

THE MOVEMENT OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION: INDONESIAN EXPERIENCE OF NON-VIOLENCE APPROACH TO RADICALISM

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Abstract. Indonesian cases of religiously-inspired radicalism are among the most prominent in the world. Government and non-government agencies are deeply involved in the process of eradicating this phenomenon. From the government side, hard approach has been most visible method taken so far. However, the efficacy of this method is under serious question. Rather than suppressing radicalism, hard approach is even seen as one of many factors leading to the spread of radicalism, especially among the youth. In such cases, the adoption of a new approach is inevitable. In the light of this situation, during at least five years, Indonesian government has launched a campaign to counter religiously-inspired radicalism. The campaign called “Moderasi Beragama” in Indonesian national language, or religious moderation, is aimed at advocating people of religions in Indonesia, especially Muslims, to have moderate mindset on religion, and at the same time practise their religion in proportional way. As a strategy, this approach has brought new hope for deradicalisation movement. The strength of this approach are two-folds. Firstly, it proposes non-violence nature in dealing with radicalism. Secondly, as radicalism is not merely the problem of actions, but the most fundamental element of radicalism is mode of thought, the movement of religious moderation is aimed at moderating mindset. However, in reality, this approach cannot be easily implemented and accepted. In addition to support by moderate groups, some other groups view moderation as a movement towards secularizing Indonesian Muslims, and even further it is perceived as an agenda of the enemy of Islam to destroy Islam using hand of Muslims. This paper looks into deep sides of the movement, how it has been developing during recent years, what benefits it has brought for deradicalisation movement, what challenge that it faces; and how is future of the movement.

Keywords: *intolerance, radicalism, terrorism, religious moderation, Indonesia*

Introduction

Religious intolerance, radicalism, and terrorism are among fundamental challenges in contemporary Indonesian religious life. Although by the passing of time, the potential of those phenomena shows unstable tendencies, they remain threats which need proper responses and treatments. In certain period, radicalism showed ascending trends, but in other time, the decrease of radicalism level can be seen very clearly. The instability of intolerance, radicalism and terrorism tendencies in Indonesia, however, do not disqualify their primacy as threat and problem. Data presented by diverse agencies show different figures, but at the bottom line of all those data is the fact that threat of intolerance and radicalism in Indonesia cannot be undermined. In dealing with religious intolerance, radicalism, and terrorism; various attempts have been taken by both the state and non-state agencies. In general, I identify three most popular attempts, namely:

(a) legal and coercive actions, (b) psychological affections, and (c) cognitive interventions. The popularity of the first approach superseded the second and third; and in some cases, the two later endeavours tend to be ignored. However, those three approaches are basically complimentary, and that single approach does not promise much success. In this case, cognitive intervention has recently been introduced in systematic ways to support other approaches. While hard approach cannot be fully ignored, it should not be adopted as the mere or main approach. Hard and soft approach must be simultaneously used, and put on their respective reach. Hard approach mostly deals with the result, while soft approach deals with source and process.

In this sense, employing all approaches in equal weight is fundamentally inevitable. A new cognitive intervention approach called the movement of religious moderation or *moderasi beragama* pioneered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has been taken. In general, this initiative plays on cognitive level of Indonesian Muslims. It is projected at bringing Indonesian Muslims' religious life into moderate ways and avoid extremism. Among extreme mindset are hostility to otherness, both internal and external. Through moderation, people of diverse religious traditions will be directed towards proportional observance of their religions, great appreciation and toleration to people other than their own religious traditions; and people of different background. In other words, moderation is an initiative to intervene people of religions' extreme mindset. Although the importance of religious moderation agenda cannot be ignored, Indonesian Muslims' attitude towards the movement are non-monolithic. This article intends to examine the movement of religious moderation in Indonesia as a non-radical approach to radicalism. The main thesis developed in this article are: Firstly, in dealing with religious intolerance, radicalism and terrorism, single approach will not promise high level of success. In this context, cognitive intervention must be seriously considered to support other approach. Secondly, the movement of religious moderation which was introduced in recent years by Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia can be seen as a non-radical or soft approach in dealing with religious intolerance, radicalism and terrorism. Thirdly, while this non-radical approach offers more humanistic touch, its level of success has not been proven clearly. In the context of Indonesian contemporary Muslim religious life, the movement and campaign of religious moderation face many challenges.

In order to achieve those points, this article will take following flows. In the first part after this introductory section, it will deal with general portrait of religious intolerance and radicalism in Indonesia. In doing so, this article will present data provided by various agencies on intolerance, radicalism and terrorism. Following empirical data presentation, in the next section, discussion on the basic concept, philosophy and goals intend to achieve by the movement of religious moderation will be presented. In every newly created idea and movement, there always be promises and challenges. So, in the last part, the researcher will evaluate the prospects and challenges of religious moderation movement.

Religiously-inspired radicalism in Indonesia

As many other concepts, radicalism does not belong to one single formulation on which all can agree. The same is true in the Indonesian context. Varied concepts on radicalism have made identification of who are radicals or not an uneasy task. Therefore, it is useful to limit the meaning of radicalism in Indonesian context, or at the very least, in the context of this paper, in order to offer a relatively precise analysis and

avoid ambiguity and elusiveness. In a book published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, radicalism is defined as religious understanding which aspire for social and political changes and take violence as milestone to justify beliefs acclaimed as truth (Zarkasyi and Al-Asyar, 2014). While it cannot be taken as formal and official stance of Indonesian government on the issue, it is useful to identify what the Ministry of Religious Affairs has in general in relation to conception of radicalism as initial indication and how it is related to the movement of religious moderation. Theoretically speaking, scholars on radicalism offer more detailed identification. Kallen, for instance, proposes three general features of radicalism. Firstly, radicalism is a form of negative response to existing condition by rejecting institutions, ideas and values being actually practiced by the authority or majority of people. Secondly, the rejection of radicalism to those elements is not the final goal, as they actually set an agenda to substitute with their versions. Lastly, radicals strongly believe on the truth of their ideology and program against any other ideologies and programs (Kallen, 1972). In similar vein, other definition describes radicalism as “action of sweeping, fundamental and rapid change of laws and methods of governing” (Bialer and Sluzar, 2019).

Many more definitions of radicalism can be prolonged. Nevertheless, the presentation of three examples above only to show some possible intersections among many definitions. Some basic formulations above are complimentary and relevant to be applied in Indonesian context. The most fundamental keyword for radicalism is rapid change, which three definitions quoted above actually meet. In this context, the fundamental change radicals seek in Indonesia is related to the basic structure of the state, whether related to philosophy of state, form of government or system of law. To be more precise, in contextualizing radicalism in Indonesian situation, there are four elements which can be employed to identify groups and orientations as radical. Those are related to ideology, system of law, the use of violence as means of struggle, and the governance of society. These four elements do not refer exclusively to contemporary situation, since debate over such fundamental issues have taken place shortly after Indonesia gained its independence. In this case, scholars see the transformative nature of radicalism in Indonesia. In the first period, Islamic movement transformed into practical politics in power contestations, especially in election. The next phase of this movement is transformation from practical politics to propagation movement which operated on the level of mindset, discourse and thought. The most recent transformation of radical Islamic movement in Indonesia is from radicalism to terrorism (Hasani, 2012).

Similarly, Vedi Hadiz believes that radicalism in Indonesia, especially those related to Islam, is not resulted merely from the fall of Suharto’s administration, as many believe. Rather, it has long history and is connected to more global dynamics. Hadiz maintains that radicalism and terrorism basically related to the fluctuating relationship of the state and political Islam in the post-independence period. In the global context, the rise of radicalism related to the role of political Islam as articulator and defender of justice against developmentalism and capitalism. In short, Islamic radicalism in Indonesia, Hadiz convinces, is partly resulted from long authoritarian developmentalism under the Suharto regime. Therefore, both from the past and present, the contestation over state ideology cannot be overlooked. Before finally stated by the Indonesian national constitution that Indonesia is not a state of religion nor secular state (in the sense that it is not based its constitution on one particular religion nor omit the religiosity aspects in administering the state), debate over making Indonesia as an

Islamic state aroused. Alternatively, Indonesia adopts a national philosophy called Pancasila which literally means five principles. The five principles are: divinity, humanity, unity, togetherness, and social justice. The history behind the formulation of Pancasila explains the ideological debate at the initial stage of formation of Indonesia as a nation-state. However, shortly after the proclamation of independence, rebellion over unitary state of Indonesia with Pancasila as state ideology, emerged. In 1949, Kartosuwiryo led a movement called Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (Islamic State/Indonesian Islamic Army).

Kartosuwiryo is the pioneer, and the movements towards Islamisation of the state is never ending attempts by those who see Islam as a sheer ideology for Indonesia. In subsequent periods, contestation between supporters of the unity of Islam and state and proponent of Indonesia as a unitary republic prevailed. In contemporary setting, debate over the ideology and philosophy of state once again comes to the fore. New Islamic movements of Middle East origins developed in Indonesia, especially in the post-New Order period, set agenda of founding caliphate or Islamic state, and at the same time radically propose the substitution of Pancasila as state ideology with shari'a or Islamic law. Group such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and Front Pembela Islam (FPI) or Islamic Defender Front which have been dissolved by the government are examples of those who reject Pancasila as state ideology and proposed Islam as sole ideology for all people of Indonesia regardless their religious affiliation. In response to this dynamics, Joko Widodo's administration took radical legal and coercive path by dissolving Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Front Pembela Islam. But, legal and coercive responses to suppress ideology proven ineffective. Only two years after the dissolving of HTI and FPI, Khilafatul Muslimin showed its appearance to public. Just as Hizbut Tahrir, Khilafatul Muslimin believes that caliphate is the only solution for problems faced by people of Indonesia. Although this organization was founded in 1997, people never been aware of it and only recently it made its public emergence. Nevertheless, the most important point is that one single approach in dealing with radicalism does not promise efficiency. The anti-Pancasila attitude underlines two important points, namely: strong attempt to bring Indonesia as an Islamic state, on the one hand; and ignorance of the fact that Indonesia is a home for diverse identities, on the other. In addition to five principles mentioned in Pancasila, Indonesian philosophy of state also describes Indonesia as *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* which generally translated as unity in diversity.

Against the backdrop of the afore-mentioned conceptual discussion, relationship with empirical data can be established. Data released by Indonesian national agency for eradication of terrorism (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, BNPT) shows that almost 33 million of Indonesians are exposed to radicalism (Majid, 2022). Similarly, research conducted by Center for the Study of Islam and Society (Pusat Pengkajian Agama dan Masyarakat, PPIM) Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, reveals the level of intolerance among school and university students in Indonesia. The research found that on cognitive level, 58,5% of students show their radical and intolerant tendencies, while 51,5% show internal intolerance, and 34,3% show external intolerance (PPIM, 2018). On attitude level, the survey found that most respondents from the students show moderate attitude (74,2%). However, there is significant difference in terms of internal and external tolerance. Students are more tolerant to those who are from different religions (62,9%), rather than difference in orientations within Muslim circles itself (33,2%). This means that over 50% respondents are more tolerant to Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists; rather than to their

fellow Muslims who belong to other orientation such the follower of Shi'a and Ahmadiyah (PPIM, 2018). On the other hand, the violation of freedom of religion showed decreasing tendency. SETARA (2022) reports that the case for religious intolerance in 2021 slightly decreases compared to the case in 2020. In 2020, there were 180 violation cases while in 2021, 171 violation cases are recorded. The positive trend is also recorded by International NGO Forum on Indonesian Developments (INFID). In 2020 report, it showed a positive shift on the attitude and perception of young generation on issues of intolerance and extremism based on religion compared to findings in 2016 (INFID, 2020).

Related to terrorism as violent actions, in 2021 there was slightly increase in number of terrorism suspect. In 2017, Indonesian authority identified 176 people are suspected related as terrorism. This number doubled in 2018, where 396 people are identified as part of terrorism suspects. In 2019 and 2020, the figure decreased at 275 and 232 people respectively. But, in 2021 increase can be identified as there were 370 people suspected as involved in terrorism (Annur, 2022). Variety of data quoted above clearly show the instability of intolerance, radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia. As the major religious group in Indonesia is Islam, it is understandable that those phenomena are mostly exhibited by Muslim groups. This does not mean that Islam is the only religion with radicalism potential, as all religions in the world basically have radical groups who interpret their religion in radical ways, but reference to Muslims in Indonesia is an unintended consequence of Muslim being major religious group. Furthermore, it should also be taken into account very clearly that within the circle of Indonesian Muslims in general, intolerance, radicalism, and terrorism basically compose minority group. But, as these minor groups take focal position and dominate public sphere (both conventional and new), their influence and following are steadily spread from time to time.

In relation to how intolerance, radicalism and terrorism are dealt with, the employment of legal and coercive treatments might be connected to the level of effectiveness they brought. However, while it has ability to constantly diminish certain circles of radicals, in the long run, the efficacy of such a response is questionable, based on the conviction that coercive approaches potentially invite more simultaneous backlash from more diverse radical groups. It is true that coercive approach or popularly known as hard approach promises instant success. Nevertheless, the success of such approach is superficial and mostly does not touch root of the problem. Radicals are notoriously known for their adherence to the principle that violence is a legitimate method in struggling belief and ideology. Consequently, rather than creating worrying-effect, hard approach for radicals is seen as the justification of their position, and based on such conviction, countering reactions from radical groups are more simultaneous. On the other hand, intolerance and radicalism are forms of religious orientations and involve mindset formulation. In other words, terrorism is basically the fruit of intolerant and radical minds. So, it is inseparable from religious understanding and orientation. In more complicated formulation, religious intolerance and religiously inspired-radicalism involve cognitive perception on how religion is observed. In the Indonesian context, the formation of religious orientation and understanding cannot be separated from socio-political changes, one of them to be the fall of authoritarian regime under Suharto in 1998.

The meaning of Suharto's fall for religious life is significant, as it opened up space of competing religious discourses. Unavoidably, this change has contributed to proliferation of widely diverse religious understanding ranging from the most radical to

the most liberal, from those who adhere to literal understanding to the most contextual comprehension. The major trend, however, is that conservatism is currently on the rise. As observed by Bruinessen (2013), in the last decade, Indonesian Islam witnessed the rise of conservative understanding and practice. This development is then coupled with the rise of Islamic populism or in more exact context, I would identify it as populism of Islamic religious literacy. This trend manifests in the easiness of gaining source of Islamic religious literacy. However, rather than creating more religiously-literate Muslims, it has contributed the rise of conservatism (Zulian et al., 2021). In such a context, cognitive intervention is significantly needed. Cognitive intervention deals with perception, understanding and mindset. It is intellectual in nature, and as will be clear from following section, the religious moderation is an endeavour to fill this lacuna.

Religious moderation movement

Against such backdrops, religious moderation is an important initiative in at least two levels. On the one hand, it complements legal and coercive approach previously adopted by the Indonesian government. On the other hand, it is an alternative voice in the midst of conservatism ascendance in public life. Sociologically speaking, religious moderation movement cannot be separated from push and pull factors in Indonesian Islam contemporary discourse. The domination of conservative discourse on public sphere, both in conventional and new form, has reached a cannibalistic level. By cannibalistic I refer to it as tendencies among many Muslim groups to denounce other views of Islam which are literally dissent from popularly preached versions which later become popular discourse among Muslims. In technical term of Islamic studies, such situation is known as takfir, namely denouncing others as kafir (infidels). In the Muslim world globally, religious moderation is not really a novel movement. Before its recent contextualisation in Indonesian situation, moderation has been echoed by many Muslim leaders and scholars. Even in Indonesian context, it is believed that in the previous period (New Order era), the movement of religious moderation had actually been adopted by government (Irham et al., 2021). Statistically records, in 1960s, al-Azhar shaykh Muhammad al-Madani used the term *wasatiyya* which more or less refers to the same understanding. In the aftermath of 9/11 tragedy in the US, Feisal Abdul Rauf, the imam of Muslim community in New York, campaigned for a vision of moderate Islam. This campaign is part of systematic endeavour to build a bridge between Islam and the west. In the eye of the West, the most popular face of Islam is radicalism, on the one hand; and at the same time, some groups in Islam perceive the West as the enemy, on the other. These two extreme perceptions need to be reconciled. Therefore, Rauf's endeavour of promoting moderate Islam can be contextually understood.

Other Muslim scholar associated with moderation is Yusuf Qaradhawi, a Qatar-based Egyptian scholar. Although some scholars, such as Polka (2019) associates Qaradhawi's moderation to Salafism, Qardhawi's inclination to moderate thinking of Islam cannot be concealed. In his understanding, moderateness is a middle position between two confrontational ends (*al-tawasuth wa al-ta'adul baina al-tharfaini mutaqaabalaini*). Through this formula, Qardhawi exemplifies the middle position on which Islam has to stand, which he views as between two extremes, such as: between divinity and humanity, between individualism and communalism, between sacred and profane, or between pure rationalism and pure textualism. The movement of religious moderation in Indonesia, therefore, is not an alien trend separated from global quest of moderation within the context of interaction of Islam and contemporary phenomena. However, the

uniqueness of Indonesian version of religious moderation is that it is initiated by the government. This has made moderation a strong and a weak movement simultaneously. It becomes a movement with strong imposing force for, if not all people of religion in the country, at least for civil servants who are formally attached to government policies and programme. In contrast, as identity politics becoming more popular, resistance to government is getting wider popular support. One manifestation of the resistance is rejection or at least cynicism to all state's initiatives and policies, and religious moderation movement is not an exception. I will deal with negative responses to the movement in the last part of the paper.

As a movement initiated by the state, it is formally strong. The strength can be seen from systematic endeavours have been taking through many means such as publication, public campaigns, trainings, and research. It is true that the moderation is basic trait of Islamic teachings. However, bringing such discourse publicly is not an easy issue. Therefore, in attempt at spreading the discourse, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has published many books on the subject. In 2019, the Research and Development Division of Ministry of Religious Affairs published a Quranic exegesis entitled *Tafsir Maudhu'i (Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik) Moderasi Islam or Thematic Exegesis on Islamic Moderation* (hereafter I will refer to it as *Exegesis Book*). At the same year, other material is published, namely a book entitled *Moderasi Beragama or Religious Moderation* (hereafter I will call this *Moderasi Book*). As public sphere is now included the media, online campaigns are also taken by the Ministry. The *Moderasi Book* builds arguments on the urgency of religious moderation by proposing both normative and empirical basis. On normative level, it starts the argument by arguing on the function of religion. It says:

...salah satu esensi kehadiran agama adalah untuk menjaga martabat manusia sebagai makhluk mulia ciptaan Tuhan, termasuk menjaga untuk tidak menghilangkan nyawanya. Itu mengapa setiap agama selalu membawa misi damai dan keselamatan. Untuk mencapai itu, agama selalu menghadirkan ajaran tentang keseimbangan dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan; agama juga mengajarkan bahwa menjaga nyawa manusia harus menjadi prioritas; menghilangkan satu nyawa sama artinya dengan menghilangkan nyawa keseluruhan umat manusia. Moderasi beragama menjunjung tinggi nilai kemanusiaan.

...one essence of the presence of religion is to guard human dignity as noble creature of God, including to preserve their lives. This is the reason why all religions bring the mission of peace and salvation. In order to achieve this goal, religions present teachings on balance in all aspects of life; religions also teach that preserving one's life is a priority; taking away one's life equals killing all human beings. Religious moderation respects humanity.

(Kementerian Agama recorded on 2019).

Proposing reason on the function of religion, for me, is a strategy to negotiate with cognitive realm of intolerant and radical groups. Why is it so? Intolerant and radical groups are united by their excessive fanaticism to everything religious. Therefore, my interpretation of this argument proposed by the movement is that it intends to converse with intolerant and radical groups, "if you believe in religion and observe religion in

excessive ways, please remember that religion does not permit radicalism...". Other normative argument posed is related to competing understanding of basic tenets of Islam. As Islam passes long periods and transgress diverse regions, the need for new and contextual understanding is inevitable. So, religious moderation also touches issues of new interpretation of basic tenets of religion in order to respond to advancement of human situations and problems. The movement believes that religious interpretations produced by religious scholars in the past are no longer able to address the complexity of human dynamics in the present time. At the same time, it also underlines that some groups of Muslims fail to respect the diversity of interpretations which mounted in strong fanaticism.

Furthermore, normative argument is not the only basis for religious moderation. The argument goes onto empirical reasons presenting facts of diversity of human beings, in general, and Indonesia in particular. Kamaruddin Amin who is one of director at the ministry, calls Indonesia as "mega diversity country." Such a label intrinsically suggests that Indonesia is very diverse, and diversity should not be a problem for social interaction and relationship among groups in the country. However, within a state where people with diverse languages, traditions, cultures and religions live; multiculturalism has not been easily practised. Oman Fathurrahman are the Head of Working Group on Religious Moderation, Ministry of Religious Affairs, is aware of the potential social and horizontal tensions in in a country with diversity as Indonesia. Among phenomena Fathurrahman identifies are: tendency to contradict religious practises with cultures, majority groups' rejection of other religions house of worship, rejection of public leaders on the basis of difference in faith, and replacing state ideology in the name of certain religion.

From this point, it is obvious that religious moderation is about moderating attitudes of observing religion and not about changing basic principles of religion. Such distinction is fundamental to be made as in the case of Islam, misunderstanding of the movement widespread. In response to such perception, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, former Minister of Religious Affairs, makes clear difference between "Islam" as a religion and "observing Islam" or "professing Islam" (ber-Islam) as empirical practices." As a divine religion, Saifuddin continues, Islam is perfect and complete. So, it does not need moderation since Islam is already moderate within itself. Moderation is basic principle of Islam and it is built in within. So, it is the way Muslims observing Islam and the method Islam is conceptualised that need to be moderated. Saifuddin's strong argument on moderation cannot be seen as merely argument. It is an argument with imposing power, as he was a minister who in his term, the movement is initiated. Therefore, in this context, Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge can be applied. According to Foucault, the possibility of knowledge to emerge and, further seen as truth involve not only the body of knowledge itself, but also the vast chain of power around knowledge. In Foucault's words, power produces and reproduces knowledge based on its designed goals. In this situation, Saifuddin's argument can be seen as knowledge determined by power which is built on certain concepts support the interest of power holders.

Therefore, it can be understood when moderation movement is then followed by intellectual formulation which will shape a new body of knowledge defined by holder of the power. In this case, basic concept of religious moderation is then followed by formulation of the principles, characteristics, and implementation of the movement. The Exegesis Book I refer to earlier explains three principles of moderation. Those are:

justice (*adālah*), balance (*tawāzun*), and tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*). Furthermore, it also sets in detail characteristics of moderation, namely: understanding realities, putting things in priorities, avoiding excessive fanaticism, prioritizing easiness and convenience, comprehensive understanding of religious texts, openness in responding difference and plurality, commitment to truth and justice. Justice or fairness. The Exegesis Book on moderation goes onto explanation of what it means by justice or fairness. Despite many meaning of just and fair in the Qur'an that scholars offered, three meaning of 'adl are employed in the Exegesis Book, namely: a) *tawḥīd*, a declaration that Allah is the only God, b) performing things rightly, and c) applying equality in observing obligations as the servant of God. Some commenters elaborate more on the concept of justice and fairness. He maintains that one manifestation of fairness is respecting differences on the basis of understanding of the situation leading to differences be it on practical or discursive levels. He proposes examples of women's public role in Saudian and Indonesian case.

As have been widely known, women have very limited role in public life in Saudi. While in Indonesia, the practice of women's participation in public life are very common, as far as being judge in the court, Indonesian women are permitted. Saifuddin continues, fairness is needed to analyze differences, which in this case fairness is manifested in the proper understanding of the context. Saudian parameter of women public role is wrong if it is measured from Indonesian practice. On the contrary, Indonesian freedom of women in public sphere will be invalid according to Suadian standard. The attitude of blaming comes from misunderstanding of context. In this case, an important point can be reiterated is that according to the parameter of religious moderation, justice and fairness closely related to contextual thinking. Balance. Another important principle of religious moderation is balance. The Exegesis Book underlines the importance of keeping all things in balance. In more specific relations to religious context, moderation should be understood as balanced religious attitudes, balance between observance of one's own religion and respect to other people's religious stance and practice. The balance or middle way in practicing religion, as suggested by Qaradhawi above, will be the path to avoid from excessive extremism, and revolutionary attitude in observing religion. Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia argues that religious moderation is a solution for the presence of two confronting poles in understanding and practicing religion, ultra-conservative or right extreme, on the one hand, and right extreme or liberal orientation, on the other.

Tolerance. On tolerance, the Exegesis Book formulates that tolerance is respecting and appreciating fellow human beings. It is manifested in avoidance to force opinions and will towards others. Kamaruddin Amin, one director at Ministry of Religious Affairs, articulates tolerance as respecting difference without mixing one's faith and belief. He maintains, "As an example, I am a Muslim, I believe in the truth of my religion. It is *aqidah* (creed, faith). But my friends who belong to other faith and beliefs, they have rights to claim the truth of their religions" (Husnawati, 2022). In relation to balance, tolerance can also be understood as balance between holding the principle and respecting others' principles. Having principle without respect to other people's principle will only resulted in attitude of exclusivism (*i'tizal*), and truth claim. Theoretically, it is believed that those who have tolerant (*tasamuh*) attitude, they will be able to practice the balance (*tawazun*). Both tolerance (*tasamuh*) and balance (*tawazun*) will lead people to perform dialogue in delaing with any problems. Furthermore, "With tolerance, Muslim will be able to avoid discrimination against difference of ethnicity,

wealth, social status, and other worldly attributes. Book of Moderation argues that it is the reason why Islam withdrew the roots of fanaticism in the ignorance era (jahiliyah).

Having said all above discussion, it can be maintained that religious moderation is believed to be the key for tolerance and harmony in all levels: local, national, and global. The preference to moderation by rejecting extremism and liberalism in observing religion is in order to maintain civilisation and create peace. Through this path all people of religion can treat other people in dignity, accepting difference, and living together in peace and harmony. In a multicultural society as Indonesia, religious moderation is no longer preference. It is a necessity. The adoption of above principles, it is expected that Muslim will adopt accommodative and tolerant stance, avoiding extreme attitude in dealing realities. Furthermore, religious moderation is an attempt to deal with radicalization of mind. By this, it refers to a situation where Muslims in Indonesia are influenced greatly by popular discourse on Islam shaped by conservative groups. PPIM Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, released research which map out the landscape of Islamic discourse on the media. In presenting the reference of moderation to Quranic basis, it can be understood that the moderation movement intend to show that any forms of radicalism and extremism are contradictory to the Quran. It is a clear competing discourse to answer those who claim their extreme, intolerant and radical thought, attitudes and actions are based and expression of the true Islam.

Prospects and challenges

The movement of religious moderation is a noble endeavour to bring back Islam to its middle and moderate position, and to avoid extreme understanding and practice of Islam. On theoretical ground, the movement can be seen as a systematic attempt to deal with radicalism using more sophisticated method. It intervenes cognitive aspect of Muslims, especially young generation, with more open understanding of Islam. Notwithstanding, responses to the initiative are non-monolithic. Some groups perceive religious moderation positively, while others see it in very negative way. Supportive views to the movement can be seen from two largest Indonesian Islam organizations namely Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. Both organisations are known as the pillars of moderate Islam, although they are often described as representing modern and traditional Islam respectively. Leaders and scholars of these two organisations show commonalities in supporting the movement at least on three points. Firstly, moderation is much more favorable concept than deradicalisation. Muhammadiyah general chairperson, Haedar Nashir, views moderation as softer method to deal with radicalism and extremism. Similarly, the secretary general of Muhammadiyah Central Board believes that the term “moderation” is much more positive compared to term “deradicalization,” as there are pejorative elements within the term deradicalization. In this context, Nashir sees that Indonesian government has adopted deconstructive approach of deradicalization which will only create new radicalism. In the context of Nahdlatul Ulama’, moderation as a method of deradicalisation has been implemented in the form of teaching on the harmony of state and religion. Robikin Emhas, chairperson of central board of Nahdlatul Ulama, presents a data that more than 27.000 NU-affiliated boarding schools, harmony of state and religion is part of the curricula (Fathan, 2021).

Secondly, moderation is best method to show the moderate, tolerant and peaceful nature of Islam. According to Mu’ti, Muhammadiyah does not have any problem with

moderation, as since its foundation, Muhammadiyah is a moderate Islamic movement promoting modern and moderate orientation of Islam. Furthermore, the moderateness of Muhammadiyah is shown through the coinage of concept of Islam Berkemajuan or Islam with progress. This concept suggests that Muhammadiyah is a movement which is flexible in keeping its two core missions, namely purification and dynamisation of Muslim religious life. Nahdlatul Ulama, on the other hand, untiringly campaigns for the moderate and tolerant nature of Islam through means cultures. Said Aqil Siradj, the former chairperson of NU maintains that the implementation of moderate and tolerant Islam by Muslims will culminate in the presence of rahmat (mercy) for universe. More specifically, NU implements religious moderation in the campaign of Islam Nusantara. Despite the fact that this concept is controversial, the main idea of the concept is that Islam should be harmonised with local elements and cultures as long as they are not contradictory to Islamic basic teachings (Nasikhin and Raaharjo, 2022). Thirdly, acceptance to Pancasila as state ideology. Both Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama' never problematise Pancasila as the state ideology. Haedar Nashir, Muhammadiyah's general chairperson, suggests that in the context of plurality in Indonesia, moderation is suitable with the state ideology of Pancasila as a moderate ideology. Similarly, Fathoni Ahmad, a Nahdlatul Ulama activist, states that the acceptance of NU to Pancasila is based on the fact that the substance of Pancasila is not contradictory to Islamic teachings (Ahmad, 2020).

In contrast to Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama', a number of clerics, scholars and organisations show their reluctance and critical attitude towards religious moderation movement. Such attitude originates from misunderstanding on the basic meaning of moderation which further implemented in the rejection of moderate attitude. Some rejection to religious moderation movement is based on several reasons. Firstly, moderation is a western project. As the researcher have mentioned earlier, conservative narratives are dominant in social media. In this situation, conservative narratives rejecting religious moderation is common. For example, a writer named Alfiana Prima Rahardjo, argues that religious moderation is a western project in order to suppress Islam. He believes that the West does not want to see the glory of Islam. Belief that moderation is a western project is also adopted by a number of clerics who are affiliated in an organisation called Pesantren Muadalah. According to clerics of the organisation, the terminology and concept of Western-style moderation is unacceptable, as it is not in accordance with Eastern culture and Islamic values. Furthermore, Western-style moderation is based on liberal democratic values, secularism, and tolerance which are not appropriately understood.

Secondly, they argue that pesantren have developed their own version of moderation which is claimed as more acceptable by Indonesian Muslims. It is argued that pesantren-style moderation is already based on the concepts of tawazun and tawashuth. Therefore, there is no need for a new mode of moderation to be forced into the pesantren environment. In the context of pesantren, moderation has been implemented since the establishment of. Furthermore, the opponents of religious moderation also critical and cynical to the Quranic verses quoted by to legitimate the movement. A writer named Agustin is convinced that the use the Qur'anic verse by religious moderation movement is only as a tool in to make it justifiable. Moreover, the Qur'anic verses quoted have diverted it from its true meaning (Agustin, 2021). Thirdly, the movement of religious moderation has led to western-originated ideas. Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, a prominent critic of progressive Islamic thought in Indonesia, argues that religious moderation leads

to humanism, relativism, and nihilism (Zarkasyi and Al-Asyar, 2014). One important point of criticism Zarkasyi addresses to religious moderation is the proposed idea on harmony of between religion and culture. Zarkasyi questions which aspects of religious teaching which is in harmony with culture. He believes that if this happens, the limits between Islamic teachings and the culture will be unclear. Brief discussion on response be it in the form of supports or challenges to religious moderation clearly show that as a new initiative, religious moderation has been perceived both as hope and threat. This means that while this initiative promises new hope for deradicalisation, it is able only to reach certain groups. In order to make the campaign attract wider audience, sustainable evaluation of formulation of new strategies are urgently needed.

Conclusion

In Indonesia, from time to time, radicalism has been real in Indonesian religious landscape. In responding to this situation, Indonesian government has taken many steps. There are three most popular attempts, namely: (a) legal and coercive actions, (b) psychological affections, and (c) cognitive interventions. The first attempt emphasizes the use of state-recognized violence to deal with radical groups. The second attempt is a kind of response which focuses on affection and individual persuasion from state agencies to those who were involved to radicalism but are still prone to the ideology. While, the last touches on cognitive level by discursive intervention. Other than those approaches, Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs has launched a new campaign called “moderasi beragama” or religious moderation. Considered as a non-violence approach to deal with radicalism, this campaign has a good prospect as one of many methods to eliminate radicalism. However, doubts to this campaign emerge. Some Islamic groups see this as a non-Islamic way to attack Islam softly, rather to strengthen Muslim community, especially in Indonesia. In contrast to that view, this article believe that religious moderation can be seriously seen as prospective, as it is the only non-violence approach to radicalism operates in the context of Indonesian religious landscape. Therefore, it should be seriously developed and intensively applied in order to eliminate religiously-based radicalism in Indonesia.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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