secularism as infidels (see surah al-Jāthiyah: 24). Thus, while secularization is a dynamic process, secularism is a completely materialistic ideology.<sup>31</sup> Secularization, which means to the profane world as the profane itself, instead of the sacred, can become the capital for Moslems to be advanced, modern, and involved in development. Ahmed An-Na'im's said that Madjid was hoping the realization of Islamic renewal in Indonesia, and that Moslem must be able to distinguish between transcendent values and temporary values.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Madjid also campaigned the importance of the Indonesian people to idealize the idea of "religious pluralism." It is actually not only for the sake of preserving Indonesian pluralism but also for the fact that theologically plurality is God's design, or *sunnatullāh*, which could not be rejected and denied.<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime, Abdurrahman Wahid came up with the thesis of indigenization of Islam. According to Wahid, Moslems must be able

to translate the “universal Islam” into local or indigenous contexts. For Wahid, Indigenization of Islam is not “Javanization” or syncretism, because indigenization of Islam only considers local [Indonesian] needs in formulating religious laws without changing the law itself. Nor does it leave religious norms for the sake of culture, but also that these norms accommodate the needs of culture by using the opportunities provided by the variety of understandings of the texts (al-Qur’an).<sup>34</sup> Wahid also put forward the idea of reviving creative “Islamic cosmopolitanism”, which transcends ethnic, cultural and other boundaries. A creative cosmopolitan society, according to Wahid, is a society that takes the initiative and wanders and seeks the farthest insights to dialogue universal values with local-particular values while adhering to the basic values of universal truth.

In fact, some consider the ideas of religious pluralism, Islamic renewal, and Islamic cosmopolitanism as secular and liberal ideas.<sup>35</sup> But, some others take these ideas very moderate and – if we use today’s terminology – very much in line with the spirit of mainstreaming religious moderation. Other important matters that need to be taken into accounts are the roles of major Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah in actively campaigning for acceptance of Pancasila as the sole principle and a moderate, open and respectful religious life in the context of pluralistic Indonesia. In terms of accepting Pancasila as the sole principle of organizations, it can be said that NU was the first organization which accepts Pancasila as the sole principle which was ratified in the decision of the 27<sup>th</sup> NU Congress held at the Salafiyah Syafi’iyah Islamic Boarding School Sukerejo Situbondo, East Java on December 8-12, 1984. Kyai Achmad Siddiq, as the Rais Aam of PBNU at that time, viewed Pancasila as the *kalimatun sawā’* (the common words) that unites all elements of Indonesian societies.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, Siddiq claimed that the acceptance of Moslems to Pancasila as the sole principle in socio-political life was a legal obligation. He also emphasized that for Moslems, the establishment of an Indonesian state based on Pancasila was the final goal of their aspirations.<sup>37</sup> This means that any idea about the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia does not represent the political aspirations of Moslems as a whole.

In line with NU, Muhammadiyah gave its response to the idea of Pancasila as the sole principle of the organization, in the Tanwir Assembly meeting in May 1983, in one of its decisions of which emphasized that Muhammadiyah agreed to include Pancasila in its Articles of Associations/ Bylaws without changing the existence of Islamic principles.<sup>38</sup> Subsequently, in the 41<sup>st</sup> Congress held in Surakarta, Central Java on December 7-11,

1985, Muhammadiyah officially accepted Pancasila as the sole principle of its organization, so that Article 2 of its Articles of Associations/Bylaws was amended to be Muhammadiyah based on Pancasila. According to Abdurrahman Wahid, the decisions of religious mass organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah to declare that the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution is the final and national consensus, instead of an opportunistic attitude. It is a genuine awareness based on historical reality, cultures and national traditions as well as the substance of religious teachings which are strongly believed to be true.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Islam is the creed or belief, while Pancasila is a common reference in the life of the nation and state. Islam and Pancasila should not be contradicted with each other, and indeed the precepts in Pancasila are very much in line with the main teachings of Islam. Both walk hand in hand to reinforce each other.

The exploration above clearly shows that the spirit of the religious moderation movement has been started since the New Order era, the purpose of which is to ensure that stability is properly maintained for smooth implementation of development. Taking Pancasila, instead of other ideologies based on religions, ethnicity, race, socialism, communism or secularism, as the sole way of life of all Indonesia people is inevitable to ensure stability.

### **Religious Moderation in the Reform Era**

Started in 1998, Indonesia's reform has brought very serious implications to democratic life in Indonesia. There were widespread demands from the community, students, and reformers for socio-political changes.<sup>40</sup> On the one hand, the reform era had the impacts of changing from limited democracy to open democracy which gave birth to many political parties as a consequence of openness, more active and participative civil society in giving input and criticism to the government, and strengthened implementation of regional autonomy and eradication of corruption, collusion and nepotism in all fields; and law enforcement, among others.<sup>41</sup> But, on the other hand, this very open reform has been in fact used by all community groups, including trans-national religious groups with the ideology of "hard Islam". They unabashedly reveal themselves as political ideology on behalf of Islam. The issues of the Jakarta Charter and the demands for the formalization of sharia at the state level have been once again voiced loudly. According to Ahmed An-Naim, there are two types of movements in the issue of sharia application: the first, the supporters of the implementation of sharia at the state level such as the Indonesian

Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII), the Indonesian Committee for World Islamic Solidarity (KISDI), the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Laskar Jihad, and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI); and the second is the groups that reject the formalization of sharia including Muhammadiyah, NU, and Islamic NGOs such as Paramadina, Liberal Islam Network and others.<sup>42</sup>

For the first group, the enforcement of Islamic law as a *manhaj* (method or way) must be universally practiced in a country. The ways they use to fight for their aspirations are indeed different. MMI, for example, fights for the agenda of implementing sharia through peaceful means within the framework of the democratic political system promoted by the Reformation Order, while Laskar Jihad and FPI often commit acts of violence. FPI more often raids amusement venues and does sweeping to those who do not follow Sharia, while Laskar Jihad sends its laskar to Maluku to defend Moslems who are in conflict with Christians.<sup>43</sup>

For the second group, defending the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila as mandated by the Founders of the nation is non-negotiable. This attitude is a form of responsibility of the nationalists so that the future of Indonesian ideology is maintained. This group is aware so much that if Islam is understood as a political ideology, it will become a narrow-minded Islam. When any group, including Islamic groups themselves, These Groups, including the Islamic groups themselves, is of different views with the ideological Islamic groups, it will be very easy to be accused of being enemies of Islam. They can easily accuse others who are different from them as disbelief and apostasy.<sup>44</sup> These ideological Islamic groups are often synonymous with trans-national religious groups that carry strong Islamic ideas of the Middle East's models, which are often in conflict among themselves. According to Aksa, this ideology is dominated by scriptural, textual, normative, radical, fundamental thoughts or ideas, which are significantly different from the concept of nation-state.<sup>45</sup> From these ideological Islamic groups, cases of intolerance often arise because they tend to blame others in practicing their religions.<sup>46</sup> With religious narratives that bewitch the Muslim communities, they tend to impose their will and ignore the reality that Indonesian society is very diverse. Traditionalist Moslems such as NU are often attacked for their beliefs. They are accused of being syncretic, occult, and *mushrik*, or considered to deify clerics too much. In fact, they also actually deify their leader as the High Priest (Imam Besar). The case of intolerance that has seriously torn Indonesia's diversity apart emerged in the 2017 Regional Head Election (Pilkada) in Jakarta which convicted one of the gubernatorial candidates

who happened to be a Chinese Christian, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, as a blasphemer of religion, resulting in a series of mass demonstrations, one of which was popularly dubbed as the 212 movement.<sup>47</sup> Once again, two major Islam groups, i.e. Ideological Islam and cultural Islam, are in opposition to each other. They argue with each other and attack each other both in cyberspace and in the real world, resulting in a fairly serious contestation.

Due to such unhealthy and worrying religious understanding and practice as reflected above, the term of religious moderation is now being re-echoed in the country. The majority of moderate Moslems want peace in practicing religious teaching which has been now eroded by extreme, exclusive, and radical religious movements, resulting in high tensions between fellow religious communities that threaten the safety of the nation.<sup>48</sup> Various conflicts and tensions between human beings in various parts of the world have also led to international commitments through the United Nations declaring the year 2019 as “The International Year of Moderation”.<sup>49</sup>

This declaration is in line with the commitment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to continue to campaign for the paradigm of religious moderation. This can be seen during the 2019 Working Meeting of the Ministry of Religious Affairs which resulted in an agreement to make the vision of religious moderation as the spell and keyword that animates all programs and policies in all work units of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, including in the Religious Colleges.<sup>50</sup>

According to Director General Kamaruddin Amin, the development of a paradigm of religious moderation in Indonesia should take the two following matter into account: *first*, the proper placement of religious functions, i.e. to put and to understand religions as guidance (*hudan*) for humans. In this way, religions should have beneficial influences on human, instead of justifying practices that actually lead to dehumanization. *Second*, aligning religious understanding and attitudes with national values based on the Pancasila ideology. Religion and Pancasila have relations which reinforce, instead of contradict, each other.<sup>51</sup>

Subsequently, over the last several years, especially since 2018 until now, the Ministry of Religious Affairs in every commemoration of Charity Bhakti Day (HAB) always makes a slogan about respecting differences in order to create religious harmony in Indonesia. This can be seen in the commemoration of the 72<sup>nd</sup> HAB in 2018 with the motto “Spread Peace”, “Keep the People Together” in 2019, “People in peace, Indonesia Go Forward” in 2020, and “Indonesia Peaceful” in 2020. In 2019 the then

Minister of Religion Lukman Hakim Saifuddin set 2019 as the year of religious moderation. Religious moderation must become the mainstream in developing Indonesia.<sup>52</sup> Even the current Minister of Religion, Yaqut Cholil Qoumas when inaugurated by the President, made an affirmation: “Make religion an inspiration, not an aspiration”. Religion should be an inspiration for peace and harmony, instead of an aspiration to seize power, to oppose the government, to change the basis of the state and so on.

The explanation above clearly shows that the mainstreaming of religious moderation has actually started a long time ago, and is still being voiced by the state and moderate religious groups. According to the proponents of religious moderation, if ideological religious groups, who cannot respect differences and appreciate the reality of Indonesia’s plurality continue to campaign for their ideologies, the religious moderation movements must continue to be voiced in a structured, systematic and massive manners at all lines, levels and categories. The campaign for religious moderation shall be carried out not only by the state with all of its regulations but also by all people of all social classes. The most important thing is that this movement for harmonious, peaceful and advanced Indonesia should be a cultural movement performed by people of upper, middle and lower classes.

### **Comparison of Religious Moderation**

During the New Order era, the state was a very strong entity. Moreover, it was the only entity that campaigned for Pancasila as the sole state ideology and tended to direct rational religion to support developmentalism. During the New Order era, various trans-national religious movements could not move freely though they already existed.<sup>53</sup> The authoritarian and repressive characters of the New Order – in the name of national stability – made religious and ideological movements as well as their supporting movements unable to live, except Pancasila. There was a tremendous depoliticization of religion at that time. On the contrary, during the reform era, there was a tremendous politicization of religion that had allowed ideological Islamic groups to rise freely to spread their religious missions. In the New Order era, in addition to the state, the main actors of religious moderation were the Moslem intellectuals mentioned above. The country was very strong at that time. Pratikno said that the strength of the New Order government was rooted in four main sources, namely physical and legal repression, economic clientelism, particularistic political discourses that supported authoritarianism and the development of state corporatism.<sup>54</sup>

As already mentioned, during the Reform era, it can be said that the religious moderation campaign counters hardline Islamic groups that had

a conflicting understanding of religion such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), Laskar Jihad, and the Muslim Brotherhood, among others,<sup>55</sup> who want to formalize the sharia,<sup>56</sup> and the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) which has the doctrine that the holy book must be above the constitution. What FPI means by the holy book must be above the constitution is that the state is obliged to do *amar makrufnabi mungkar*.<sup>57</sup> Otherwise, FPI will do it and what FPI does should not be considered as violation to the law because for FPI the laws set forth in the holy book are above a man-made constitution. In this sense, a clash between FPI and the State and the majority of moderate religious people seem to be inevitable. Currently, in addition to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which has already had structural and cultural projects on religious moderation, Islamic intellectual elites and major Islamic organizations such as NU, Muhammadiyah, Mathlul Anwar, Rabithah Alawiyah Indonesia civic groups, and ordinary people who are active in social media should be the actors playing active roles in campaigning religious moderation.

In the context of Islamic movement and thought, during the authoritarian and repressive New Order, it was only Sunnis who came to the fore. Actually, Shia adherents have already existed at that time, but they were more likely to hide their identities (so-called in Shia as *taqiyyah*). The state intelligence apparatus at that time very closely monitored Islamic movements that came from Iran (because of the Iranian revolution), Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, or Egypt (as the home of the Muslim Brotherhood), and other Middle Eastern countries that were considered to bring conflicting ideologies to the homeland. During the reform era, a variety of heterogeneous, complicated and complex Islamic groups and movements can emerge freely. Therefore, the models and challenges of religious moderation in the two eras are also significantly different.

## Conclusion

Theologically, as explained above, Islam is the religion which has moderate character. Theological doctrines in the Qur'an, Traditions (*sunnah*) and opinions of scholars clearly show that Islam pays serious attention to the teachings of harmonious life between human beings and between humans and their environment. In the context of religious understanding, Islam criticizes the very permissive religious model of Christianity and the rigid and harsh religious model as in Judaism. However, Islam draws inspiration for strict law enforcement from Judaism (such as the *qisās* law) and appreciates the Christian model of amnesty and reconciliation which states that forgiving enemies is better than taking

revenge (see Al-Qur'an verse *al-Shūrā*: 39-42). Islam must be in the middle between firm and stern stances and forgiving and reconciling stances. Each must be understood in context. Islam also teaches the attitude of being in the middle between being too concerned with the world or too concerned with the hereafter. This is the supreme mode of Islam.

Historically, Islamic moderation has been applied by the Prophet Muhammad as described above. In the context of Indonesia as a country with diversity of religions and cultures, Indonesian people should be always aware of the plurality reality and try to maintain and preserve it for a harmonious life. In the past, the Dutch colonial government made several regulations that stipulates religious life of Moslems, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and Confucians so that they get along with each other, because if they fight and conflict which each other the colonial government would, politically and economically, suffer from losses.<sup>58</sup> During the colonial period, there was also the Dutch East Indies theosophical society, as a branch of the international theosophical movement, having its headquarter in Adyar-India, which actively campaigned for ideas about transcendental unity of religions in order to create mutual understanding and harmony among religious adherents in the archipelago.<sup>59</sup> After Indonesia's independence, especially in the New Order era, the ideas of religious moderation were designed systematically by the state (through the Ministry of Religion) and campaigned by Moslem intellectual elites and then disseminated among the educated. During the reform era, in addition to the state and intellectual groups, civil societies which are incorporated in various organizations and associations, have been intensively enthusiastically campaigning for the importance of moderate thinking and acting in religions. The phenomenon of the revival of the silent majority of moderate religious groups, especially from the 2010s to the 2020s was an unstoppable response to the phenomenon of the emergence of conservative and intolerant minority religious groups whose religious understanding and attitudes are in conflict with the cultures of the majority of religious people and with the ideology of the state. This study shows that throughout modern history, the efforts of the majority of religious people in Indonesia in campaigning for religious moderation intellectually, culturally, and politically by any means, models, modifications and different actors according to the context, challenges, and the spirit of the times will never fade away or even died.[]

## Endnotes

1. Writer Team of MUI, *Islam dan Kebangsaan* (Jakarta: Komisi Dakwah dan Pengembangan Masyarakat Majelis Ulama Indonesia Pusat, 2019), 115.



2. Team of MUI, *Islam dan Kebangsaan*, 115.
3. Muhammad Aqil Irham, "Civil Religion dan Masa Depan Umat Beragama di Indonesia: Mempertemukan Ideologi Keagamaan dan Ideologi Kebangsaan," *al-Adyan* 12, no. 2 (2017): 145–158
4. Agus Akhmadi, "Moderasi Beragama dalam Keragaman Indonesia," *Jurnal Diklat Agama* 13, no. 2 (2019): 45–55.
5. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Balitbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI, 2019), 15–16.
6. Abdul Mustaqim and Braham Maya Baratullah, *Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Paradigma Resolusi Konflik* (Yogyakarta: Lintang Books, 2020), 11.
7. M. Quraish Shihab, *Wasathiyah, Wawasan Islam tentang Moderasi Beragama* (Tangerang Selatan: Penerbit Lentera Hati, 2020), 35.
8. Akhmad Mujahidin, "Implementasi Moderasi Beragama di Lingkungan PTKI," in *Moderasi Beragama; Dari Indonesia untuk Dunia* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2019), 60.
9. Aswaja is a religious understanding that is embraced and taught by the Salaf scholars of the generation of companions and tabi'in, who are known to be moderate and avoid anarchy or chaos in society. They consistently maintain the Sunnah of the Prophet and the Companions to this day. They put forward the Aswaja deliberation, which is a religious understanding adopted and taught by the Salaf scholars of the generation of friends and tabi'in, who are known to be moderate and avoid anarchy or chaos in society. They consistently keep the Sunnah of the Prophet and the Companions to this day. They put deliberation and the interests of the greater Muslim community first. See Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara: Ijtihad Genius & Ijma' Indonesian Ulama* (Volume 1) (South Tangerang: Pustaka Afid, 2015), 26.
10. Said Aqil Siraj, *Tasawuf Sebagai Kritik Sosial Mengedepankan Islam Sebagai Inspirasi, Bukan Aspirasi* (Jakarta: SAS Foundation, 2012), 426.
11. Said Aqil Siraj, *Islam Sumber Inspirasi Budaya Nusantara* (Jakarta Pusat: LTN NU, 2015), 73–74.
12. Juan Cole, *Muhammad: Juru Damai di Tengah Benturan Imperium Besar Dunia* (Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet, 2019), 28–33.
13. Idrus Ruslan, *Negara Madani: Aktualisasi Nilai-nilai Pancasila dalam Kehidupan Berbangsa dan Bernegara* (Yogyakarta: SUKA Press, 2015), 95.
14. Martin van Bruinessen, *Rakyat Kecil, Islam dan Politik* (Yogyakarta: Gading, 2013), 298, see also Ahmed Abdullahi An'im, *Islam dan Negara Sekular; Menegosiasikan Masa Depan Syariah* (Bandung: Mizan, 2007), 421.
15. Afif Muhammad, *Agama dan Konflik Sosial: Studi Pengalaman Indonesia* (Bandung: Marja, 2013), 69.
16. In terms of religious harmony, there are at least three elements that are very urgent; First, the willingness to accept differences in beliefs with other people or groups. Second, the willingness to allow others to practice the teachings they believe in. Third, the ability to accept differences and then enjoy the atmosphere of solemnity felt by others when they practice their religious teachings. Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Compilation of Policies and Legislations for Religious Harmony*, Eleventh Edition. (Jakarta: Research and Development Agency and Training and Development Center for Religious Life, 2012), 5.
17. Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-Agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Depan Reformasi* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015), 244.
18. According to Media Zainul Bahri, through these programs, Mukti Ali hoped that at least each religious community could know and understand each other. It became the basis for the establishment of harmonious inter-religious relations. The foundation to be formed through this dialogue is a state of mutual respect. Read more in Fadrik Aziz Firdausi's article, "Abdul Mukti Ali, Bapak Kerukunan Umat Beragama," *tirto.id*, last modified 2019,

- diakses Januari 26, 2021, <https://tirto.id/cKqL>
19. Mukti Ali's religious views which were "rational" and "modern" at that time were indeed "fit" with the hopes and development projects of the New Order. This compatibility is also considered very fitting because the previous minister of religion Muhammad Dachlan fail balance the thoughts of "rationalizing" religion and "development". In Mukti Ali, Suharto found a figure who matched the spirit of his era. See Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-Agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Depan Reformasi*, 244.
  20. Faisal Ismail, *Dinamika Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2014), 107.
  21. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, *Kompilasi Kebijakan dan Peraturan Perundang-Undangan Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, Edisi Kesebelas. (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, 2012), 5.
  22. Ismail, *Dinamika Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama*, 107.
  23. Fuad Jabali dan Jamhari, *IAIN dan Modernisasi Islam di Indonesia* (Ciputat: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 2002), 24.
  24. Tarmizi Taber, "Anatomi Radikalisme Keagamaan dalam Sejarah Islam," in *Radikalisme Agama* (Jakarta: PPIM IAIN Jakarta, 1998), 43.
  25. Fauzan Saleh, *Teologi Pembaruan: Pergeseran Wacana Islam Sunni di Indonesia Abad XX* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2004), 261–262.
  26. Fauzan Saleh, *Teologi Pembaruan: Pergeseran Wacana Islam Sunni di Indonesia Abad XX* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2004), 261–262.
  27. Fauzan Saleh, *Teologi Pembaruan*, 265.
  28. Bahtiar Effendy, *Islam dan Negara; Transformasi Gagasan dan Praktik Politik Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2009), 160-1.
  29. Saleh, *Teologi Pembaruan: Pergeseran Wacana Islam Sunni di Indonesia Abad XX*, 320.
  30. Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Kemodernan, dan Keindonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1987), 218.
  31. Madjid, *Islam, Kemodernan, dan Keindonesiaan*, 219.
  32. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, *Islam dan Negara Sekular: Mengasosiasikan Masa Depan Syariah* (Bandung: Mizan, 2007), 427.
  33. Detailed discussion on pluralism can be seen in the Book of Nurcholish Madjid, *Cendekiawan dan Religiusitas Masyarakat: Kolom-kolom di Tabloid Tekad* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), 63.
  34. Abdurrahman Wahid, "Pribumisasi Islam," dalam *Islam Indonesia Menatap Masa Depan* (Jakarta: P3M, 1989), 83.
  35. In this context, Anis Malik Thoha criticizes the idea of religious pluralism because it will be able to relativism or equate all religions and of course it will confuse all religions massively and en masse. See Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis* (Depok: Perspektif, 2007), 136.
  36. Achmad Siddiq, *Islam, Pancasila dan Ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Jakarta: LTN PBNU, 1985), 15.
  37. Achmad Siddiq, *Islam, Pancasila*, 26.
  38. Lukman Harun, *Muhammadiyah dan Asas Pancasila* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1986), 38.
  39. Abdurrahman Wahid, "Musuh dalam Selimut: Pengantar Editor," dalam *Ilusi Negara Islam: Ekspansi Gerakan Islam Transnasional di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kerjasama Gerakan Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, The Wahid Institute dan Ma'arif Institute, 2009), 18.
  40. Muhammad Aqil Irham, *Demokrasi Muka Dua: Membaca Ulang Pilkada di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kompas Populer Gramedia, 2016), 1.
  41. Heru Nugroho, "Demokrasi dan Demokratisasi: Sebuah Kerangka Konseptual Untuk Memahami Dinamika Sosial-Politik di Indonesia," *Jurnal Pemikiran Sosiologi* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–15.
  42. Abdullah Ahmed An-Na'im, *Islam dan Negara Sekular; Menegosiasikan Masa Depan Syariah*, 399 Uraian serius tentang kelompok-kelompok yang ingin memberlakukan

- syariat di Indonesia, terutama pada awal-awal reformasi secara apik dieksplorasi oleh Noorhaidi Hasan dalam bukunya, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militansi dan Pencarian Identitas di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2008) dan Haidar Nashir, *Islam Syariat: Reproduksi Salafiyah Ideologis di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Psap, 2007).
43. Sukron Kamil, "Fenomena Gerakan Penegakan Syariat Islam: Studi atas Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia," in *Karya ilmiah penelitian agama dan masyarakat seri: Ketakwaan kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa dalam berbagai sistem sosial budaya masyarakat di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, 2005), 7–30.
  44. Wahid, "Musuh dalam Selimut: Pengantar Editor," 19.
  45. Aksa, "Gerakan Islam Transnasional: Sebuah Nomenklatur, Sejarah dan Pengaruhnya di Indonesia," *Yupa: Historical Studies Journal* 1, No. 1, 2017, 1-14.
  46. A. Faiz Yunus, "Radikalisme, Liberalisme dan Terorisme: Pengaruhnya Terhadap Agama Islam," *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 13, No. 1, 2017, 76-94.
  47. Gabriel Facal, "Islamic Defenders Front Militia (Front Pembela Islam) and its Impact on Growing Religious Intolerance in Indonesia," in *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and National Studies of Southeast Asia* (Seoul: Institute for East Asian Studies, Sogang University, 2019), 1-22.
  48. Subhan Hi Ali Dodego dan Doliwitro, "The Islamic Moderation And The Prevention Of Radicalism And Religious Extremism In Indonesia," *Dialog: Jurnal Penelitian dan Kajian Keagamaan* 43, no. 2, 2020, 199-207.
  49. Akhmadi, "Moderasi Beragama dalam Keragaman Indonesia", 45-55.
  50. Babun Suharto, "Kata Pengantar Ketua Forum Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (PTKIN)," in *Moderasi Beragama; Dari Indonesia untuk Dunia* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2019), ix.
  51. Kamaruddin Amin, "Sambutan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam," in *Moderasi Beragama; Dari Indonesia untuk Dunia* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2019), v-vi.
  52. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, *Moderasi Beragama*, vi.
  53. During the New Order era, HTI only focused on the *tatsqif*(coaching) movement through *halaqah*. In other words, at this time HTI carried out its movements secretly underground. See Abdul Qohar and Kiki Muhammad Hakiki, "Eksistensi Gerakan Ideologi Transnasional HTI Sebelum dan Sesudah Pembubaran," *Kalam: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Pemikiran Islam* 11, no. 2 (2017): 365–396.
  54. Pratikno, "Keretakan Otoritarianisme Orde Baru dan Prospek Demokratisasi," *JSP* 2, no. 2 (1998): 18–33.
  55. Andar Nubowo, "Islam dan Pancasila di Era Reformasi: Sebuah Reorientasi Aksi," *Jurnal Keamanan Nasional* 1, no. 1 (2015): 61–78.
  56. Muhammad Ainun Najib, "Politik Hukum Formalisasi Syariat Islam di Indonesia," *In Right: Jurnal Agama dan Hak Azazi Manusia* 6, no. 2 (2017): 156–174.
  57. Muhammad Rizieq Shihab, *Dialog FPI: Amar Maruf Nahi Munkar* (Jakarta: Ibnu Saidah, 2008), 12.
  58. Information and discourses on this matter can be seen in Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Stenbrink, eds., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).
  59. This theme can be seen in Media Zainul Bahri, "Indonesian Theosophical Society (1900-1940) and the Idea of Religious Pluralism", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies (SEAS)*, Kyoto University, Vol. 6, No. 1, April 2017.

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