

The Concept of Religious Moderation in the Qur'an (Maintaining the Unity of NKRI by Understanding the Value of the Qur'an)

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Abstract

Indonesia is a country with diverse ethnicities, traditions, and beliefs. History records that the founders of Indonesia came from different ethnicities, religions, traditions, languages, skin colors, and hair types. These differences did not diminish their spirit of unity in establishing an independent and sovereign Indonesia. Islam is a religion that pays great attention to social aspects. As the holy book, the Qur'an contains teachings that encourage good and proper social interactions (*mu'amalat*) with others without discrimination and emphasize moderation (*tawasut*), avoiding extreme inclinations to the right or left. Therefore, maintaining Indonesia's unity requires a strong spirit and a proper understanding of Islam. This article examines the concept of religious moderation in the Qur'an. To construct and support the author's arguments, various opinions from different sources are cited. The findings documented in this article indicate that the Qur'an, as the holy book of Muslims, encourages good social interactions (*mu'amalat*) and promotes moderation (*tawasut*), avoiding extreme tendencies in any direction.

Keywords: Indonesia, Unity, Qur'an, Moderation

1. Introduction

Social conflict can arise due to various factors, but it is often triggered by human traits such as envy, jealousy, and greed. These three characteristics have been the primary causes of the first social conflict in human history. One of the most frequently mentioned disputes between the first two humans on Earth is the story of Habil and Qabil. This conflict began when their father instructed both sons to offer a sacrificial animal. However, only one of the offerings was accepted, leading to disagreement and ultimately culminating in one brother murdering the other (Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2012). Despite this, Habil had already advised his brother that the rejection of his sacrifice was a sign that something within himself needed improvement and that Allah is all-knowing and just in His judgments.

This story illustrates that conflicts such as disputes, arguments, wars, and even murder in modern times whether between individuals of the same faith, different religions, the same nationality, or different nationalities are often driven by these negative human traits. Envy, jealousy, and greed frequently overshadow the values of faith and morality. According to Dr. Adon Nasrullah Jamaludin, there are five main factors that contribute to the emergence of violence and conflict: (1) Social stratification within society, (2) Economic and political interests that are prioritized by specific groups, (3) Differences in religious interpretation and understanding, (4) Large-scale religious preaching movements, which lead to strong group affiliations and homogeneous perspectives, and (5) Deeply held religious beliefs that are strongly upheld by certain groups (Jamaludin, 2015).



Among the five sources of violence, there are two patterns of conflict that are particularly difficult to eliminate: conflicts rooted in primordial identity and conflicts arising from unequal distribution and misuse of resources (Suaedy, 2007). One historical example of identity-based conflict occurred between 538-576 AD, when Emperor Manuel I of the Byzantine Empire clashed with the head of the church amid ongoing tensions between Islam and Christianity. However, Emperor Manuel I firmly stated that Muslims who left their faith (apostates) should not be forced to denounce their previous religion (Goddard, 2000). This event gave rise to two opposing perspectives: a rigid stance toward Islam and a more moderate and protective approach adopted by a state leader.

The state must play an active role in resolving or even eliminating these two patterns of conflict within society, whether among government officials or the general public in Indonesia. If left unchecked, these conflicts can become deeply rooted and give rise to broader disputes in the political, economic, and cultural spheres. On November 30, 1967, Indonesia hosted an interfaith dialogue forum in Jakarta, where President Soeharto, in his opening speech, expressed concern over the state of the nation. The core message of this government-led forum was to encourage mutual respect for different identities in order to preserve the unity of the Republic of Indonesia, which is founded on Pancasila, a national ideology emphasizing belief in one God, just and civilized humanity, national unity, democracy guided by wisdom and deliberation, and social justice for all Indonesians (Natsir & Anshari, 1969).

In principle, religion and the state are two inseparable entities. The state serves as a framework for the application of religious values in social and governmental life. In the context of Indonesia, Pancasila as the foundation of the state affirms that divine values form the basis of national and state life. Therefore, maintaining harmony between religion and the state is crucial to ensuring social stability and national unity. However, historically, the idea of separating religion from the state emerged as a reaction to religious dominance in governance, as popularized by Voltaire and his contemporaries in the 13th century against the authority of the Catholic Church (Hamka, 2020). Although this concept of secularism does not apply in Indonesia, certain groups still adopt a similar mindset and attempt to realize the separation of religion and the state, which could potentially lead to social division.

To address this challenge, a proper understanding of religious moderation is essential as a guiding principle in balancing religious values and state affairs. Therefore, this study aims to examine the concept of religious moderation in the Qur'an and its application in preserving the unity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Additionally, this research seeks to identify the values of moderation taught in the Qur'an as a guideline for fostering social harmony within Indonesia's diverse society.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research method with a literature review approach to examine the concept of religious moderation in the Qur'an. The research is conducted by analyzing various scholarly sources, including interpretations of the Qur'an, books, journal articles, and other relevant references that discuss religious moderation and its role in maintaining national unity.

Data collection is carried out through document analysis, where written sources are systematically reviewed and interpreted. The study focuses on identifying Qur'anic values that promote social harmony, tolerance, and moderation (*tawasut*) while avoiding extreme tendencies in religious practices and interactions.

The analysis method used in this research is descriptive-analytical, where the collected data are categorized, compared, and interpreted to develop a comprehensive understanding of religious

moderation as outlined in the Qur'an. The findings are then synthesized to highlight the relevance of Qur'anic teachings in fostering unity and coexistence in Indonesia's diverse society. This methodological approach allows for an in-depth exploration of religious moderation and its practical implications for maintaining national integrity in a multicultural and multi-religious nation like Indonesia.

3. Results and Discussion

The spirit of religious moderation is the spirit of seeking common ground amid diversity, ensuring balance and harmony in life (Hanafi et al., 2022). Balance and harmony are the key aspects of practicing moderation—without them, discussing and implementing moderation would be nothing more than an empty ideal without foundation. Balance and harmony should not only be upheld by individuals but also by institutions, whether public or private. This raises an important question: What are the principles of moderation as a fundamental goal in life and governance? Answering this question is essential to strengthening the understanding of the concept of moderation.

The fundamental principle of religious moderation is maintaining balance between paired elements established by the Creator. In life, there must be a balance between reason and revelation, the body and the soul, physical and spiritual health, rights and responsibilities, as well as the past and the future (Saifuddin, 2019). This principle has also been affirmed by the Almighty in His holy scriptures. The primary sources of religion are its sacred texts and the prophets or religious figures who serve as role models through their words and actions.

Balance is a dimension of justice, and it applies not only to human life but also to the universe and its ecosystems (Nurdin, 2018). The characteristics of *wasathiyah* (moderation) include:

- 1) Understanding the existing reality
- 2) Recognizing the priority of religious rulings
- 3) Understanding the laws of nature (*sunnatullah*)
- 4) Comprehending religious texts holistically
- 5) Being open to interfaith dialogue and practicing tolerance

The Qur'an, as the holy book of Islam, clearly explains the mission and characteristics of Islam as a religion, as well as the characteristics of the Muslim community itself. Professor Masykuri Abdillah states that Islam's mission as a religion of mercy for all creation (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*) is found in Surah Al-Anbiya (21:107). Meanwhile, Surah Ar-Rum (30:30) describes the characteristics of Islam as a religion that aligns with human nature (*fitrah*). Additionally, Surah Al-Baqarah (2:143) highlights the moderate nature of the Muslim community (Abdillah, 2021).

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۗ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ ۗ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ إِيْمَانَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَّءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ١٤٣

“And thus We have made you a just and balanced nation so that you may be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger may be a witness over you. And We did not make the qibla (which you previously faced) except to make evident who would follow the Messenger and who would turn back on his heels. Indeed, (the change of qibla) was difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. And never would Allah let your faith be in vain. Indeed, Allah is Most Compassionate and Most Merciful to mankind.” (Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:143)

The Qur'an commands Muslims to practice moderation, but in other verses, it also instructs them to follow the straight path and the path of truth. Therefore, understanding the meaning of moderation in Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:143 requires rational thinking based on knowledge and strong faith. This does not mean that the term *wasathan* (moderate) in this verse is unclear or difficult to comprehend.

The prominent Indonesian Qur'anic scholar, Quraish Shihab, once explained that there are three conditions for practicing moderation, which are knowledge and understanding, emotional control, and caution and careful consideration. Islam is a rational religion that encourages its followers to think critically and rationally (Madjid et al., 2007).

To interpret the concept of *wasatiyyah* (moderation), three fundamental frameworks must be understood:

1. Understanding the existing reality,
2. Always referring to the Qur'an,
3. Applying it to current conditions by addressing contemporary issues, and
4. Using various approaches in interpreting the concept of *wasatiyyah*.

The word *وَسَطًا* (*wasathan*) appears in the Qur'an only in Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:143 (Abdul-Baqi & Fu'ad, 1981). However, there are four other similar forms in the Qur'an, such as in Q.S. Al-Adiyat 100:5: *فَوَسَطْنَ بِهِ جَمْعًا*. In this verse, the word *wasathna* (without *alif* and *tanwin*) means "in the middle," referring to a position or location. In contrast, the term *وَسَطًا* (*wasathan*) carries the meaning of balance or equilibrium.

In Arabic, the general term for balance is *mutawaazin*, and the word for a weighing scale is *miizan*—a tool often used as a symbol of justice. In reality, one of the major issues in society today is the diminishing or lack of justice in legal systems and other aspects of life.

A useful analogy can be drawn from a referee in a football match. A referee is not only responsible for leading the game and standing between two teams with different missions and visions. If the referee simply stands in the middle without enforcing the rules, many violations will occur, ultimately harming both teams. Instead, the referee must act as an impartial adjudicator, ensuring fair opportunities for both teams without favoritism.

Similarly, the phrase *كَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا* (Thus, We have made you a just and balanced nation) refers to a community that upholds and practices fairness (justice) in both governance and religious life. Therefore, *wasathiyyah* (moderation) is a mindset and attitude that leads individuals to act in the best possible way with justice and balance—both for themselves and others—without enforcing absolute equality. This is because balance does not always come from uniformity.

4. Conclusion

The concept of *wasathiyyah* in Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:143 embodies the meanings of balance and justice, which serve as fundamental principles in religious and national life. Religious moderation (*tawassut*), as taught in the Qur'an, emphasizes the importance of positive social interactions (*mu'amalat*) while avoiding extremism in both religious practices and social life.

In the context of governance, implementing *wasathiyyah* values is crucial in maintaining national unity and integrity. The absence of justice in various aspects of life—social, economic, and political—can lead to public distrust in the government, potentially resulting in societal division. Therefore, understanding and applying religious moderation, as taught in the Qur'an, serves as a solution for fostering social harmony and strengthening unity amid Indonesia's diverse society.

Both the government and Indonesian citizens should integrate the concept of *wasathiyah* into the education curriculum to instill moderation values from an early age. Religious and community leaders must actively promote awareness of religious moderation to prevent extremism and intolerance. Furthermore, further research is needed to explore the implementation of religious moderation in public policies and social life in Indonesia.

5. References

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