



## Islamic Moderation (Islam Wasati): The Way Forward To Counter Radicalism

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Received : June 21, 2023

Revised : June 22, 2023

Accepted : June 22, 2023

Online : August 7, 2023

### Abstract

This study aims to explain the paradox of the face of Islam known as Rahmatan lil 'alamin on the one hand but indicates with acts of radicalism on the other hand. The rise of violence in the name of religion tarnished the face of Islam, which is famous for its friendship. Islam as a tolerant and peaceful teaching against radical and liberal Islam. This paper aims to reveal the root causes of acts of radicalism in the name of religion and how to solve them. This research uses literature study by searching and formulating several primary texts and supporting texts that rely on the topic, and then we analyze it to conclude the conclusion in the end. From the existing data, the authors found a relationship between religious truth claims and acts of violence that occurred because of them. Then came the discourse of Wasati Islam as a middle way in religion. Therefore, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding so there are no misunderstandings in religious thought. Muslims must not be trapped in a narrow understanding and stuck with a model of understanding that makes Muslims undeveloped, even liars who transgress. Muslims must be messengers of mercy to this world with calm and peaceful faces by understanding the Shari'ah framework in implementing it.

**Keywords** *Wasathiyah, Islamic Moderation, Radicalism*

### INTRODUCTION

Radicalism comes from the word '*radix*', which means root and is close to the fundamental meaning. The conclusion that can be drawn from the meaning of this radix is related to the ideals that are fought for by looking at the problem at its roots. By understanding the meaning of this radix as fundamental, some people put radicalism in a row with fundamentalist movements.

The meaning of radical has shifted when brought into the realm of politics. In this case, radicalism is an understanding or flow that wants social and political change by using acts of violence as a springboard to justify their beliefs which are considered true. From here, radicalism can be understood as a state political ideology that requires major changes and revolutions as a way to achieve a significant level of progress. This last definition tends to have a positive meaning that can give birth to great progress for world civilization. The tendency for the meaning of radicalism to give rise to political and economic biases basically cannot be separated from the views of its adherents, who have different arguments for interpreting the radicalism movement that is growing rapidly among Muslims. It is not surprising that the positive and negative views on the emergence of the radicalism movement are very dependent on the fundamental beliefs of its adherents.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The word radical is also often interpreted as partisanship, leaning, supporting only one idea, one group, or religious teaching in full and earnest and focused on a goal and is reactive and active. Literally, radicalism or fundamentalism has nothing negative. However, etymologically, radicalism and fundamentalism have experienced a narrowing of meaning with a negative meaning (Salim,

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n.d.).

Radicalism in religion is like a double-edged knife. On the one hand, the positive meaning of radicalism is the spirit towards change for the better, commonly called *ishlah* (improvement) or *tajdid* (renewal). In this way, radicalism is not a synonym for extremism or violence; it will be very meaningful if it is carried out through a comprehensive understanding of religion and applied to the personal sphere. Although on the other hand, radicalism will become dangerous if it reaches the level of *ghuluw* (exceeding the limit) and *ifrath* (outrageous) when it is forced on adherents of other religions (Azra, 1999).

KH. Hasyim Muzadi defines radicalism as "radical in its understanding orism". Usually, they will become permanently radicalized. Radicalism as an ism can grow democratically, by community force and terror. In other words, radicalism has become an ideology and a school of thought. In the view of researchers, everyone has the potential to become radical and adherent to radicalism (radicalism), depending on whether the environment (*habitus*) supports it or not (Abu, 2012).

Another perspective we know is that radicalization, according to Muzadi, is (a person who) grows to be reactive when injustice occurs in society. Usually, radicalization grows related to economic, political injustice, weak law enforcement and so on. We cannot assume that when the terrorists have been arrested, then radicalism has disappeared. As long as justice and prosperity have not been realized, radicalization will always appear in society. Justice involves many aspects: legal, political, educational, social, human rights, and cultural. Law is different from justice. Law is a certain aspect, while justice is the morals of that law (Abu, 2012).

So what about radicalism in religion? A paradox occurs when a person wants to practice religious teachings in truth – but it turns out – they are trapped in a wrong belief. In QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 208. "O believers! Enter into Islam wholeheartedly and do not follow Satan's footsteps. Surely he is your sworn enemy".

Nothing is wrong with the editorial of the verse. However, when the word 'kaffah' is interpreted and understood as a movement to establish an Islamic state or whatever it is, that would be a mistake. Why? Because this movement will certainly justify any means to achieve its goals.

Religious radicalism grows and develops along with the dynamics within the Muslim community; various political, economic, and religious intersections influence its emergence. In this case, we see that religious radicalism often acts in the name of certain religious understandings as its legitimacy, while political, economic and socio-cultural motivations become blurred. In the course of Islamic history, this happened after the death of Umar bin Khattab and was continued by the caliph afterwards. The conflict was never quiet, including in the context of history in Indonesia, such as the Padri War.

Religious radicalism also arises due to distortions in religious understanding. One of the causes of distortion in understanding religion is the understanding of the arguments of the Qur'an and Hadith, only literally or textually. Understanding the arguments of the Qur'an and Hadith only by using this literary approach is dangerous because it can derail someone in misunderstanding. In taking a law from *syar'i* propositions (*istinbath al-hukm*) one must go through a set of methodologies that have been formulated by scholars, both by way of understanding the literal meaning of the arguments of the Qur'an and Hadith (*manthuq an-nash*) or even by digging deeper into the hidden meaning of the arguments of the Qur'an and Hadith (*mafhum an-nash*).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative-descriptive by applying two approaches, firstly normative approach. This approach seeks to uncover the concept of radicalism in Islam and find a way or solution. Secondly, by using the tafsir methodology to explain the meaning of the term in the Quran

and search for relevancies to the subject.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Definition of *Wasathiyah*

In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) (2016), moderation is defined as reducing violence and avoiding extremes. Moderation comes from the Latin 'moderatio', which means neither excessive nor lacking. From these two meanings, it can be concluded that moderation, when associated with Islam, is the behaviour of avoiding an attitude that is too extreme towards religion.

In the Arabic language, moderation is known as *wasath* or *wasathiyah*, which has the same meaning as balanced (*Tawazun*), fair (*Al-'Adalah*), and middle (*Tawassuth*). In addition, moderation can also be interpreted as the best choice. It can be interpreted that the meaning of *wasathiyah* here is to take the middle way between the two things to keep away from extreme things.

The term *wasath* and its derivations are only mentioned five times in the Qur'an. Originally, this term meant something that had two ends that were the same size (Al-Asfahani, tt). Nevertheless, in general, *wasath* is in the middle between two things. Hence, someone who regulates the course of the game is called a "referee" because he is between two players, neither side to the right or left. Likewise, with the word of God:

*Observe the 'five obligatory' prayers – especially the middle prayer (wustha) – and stand in true devotion to Allah' (al-Baqarah [2]: 238).*

There are many narrations about the *wustha* prayer. Some call it the noon prayer, because the word midday is usually used to indicate the time of day, which is the time between morning and evening. Another tradition mentions the Maghrib prayer because the number of cycles is in the middle, between two and four. While other narrations state dawn. All of that is true, when referring to the basic meaning of the word *wasth*. However, the history that is considered strong enough is the Asr prayer, because the time of Asr is in the midst of human activity in carrying out their activities, different from other prayers (Al-Asfahani, tt).

The term *wasath* can also mean normal or reasonable, as in QS. al-Maidah [5]: 89. *Wasath* is also to show the meaning that is between two bad things, as the verse above describes a generous attitude, namely an attitude that is between extravagant and miserly, and also pure milk, which is between blood and faeces. So this is where the word *wasath* is interpreted as a moderate attitude (middle), not to the left and not to the right, '*bainat tafrih wa ifrath*' (Research and Development Agency and Education and Training Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2012)

The word *wasath* also means fair as in the hadith of the Prophet:

From Abu Sa'id said; Rasulullah shallallahu 'alaihi wasallam said: "(On the Day of Judgment) Prophet Nuh 'alaihissalam and his people came and Allah Ta'ala said: "Have you conveyed (the teachings)? Nuh 'alaihissalam replied: "Yes, O my Lord". Then Allah asked His people: "Is it true that he has conveyed to you?". They replied, "No. Not a single Prophet came to us". Then Allah said to Noah 'alaihissalam: "Who is the witness over you?". Prophet Noah said; "Muhammad shallallahu 'alaihi wasallam and his people". So we also testify that Prophet Nuh 'alaihissalam has conveyed the message he was carrying to his people. That's what Allah Most High says (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143 which means), ("And so We have made you 'believers' an upright community (a middle ummah) so that you may be witness over humanity'). *al-washath* means *al-'adl* (just) (Narrated by Bukhari, Hadith No. 3091 and Ahmad, Hadith No 10646).

In the hadith above, it is very clear that the Prophet saw interpreted the word "*wasathan*" to mean "justice". Justice in question is, that Muslims are people who put things in their place, react to things according to their portions and circumstances. Moderate is honest and commitment is not

ambiguous and inconsistent in attitude, so Allah completes QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143 above, after mentioning *wasathan* with "so that you may be witnesses for mankind". In Islamic teachings a witness must be fair and honest.

It seems fair, honest and consistent is very appropriate for the meaning of this verse, in accordance with the interpretation of the Prophet of this verse, namely justice (Arif, 2019).

### **Principles of Moderation in Islam**

Islam has very qualified principles of moderation, namely justice (*'Adalah*), balance (*Tawazun*), and tolerance (*Tasamuh*). These concepts are part of the ideology of ahlus sunnah wal jama'ah (*aswaja*). Sunni Islamic thought actually originates from the struggle of thoughts that have been formulated by Imam al-Hasan Asy'ari (d. 260 H/873 AD) and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 324 H/935 AD) in the field of faith, and following one school of four (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'I and Hambali) in the field of shari'ah, and the field of Sufism following al-Ghozali and al-Junaid al-Baghdadi.

*Aswaja*, one of the characters, is always able to adapt to situations and conditions. Therefore, it is not old-fashioned, not rigid, not exclusive, and also not elitist, let alone extreme. It can even develop and, at the same time, make it possible to break down the already conducive establishment. Of course, these changes must still refer to the paradigm and principles of 'as-shalih wal ashlah' because this is an implementation of the rules of '*al-muhafazhah 'alal-qadim as-shalih wal-akhdzu bil-jadid al-ashlah*' including efforts to match steps according to developing conditions in the present and in the future, namely the expansion of the relevance of implementing concrete thoughts and movements into all sectors and fields of life, be it faith, shari'ah, morals, social, culture, economy, politics, education and so on (Research and Development Agency and Education and Training Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2012)

Muslims must not be trapped in a narrow understanding and stuck with a model of understanding that makes Muslims not develop, even tends to go wild that goes beyond the limits. Muslims must be messengers of mercy to this world with calm and peaceful faces by understanding the shari'ah framework in implementing it.

There are three principles of moderation that Muslims must have in order to be able to realize this *wasathiyah* Islam, namely (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2012) :

1. *'Adalah* (Justice) is an impartial attitude, siding with the truth or not being arbitrary towards something. In Tafsir al-Jalalain, the word *al-'adl* means *at-tauhid* and *al-insaf*. While in Tafsir al-Mawardi, the word *al-'adl* has three meanings. First, it means *at-tawhid* (testimony that there is no God but Allah). Second, doing something with the right (right) and third, acting the same in doing charity for Allah, both heart's charity and outward charity.
2. *Tawazun* (Balance) means giving something its due without adding and subtracting, and balance cannot be achieved without discipline. Balance or *tawazun* implies moderation and movement. This middle attitude is committed to justice, humanity and equality and does not mean not having an opinion. Those who adopt this attitude mean being firm but not harsh because they are always on the side of justice. It is just that their sides are regulated so as not to harm others. Balance is a form of view that does something in moderation, neither excessive nor lacking, not extreme and not liberal.
3. *Tasammuh* (Tolerance) is tolerance or an attitude of respect and respect for others, both towards fellow Muslims and non-Muslims. *Tasamuh* is a tolerant attitude with the core of respect for different views and the plurality of people's cultural identities (Subhan, 2007). The principle of tolerance ensures that a peaceful and harmonious life reflects the will to make Islam a peaceful religion and able to reconcile, as exemplified by the Prophet

in reconciling the Muhajirin and Ansor between the tribes 'Aus and Khazraj (Misrawi, Hadratussyaikh Hasyim Asy'ari Moderation of Community and Nationalism, 2010).

### **Characteristics and Characteristics of Islamic Moderation**

In QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143, Allah SWT. indicates the ummah that will be built in the context of this verse, namely, *ummatan wasatha* (moderate). From this verse, it can be understood that Islam is a moderate religion in the sense that it does not teach extreme attitudes in its various aspects. *Ummatan wasatha* is a society that is in the middle in a moderate sense. *Wasthiyah* here invites Muslims to interact openly and not exclusively with other parties within their own environment and also in global developments.

There are several traits and characteristics of moderation in Islam:

#### **1. Understanding Reality**

There is a saying that in living this life, nothing is permanent or does not change except the change itself. Likewise, humans are creatures that God endows with the potential to continue to develop. The consequence is that humans will continue to experience change and development.

Since the early period of the development of Islam, history records that many different fatwas were due to the different realities of people's lives. 'Umar bin al-Khattab is a character who is widely referred to because of his intelligence in understanding reality which is then used as an excuse for deciding cases which outwardly sometimes appear to be inconsistent with the sound of the text of the Qur'an or hadith.

An example in the Indonesian context is how to apply Islamic law in the life of a nation like Indonesia. While the views will refer to the verses of the Quran to answer these questions, including QS. al-Maidah [5]: 5, and verse 45 and verse 47. Where in these verses, there are groups who understand that implementing Allah's law in every aspect of life, including statehood, is a fixed price, then for a person or group who does not apply, it can be judged as an infidel, unjust and wicked.

#### **2. Understanding Priority Jurisprudence**

Another characteristic of moderate Islamic teachings is the importance of setting priorities in charity. The Qur'an explicitly states that the priority in carrying out religious practices must be known and practised by every Muslim. In QS. at-Taubah [9]: 19-20, Allah explains with a question about the difference between people who give water to people who make pilgrimages and take care of noble mosques compared to people who believe in Allah and the Last Day and really strive in the way of Allah. Verse 19 asserts that they are not the same. Moreover, in verse 20, it is explained that the position of those who are more noble and foremost are those who believe in the true faith and prove their truth by obeying Allah and His Messenger, emigrating and striving for the cause of Allah with their property.

Often people are extreme in adhering to one school of fiqh for sunnah practices and blaming other people who are different, causing differences and hostility. If someone understands the fiqh of priority, then this certainly will not happen. He must be able to see which worship is the priority that must be carried out and which are of Sunnah value which can be abandoned if it is not possible to do them.

#### **3. Avoid Excessive Fanaticism**

Fanaticism, as contained in the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, is a belief that is too strong in teachings (politics, religion and so on) (Bahasa, 2016). This trait usually adorns a

person in religion, and his beliefs can be justified and even commendable. However, at the same time, Muslims are taught to be tolerant, as stated in QS.al-Kafirun [109]: 1-6.

Therefore, harmony among people of different religions must be maintained in a pluralistic society to avoid excessive fanaticism, provided that faith is not sacrificed. The fanaticism prohibited by the Prophet Muhammad is what is termed *ta'asub* or *'ashobiyah*. Each of them highlight their membership or group. The Prophet said, "It is not part of our group (Muslims) who invites to the attitude of *'ashobiyah*."

#### 4. Prioritizing the Principle of Ease in Religion

In QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 185 Allah states, "Allah intends ease for you, not hardship for you". See also in QS. an-Nisa [4]: 28, QS. al-Hajj [22]: 78. Even the Prophet Shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam said, "Indeed this religion is easy". (Narrated by al-Bukhori from Abu Hurairah). Likewise, when the Prophet sent Mua'dz bin Jabal and Abu Musa al-Asy'ari to Yemen, he advised both of them:

*"You should make it easy and do not make it difficult, give good news and do not run away, help each other and do not fight each other."* (Narrated by Imam al-Bukhori and Muslim from Sa'id bin Abi Burdah from his grandfather's father)

What needs to be considered in this case:

1. There really is an old age that allows him to take leniency.
2. There is a syar'i argument that allows for waivers.
3. Sufficient for needs only and does not exceed the limits of the line set by the proposition (RI B.L., 2012)

#### CONCLUSIONS

'Differences are mercy', a situation that must be addressed fairly without a frontal attitude that will tarnish the value of goodness in these differences. With a wise attitude in dealing with differences, in essence it has shown a high level of individual understanding of the substance of religious teachings that uphold peace.

*Wasathiyah* can be interpreted as a balance between various problems in life whose solutions adapt to the conditions of the existing problems, provided that they are in accordance with Islamic religious rules. *Wasathiyah* is also a middle way for existing problems, and in its application, it is not excessive and also not lacking.

With this *Wasathi* Islamic view or religious moderation, at least the ideas that teach anarchist radicalism, which leads to terrorism, can be eliminated or at least minimized. Sowing the teachings of religious moderation in the world of education can counteract the development of radicalism notions. Plurality can be maintained, conduciveness can be implemented, and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia will not be divided.

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