

Synergy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah in Driving Religious Moderation to Achieve Indonesia's SDGs Targets

Sekar Ayu Aryani¹, Erham Budi Wiranto², Ahmad Asroni³, Waston⁴, Siti Fauziyah⁵, Muhamad Yusup⁶

^{1,5}Religious Study Program, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Indonesia

²Sociology of Religion Study Program, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Indonesia

³Faculty of Business & Economics, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Indonesia

⁴Doctoral Program in Islamic Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

⁶Qur'an and Tafsir Study Program, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Indonesia

¹sekar.aryani@uin-suka.ac.id, ²erham.wiranto@uin-suka.ac.id, ³ahmad.asroni@uii.ac.id,

⁴was277@ums.ac.id, ⁵sitifauziyah3392@gmail.com, ⁶muhamad.yusup@uin-suka.ac.id

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Abstract

Objective: This study examines the synergy between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah in promoting religious moderation to contribute to Indonesia's achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The primary objective is to explore how these three key actors collaborate in fostering moderation and how their efforts align with SDG targets, particularly those focused on peace, justice, and strong institutions (Goal 16). **Theoretical Framework:** Theoretical frameworks of religious moderation and functionalism guide the study, emphasizing the importance of balanced religious practices in a pluralistic society. **Literature Review:** The literature review highlights the roles of NU and Muhammadiyah in religious moderation, noting their unique contributions: NU's inclusive Islam Nusantara approach and Muhammadiyah's emphasis on Wasathiyah Islam. These frameworks underscore the importance of tolerance, justice, and harmony in national life, aligning with Indonesia's commitment to promoting peace and reducing social fragmentation. However, studies also point to challenges, such as ideological differences between the two organizations and their relationship with the government, which complicate cross-sector collaboration. **Methods:** A qualitative research methodology was employed, utilizing interviews, observations, and document studies to gather data from key informants within the Ministry of Religious Affairs, NU, and Muhammadiyah. Thematic and constant comparative analysis were applied to identify key patterns and themes, including the interplay between religious moderation, government policy, and SDG implementation. **Results:** The research findings reveal that while progress has been made in promoting religious moderation, the lack of effective collaboration between the government and religious organizations remains a significant barrier. NU's close ideological ties with the government contrast with Muhammadiyah's critical yet supportive stance, leading to fragmented efforts. This fragmentation hampers the full realization of shared goals, including the achievement of SDGs in Indonesia. **Implications:** The study's implications suggest that strengthening cross-

sectoral collaboration and aligning organizational efforts are essential for achieving religious harmony and advancing SDG targets. **Novelty:** The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the intersection of religious moderation and SDGs, offering insights into how religious actors can contribute to sustainable development.

Keywords: religious moderation, sdgs, nahdlatul ulama, muhammadiyah, cross-sectoral collaboration

INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has emerged as a crucial approach to fostering harmony and tolerance in a multicultural and multi-religious society like Indonesia. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, alongside influential Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, plays a pivotal role in promoting this concept. This synergy is particularly significant in addressing challenges related to religious extremism, intolerance, and the fragmentation of societal values, which can hinder national development [1].

Religious moderation aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, which emphasizes peace, justice, and strong institutions. By fostering dialogue, understanding, and cooperation, these actors contribute to creating a stable social environment conducive to achieving other SDG targets, such as quality education (Goal 4) and reduced inequalities (Goal 10). The collaboration between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, NU, and Muhammadiyah combines governmental authority with grassroots influence, ensuring that the message of moderation reaches diverse societal layers. Their initiatives include education programs, interfaith dialogues, and community-based projects that emphasize shared values of humanity, justice, and tolerance. This paper explores the strategies and impacts of this synergy in promoting religious moderation and its role in supporting Indonesia's commitment to achieving the SDGs, highlighting the importance of unity in diversity for sustainable national progress [2].

As the two largest mass organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah bear a greater responsibility in pursuing religious moderation. With a very large time base, the success of these two mass organizations determines the main pattern of religious life in Indonesia. If both of them succeed in religious moderation in their respective sympathizers, then it can be said that most Indonesian citizens have been moderate [2].

The nuances of moderate religious life have not been felt evenly. On the contrary, religiously motivated violence still occurs. Looking back a little, we in the Reform Era began to roll violence, and religious conflicts spread. The Reform era, for many, promised a new climate of independence in all respects, including religious freedom. However, it turns out that the freedom gifted by the Reform Era gave birth to new unfreedoms, especially for minority groups. Before the collapse of the New Order, there were only 9 (nine) blasphemy cases, but after entering the Reform Era, the number of cases swelled almost tenfold namely 88 cases. This is just an example that was recorded by the Setara Institute based on its research on blasphemy cases from 1965-2017. The Setara Institute recorded 217 incidents with 329 violations of freedom of religion/belief (KBB) throughout 2023. This figure increased significantly compared to the previous year, which was 175 events with 333 actions [1],[2].

Databoks (katadata networks) also offer interesting data on individuals who commit acts of violence. Of the 422 cases of religious freedom violations that occurred in Indonesia in 2020, 184 of them were committed by non-state institutions, including community groups, individuals, and community organizations (CSOs). The majority of violations of religious freedom were committed by non-state actors, especially through

acts of intolerance, which amounted to 62 incidents. In total, there were 32 cases of reporting blasphemy, 17 cases of refusal to build places of worship, and 8 cases of prohibition of worship activities carried out by non-state actors. In 2020, non-state actors carried out 6 acts of vandalism targeting religious sites. Over the past year, there have been a total of five incidents involving violence and denial of other activities by non-state actors [2].

Religious radicalism is a problem that is no less complicated. The National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) in 2022 said that there are 33 million people exposed to radicalism in Indonesia. This figure is a positive achievement because it is a downward trend. The decline in 2019 was 38.4 percent, and from 2020 to 2021 it fell to 12.2 percent [3]. The downward trend is also inseparable from an anomalous factor, namely the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, 2023, which enters the post-pandemic era, raises new concerns about increasing radicalism. Even the Presidential Staff, Moeldoko, has dared to predict that radicalism will increase along with the political climate around the 2024 elections.

From some of the above statistical records, at least there is an idea that the problem of violence in the name of religion, whatever its form, will remain a serious concern of some parties, especially the two largest mass organizations in Indonesia, NU, and Muhammadiyah. This study seeks to answer how the Roadmap of the Religious Moderation Program by the Government?; What is the Manifestation (Conceptual and Practice) of Religious Moderation in the Context of NU and Muhammadiyah? As well as how the synergy pattern of the three actors (Government, NU, and Muhammadiyah) in succeeding Religious Moderation in Indonesia; and what the inhibiting and supporting factors. It must be admitted that the study of religious moderation is still dominated by research from Indonesian academics. Apart from the fact that the concept of religious moderation is relatively new, there are also not many foreign researchers who have conducted studies.

Related to the common problem mentioned earlier, namely religiously motivated violence that continues to occur, moderation in its most common application seems to lead to deradicalization efforts. Religious moderation is seen as effective for deradicalization efforts, according to Arifiansyah et al., for several reasons; 1). Providing awareness of human nature to do good, and the need to coexist in heterogeneity, without the boundaries of culture, religion, and state. 2). A moderate attitude prioritizes hospitality and compassion, upholds human dignity, and lives a life based on religion, morals, and universal ethics. 3). Religious people are aware of being citizens as well as being part of the world's citizens, respecting other truths. 4). Religious moderation is the most appropriate content and practice to prevent radicalism and maintain harmony in Indonesia which is knitted with Pancasila values. A moderate, fair, and balanced mental attitude is key to managing diversity. 5). With religious moderation, it will be able to organize a pluralistic and multicultural society in the development of information technology in Indonesia. 6). Religious moderation is important not only for the creation of constructive relations between religions externally but also internally to create harmony between various sects in one religion [4].

Based on some of the academic anxiety above, it is important to question a few things. First, what is the concept of Religious Moderation that the government wants; second, how to apply examples according to certain contexts, for example when practiced by mass organizations that already have a distinctive institutional tradition; and third, what criticisms have been addressed to this religious moderation policy.

To analyze the data in this study, the theory of Identity in Network Society by Manuel Castells (born February 9, 1942), a Spanish sociologist widely known for his contributions to the study of information, communication, and globalization societies was used. He is one of the leading thinkers in the analysis of social change triggered by

information and communication technology (ICT). Castells, in *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture* (1996–1998), explains how digital technologies have transformed the global economy, power structures, and social relationships. In this trilogy, Castells introduces the concept of *a network society*, a model of society in which digital networks dominate economic, political, and cultural life [5].

In this society, communication networks become the main structures that connect individuals, institutions, and communities around the world. Castell's theory of *Space of Flows* requires the existence of a new space formed by the flow of information, capital, and power through electronic networks. This space is different from traditional physical spaces, where social interaction is no longer dependent on geographical location. Main Components: Electronic information flows, Actors and organizations that operate global networks, Technological infrastructure such as the internet and communication media. The flow space creates new centers of power that are more dynamic and decentralized.

Castell talks about identity and Social Movements. According to him, identity is a source of conflict. Castells asserts that identity plays an important role in social movements in the information age. He distinguishes identities into three types: (1) Legitimizing Identity: An identity that supports and strengthens institutional power, (2) Resistance Identity: An identity that emerges as a form of resistance to domination, (3) Project Identity: An identity created to change the social structure by creating a new vision of society [6].

Castells emphasized the importance of media and communication in power structures. He introduced the concept of *power in communication*, which is how power in the information age increasingly depends on the ability to control and influence public narratives. Traditional mass media and digital platforms have an important role to play in shaping public opinion, mobilizing support, or undermining the legitimacy of governments and institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

From several studies that have been conducted, there are at least four tendencies of the theme of religious moderation studies.

First, religious moderation is used as an approach in education, especially infiltration into the curriculum, both openly and *hidden*. For example, in the context of secondary education, religious moderation is positioned as one of the approaches in the subject of Islamic Religious Education, by affirming three concepts, namely *tawassuth*, *ta'adul*, and *tawazun* [7]. Religious Moderation is even taught in educational institutions for early childhood, namely through learning with multimedia [8]. Religious Moderation can also be developed through literature-based learning [9]. Then, according to Ardiansyah, religious moderation needs to be a hidden curriculum in educational institutions [10]. At the level of pesantren education, the study of religious moderation is associated with the principle of understanding *ahlussunnah waljama'ah* among students with the tendency of *wasatiyyah* as a result of understanding aqidah and Sharia or worship and morality [11].

Second, religious moderation, is specifically intended as a weapon for counter-radicalism or deradicalization. Afwadzi and Miski's research, in addition to highlighting Religious Moderation as an education policy, also sees the direction of its application as a counter-radicalism strategy in higher education [12]. In line with that, Ardiansyah also sees religious moderation as a shield against radicalism.

Third, religious moderation is seen as a revision of religiosity. For example, Kawangung places religious moderation as a contextual modification of tolerance, because tolerance is seen as an old paradigm that has lost its value [13]. In addition, in Subchi's study, it was found that religiosity has a positive effect on religious moderation,

meaning that religious intellect, ideology, public practice, private practice, and religious experience support a person to be moderate enough and can prevent intolerance and radicalism [14].

Fourth, religious moderation is also often associated with local culture. This is none other than because one of the moderate indicators is an appreciation for local culture. The study of Pajarianto et al. as an example, found that local culture plays a central role in religious moderation, especially in building harmonious relationships between different religious believers, both in the nuclear family and in the extended family [15]. Local culture for religious moderation has even been integrated into education policies by several PTKI campuses in Central Java. UIN campuses can incorporate local cultural treasures into their curriculum. Thus, this affects the attitude of its academics to be more moderate [16]. Appreciation for culture is also shown in the appreciation of local manuscripts. For example, the research of Mahrus et al. found that the Islamic texts of Sambas in West Kalimantan, including the manuscripts of Maharaja Imam Sambas, are loaded with messages of religious moderation education which can be seen in the principles of flexibility and renewal (*tajdîd*), the principle of convenience (*taysîr*), and the principle of tolerance (*tasâmuh*). In fact, the madrasah founded by Maharaja Imam Sambas is one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions that prioritizes religious moderation in West Kalimantan [17]. Perhaps Mirzon Daheri's study linking religious moderation to increasing inclusive attitudes as a condition for association at the global level is the only one that sees the other side of the use of local culture [18].

METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative. Qualitative research is carried out to understand social phenomena from the perspective of participants or research subjects. This method focuses more on the meaning, interpretation, and context of an event or phenomenon, rather than measuring or calculating variables quantitatively. Qualitative research is usually conducted to answer exploratory research questions, explore a deep understanding of a problem, or describe the complexity of a phenomenon. Considering that the research that wants to look at the role of three actors in Religious Moderation is quite complex, qualitative deepening is more necessary than measuring numbers.

Data were collected by interviews, observations, and document studies, which were corroborated by literature studies. This research uses a Sociology approach, especially with a theoretical perspective of Functional structure. The data collected was sourced from informants and official data owned by three actors, namely the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, the Central Executive of Muhammadiyah, and the Executive Board of Nahdhlatul Ulama. Data was also dug up from the field where Religious Moderation by the three actors was carried out.

Qualitative data analysis involves the process of investigating and interpreting qualitative data to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied. This research will use two methods of analysis, namely: 1). Thematic Analysis involves the identification and understanding of the main themes or patterns in the data. Researchers gather data into larger categories or themes, identify relationships between themes, and develop a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied. Religious Moderation will be the main theme, then the components will build a more complete understanding of the main theme; 2). Constant Comparative Method. The continuous comparison method involves a constant comparison between newly collected data and existing data. This helps identify similarities, differences, and patterns that emerge throughout the study. The construction of Religious Moderation among NU and Muhammadiyah will be continuously associated with the concept of Religious Moderation which was formally proclaimed by the government.

Table 1. Research Methods

Aspect	Description
Research Type	Qualitative research to understand social phenomena from the perspective of participants.
Purpose	Explore the role of three actors in Religious Moderation, emphasizing meaning, context, and complexity.
Data Collection Methods	Interviews Observations Document studies Literature studies
Theoretical Approach	Sociology approach with a Functional Structure perspective.
Data Sources	Informants Official data from the Ministry of Religion, Muhammadiyah, and Nahdlatul Ulama. Field observations in locations of Religious Moderation programs.
Data Analysis Methods	1. Thematic Analysis: Identifying and interpreting main themes (e.g., Religious Moderation and its components). 2. Constant Comparative Method: Comparing new and existing data to find patterns and relationships.
Main Focus	Construction of Religious Moderation among NU, Muhammadiyah, and alignment with government concepts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept and Manifestation of Religious Moderation in the Context of Nahdlatul Ulama

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is an Islamic organization with the largest number of followers in Indonesia. In addition to being known as the largest Islamic organization, NU since its establishment in 1926 has a moderate character (*wasathiyyah*) and is actively involved in preaching moderate Islam (*wasathiyatul Islam*). NU has positioned itself as the guardian of religious moderation by developing an approach based on the principles of inclusivity and benefit. NU puts forward the Islamic teachings of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for all nature), a principle that describes Islam as a religion that brings peace and benefits to all beings. NU develops tolerant, balanced, and fair Islamic values through education, da'wah, and involvement in social actions. In general, this chapter will explain the bases, concepts, and manifestations of religious moderation from the perspective of NU, in various aspects and dimensions.

1. The Historical, Cultural, and Theological Basis of NU Religious Moderation

Historically, culturally, and theologically, NU has been known as a moderate Islamic organization since its establishment. The historical and theological roots of religious moderation in NU can be seen from several aspects. First, religious moderation in faith. This can be seen from the view of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, one of the founders of NU, about the doctrine of *Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah*. In general, *Hadratussyaikh* K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari explained in the *treatise Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah* that the foundation of religious moderation in the view of NU can be seen in terms of faith. In the Articles of Association of NU, it is said that NU as *Jam'iyah Diniyah Islamiyah* has the Islamic faith according to the understanding of *Ahlussunnah waljamaah* by recognizing four schools, namely Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hambali [19]. This issue of faith is very important and one must be careful not to fall into extremism such as *takfiri*, an understanding that easily disbelievers other people/groups [20].

Second, religious moderation in fiqh. This refers to the rule of *al-fiqh al-fahmu fahman tāmman*, which is to understand fiqh comprehensively or comprehensively. *Hadratussyaikh* Hasyim Ash'ari in the book *Risalah Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah* the concept of NU fiqh refers

to Imam Shafi'i or if he is unable to taklid to Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, and Imam Ahmad bin Hambal so that he is not fixated on the teachings of Imam Shafi'i alone [19].

Third, religious moderation in Sufism. NU Sufism refers to Imam al-Ghazali and Imam Junaid al-Baghdadi. In the book *Risalah Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah*, it is explained that Sufism is not contrary to shlaw. Therefore, moderation in Sufism is manifested by practicing sharia on the one hand, but also practicing Sufism on the other hand [21]. In its development, religious moderation formulated by *Hadratus Shaykh* K.H. Hasyim Ash'ari was then popularized among NU with the concepts of *tasāmuh*, *tawasuth*, and *tawāzun*. *Tawasuth* means that the character of the community is not extreme in seeing various kinds of problems and always takes the middle way from various extreme points both in thinking and extreme points in the movement. *Tasāmuh* means tolerant, which is a tolerant society that always takes an attitude of *amai* and does not impose its will. While *tawazun* means balance, which is trying to find balance in various kinds of problems faced [19]. While *i'tidal* means upright or always upholding justice.

According to K.H. Syukron Makmun, Katib Syuriah of the Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU), religious moderation has become the spirit of NU that has long been practiced by *nahdliyyin* residents, even long before NU was established. He said that:

"Drawn far back to 1936, that Indonesia is a Darussalam, that is a reference from *Buhyatul Mustarsyidin*. In the Banjarmasin Congress, it was also very moderate even though at that time people were still close to the Ottomans, and the caliphates were monarchical. The jihad resolution of kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, then the Purwokerto congress in 1945/1946 confirmed that it was about defending the country. Then Karno was given the title of *waliyul amri ad-dharuri bi syaukah*, with the idea that even though this country does not have *al-imamu a'dhom*, it is still fiqhically possible, for example, marrying a woman who does not have a wali with a state apparatus as its head. This is also a form of moderation. Then the next concept is the new wasathiyah Islam. Thus, religious moderation in NU is similar to the building of knowledge, just like in the past, friends used *ijma* and *qiyas* in daily life. In the past, in NU, there was such a thing as *lailatul ijtima'*, many in the villages, which was an effort to moderate Islam, how people's understanding of Islam was bridged with *tashdiq*, with implementation, adjusted to today's picture. It all proves that religious moderation was born from the womb of NU. It is not something foreign" [22].

2. Nusantara Islam: Religious Moderation in the Style of NU

NU stands as a traditional Islamic organization with Islamic practices that uphold local cultural values. The attitude of Islamic acceptance of local wisdom and culture was further elaborated by NU into what is called Islam Nusantara, an Islamic model and practice that is in harmony with the cultural values of the archipelago (Indonesia).

Conceptually, Islam Nusantara consists of two words: Islam and Nusantara. Islam is a noble religion brought by the Prophet PBUH and spread throughout the world. While the archipelago is a region/region that refers to Indonesia and its surroundings in Southeast Asia, it does not cover the whole of Southeast Asia, because not all Southeast Asia is entered by Islam. The archipelago used by Islam Nusantara includes Indonesia and its regions and surrounding nations that have a relationship with the tradition of spreading Islam in early times. In the context of the current nation-states, those included in the concept of the archipelago are Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Southern Thailand, and Timor Leste. Nusantara Islam is Islam that has a certain pattern and interacts flexibly with the traditions of the archipelago [23].

Akhmad Sahal, a young NU intellectual, interpreted Islam Nusantara as a religious and cultural dimension that is interrelated and intertwined with each other. This perspective embodies Islam which compromises territorial boundaries that have certain cultural roots. This results in a complete understanding of Islam that no longer presents itself in a rigid and closed manner, but appreciates differences that can accommodate the values contained in a certain area [24]. Kyai Sa'dullah, a former Katib PBNU, defines Islam in the archipelago as Islam that

accommodates culture and tradition. Islam Nusantara is a *khasais* (distinctiveness) that characterizes Indonesian Islam [25].

The concept of Islam Nusantara is a model of understanding, practicing, and applying Islam in the fiqh segment of muamalah as a dialectic between texts, sharia, and *'urf*, culture, and reality in the archipelago [26]. Azyumardi Azra said that the normative doctrine of Islam Nusantara adheres to the same laws of faith and harmony as the ummah in any part of the world [27]. Meanwhile, Achmad Syahid views Islam Nusantara as an articulation and variation of Islam in the archipelago, whose pressure, color, pattern, and style in the archipelago are different from those in other regions. In this context, Islam in the archipelago is different in character and pattern from Islam in Brunei, the Southern Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Southern Thailand, and various other parts of the Islamic world [28]. Islam Nusantara is a way of reading and viewing Islam in Indonesia that is different from Islam in other regions which later became the cultural identity of NU Islam. The forms, manifestations, and expressions of Islam Nusantara can be varied because they do not presuppose a single singularity, but have characters and patterns that can be similar. The Islamic treasures of the archipelago are spread throughout the archipelago in the form of a network of scholars and early Islamic spreaders, reference books taught, traditions, literary works, mosques, Islamic boarding schools, langar, tombs of guardians and kyai, and so on. Apart from the diction and articulation of its actors which are sometimes not always uniform, for NU, Islam Nusantara is a way designed to fence NU citizens and their religious traditions from those who are categorized as salafis.

Historically. The beginning of Wahhabism in the archipelago began in Sumatra. Then, it spread to various other regions. Muslim societies influenced by Wahhabism grew up and brought with them the spirit of puritan Islam that was thick with its Arabic, hostile to the local traditions practiced by the community and opposed Sufism and madzhab traditions. Wahhabism influenced the minds of Islamic organizations at that time along with the spirit of fighting colonialism. Wahhabism is welcomed by some Muslims without a critical attitude. Islam Nusantara is an expression of the people of the archipelago who embrace Islam which emulates the Prophet PBUH through the Qur'an, hadith, *ijma'*, *qiyas*, and the opinion of salaf scholars, which are implemented in the context of the archipelago by the bearers or spreaders. In the context of NU, Islam Nusantara encourages NU followers (*nahdliyyin*) to have a national attitude that prioritizes a balance between *Islamic ukhuwah*, *basyariah ukhuwah*, and *wathaniyah ukhuwah* [29]. This national politics is in line with the character of Indonesian society which attaches importance to harmony in interhuman relations, a moderate attitude, and tends to choose a peaceful path to achieve harmony in community relations [30].

3. Key Concepts of Religious Moderation in the NU Perspective

In the Islamic perspective, religious moderation or *wasathiyah* refers to the teachings of the Qur'an, which refers to Muslims as *ummatan wasathan* or moderate people (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 143). This concept describes Muslims as a group that takes a middle ground, avoiding extremism, both in thought and practice. NU interprets this concept as a foundation to avoid fanaticism and radicalism, as well as to promote Islam based on the principles of justice, balance, and humanity. Religious moderation in the context of NU is also related to the concepts of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawassuth* (balance), *tawazun* (justice), and *i'tidal* (perpendicular or fair). These four principles are not only values that are internalized into NU's religious practices but also become a guide in responding to social, political, and cultural changes that occur in Indonesia. According to Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), this moderate attitude is a reflection of the belief that Islam not only regulates the relationship between humans and God but also demands an attitude of harmony and welfare in social life [31]. The following is explained in more detail and comprehensively the values of religious moderation that are believed and practiced by the NU.

First, *tawassuth* (balance). This principle teaches Muslims to always be in the middle, both in terms of views and practices. This balance has become NU's guideline in various religious and social issues that are developing. NU believes that true Islam is Islam that always puts the

interests of individuals and society in a balanced manner. In practice, NU rejects extreme views, both in terms of religious radicalism and excessive secularism. This *attitude of tawasuth* is based on NU's ability to find substantive values from Islam, by practicing Islamic teachings that are contextual to the needs of society by the development of the times [32]. The concept of *tawasuth* is actualized by taking a middle way in religion, not exaggerating in religion [33]. In terms of sharia law, the principle of *tawasuth* is carried out by NU by combining in a balanced manner between revelation and reason. This *attitude of tawasuth* can suppress textual extremists and intellect. With a *tawasuth attitude*, NU will become a *wasathan ummatan* (moderate group) [34]. In socio-community life, NU responds to various social phenomena from many sides and considers many things before expressing an attitude. This is done to avoid blind fanaticism that can lead to extremism [35].

Second, *tasamuh* (tolerance). *Tasamuh* is an integral part of NU's teachings which believe that every individual and group has the right to live according to their respective beliefs. NU supports the right to freedom of religion and rejects discriminatory attitudes towards different groups. According to Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *tasamuh* is part of NU's mission to promote a peaceful and open Islam, which respects differences and strengthens harmony in a pluralistic society [36]. *Tasamuh* is an attitude of tolerance, respect, tolerance, tolerance, and mutual respect. This attitude which is a characteristic of NU greatly affects the perspective on a problem. With a *tasamuh* attitude, *nahdliyyin residents* place diversity as a necessity to be appreciated. Even though it is *tasamuh* does not mean that NU justifies every opinion, teaching, and understanding.

Third, *tawazun* (balanced). *Tawazun* has a balanced attitude in serving. That is, harmonizing service to Allah SWT, devotion to fellow human beings, and devotion to the environment. *Tawazun* means to align the interests of past, present, and future interests. In making decisions, NU is always based on *shura* (deliberation). This concept considers aspects of balance and common benefit (*al-maslahah al-ammah*). When there is a disagreement, what must be put forward is *al-mujlà billati hiya ahsan* (rational debate oriented for good).

Fourth, *i'tidal* (perpendicular/fair). The essence of this principle is to uphold the values of justice, not be biased, and remain upright in truth and justice. The principles of NU are in line with the values of Pancasila which strongly uphold justice. According to K.H. Aqil Siradj, this attitude of *i'tidal* (perpendicular or fair) must be implemented in daily life. For example, always try to treat fairly between the rich and the poor, between minority and majority groups. NU teaches that Islam requires its people to be fair in every action and decision. This attitude of fairness includes the treatment of others regardless of religious or ethnic background. NU believes that justice is the main value in creating social harmony and order.

In its implementation, the attitude of *i'tidal* is a handle in applying the attitude of *tawasuth*. KH. Dr. As'ad Said Ali in his speech in Istanbul said that in carrying out *tawasuth* and *i'tidal*, NU uses three approaches. First, *fiqh al-ahkam*, which is a sharia approach for people who are ready to implement the positive law of Islam (*ummat ijabah*). Second, *fiqh al-da'wah*, namely the development of religion among the community through coaching. Third, *fiqh al-siyasah*, which is NU's effort to color national and state politics.

4. Manifestation of NU Religious Moderation

In the socio-political context of Indonesia, NU has consistently championed religious moderation through various programs and activities that prioritize a peaceful and dialogical approach. The following are various concrete manifestations of religious moderation in the context of NU.

First, Islamic education is based on *wasathiyah*. *Wasathiyah-based* education or moderation is one of the tangible manifestations of NU's commitment to creating a peaceful and tolerant Islam. In NU Islamic boarding schools, *wasathiyah* values are taught in depth to the students. Education within NU not only focuses on theological and sharia aspects but also on the formation of a character that respects diversity and upholds national values. The students are

educated to become individuals who have a balanced view of Islam, without extreme tendencies, both in the form of religious radicalism and excessive secularism.

This education includes an inclusive approach that respects differences of opinion in Islamic law (*fiqh*), with teaching that refers to the schools recognized in Sunni Islam (*ahlussunnah wal-jama'ah*). Through this education, NU seeks to internalize *wasathiyah values* to the students, who are then expected to become agents of peace in the community. In many NU Islamic boarding schools, efforts are also made to incorporate elements of local wisdom into the curriculum, to harmonize Islamic teachings with local culture. NU is known as a traditional Islamic organization that loudly maintains local culture as mentioned at the beginning. This is certainly in line with the values of religious moderation embraced and developed by the government (Ministry of Religious Affairs).

Second, interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Dialogue between religious communities is a manifestation of the principle of *tasamuh* or tolerance, which is one of the basic values in NU teachings. NU is very active in promoting interfaith dialogue as an effort to foster mutual understanding and respect for differences in beliefs. This dialogue aims to reduce the potential for conflicts between religious communities, which are often triggered by misunderstandings or prejudices against other groups. Interfaith dialogues carried out by NU in collaboration with various interfaith organizations become a medium to introduce peaceful and tolerant Islamic values to the wider community. In addition, through interfaith cooperation, NU participates in various humanitarian activities involving other religious leaders, especially in dealing with social issues that require interfaith solidarity. NU's autonomous organizations such as the Ansor Youth Movement and Banser are directly involved in guarding houses of worship of other religions. This is done because several times houses of worship, especially churches, have been targeted by terrorist groups. These initiatives are one of the clear examples of how NU practices the principles of religious moderation in daily life, by promoting mutual respect and working together for the common good.

Third, involvement in socio-economic empowerment. As an organization committed to the principle of *tawazun* or social justice, NU is also active in community economic empowerment activities. NU not only plays a role in religious affairs but also in efforts to improve the socio-economic welfare of Muslims. NU has various economic empowerment programs, especially in rural areas where the majority of the population are NU members. This program includes business capital assistance, skills training, and mentoring to improve people's living standards.

NU views that religious moderation also means taking a role in improving the socio-economic conditions of the people so that Islamic values can be applied in a just and prosperous life. According to Ahmad Syafii Maarif, these efforts are based on the principle that Islam not only regulates human relations with God but also regulates relations between human beings to create social justice [36].

Fourth, rejection of extremism and radicalism. NU firmly rejects extremism and radicalism in any form, be it in the context of religion or political ideology. This rejection of extremism is a manifestation of the principle of *tawassuth* which prevents Muslims from excessive or fanatical attitudes in religion. NU believes that Islam is a religion that advocates a middle attitude and upholds human values. Therefore, NU plays an active role in providing understanding to the public to reject radicalism that often takes the name of religion. In this context, NU also cooperates with the government in various deradicalization programs, especially for groups that are vulnerable to the influence of radicalism. Through education, discussion, and counseling activities in Islamic boarding schools and taklim councils, NU strives to prevent the spread of extremist ideology and equip the public with a moderate and peaceful understanding of Islam [37].

Fifth, national politics. Religious moderation in the context of NU is also reflected in the attitude of the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia towards national politics. NU always puts the interests of the nation above the interests of groups or factions and rejects all forms of identity politics that can divide the unity of the nation. NU also introduced the concept of *fiqh*

*siyasa*h or Islamic political law which is oriented towards national unity, while still upholding the principles of justice and democracy. In the political realm, NU often acts as a mediator and provides advice for political leaders to act fairly and prioritize the interests of the people. NU also often invites Muslims in Indonesia to participate in the democratic process peacefully and responsibly. Through this approach, NU seeks to strengthen the principle of religious moderation in Indonesian political life, which is a manifestation of the Islamic teachings of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. According to K.H. Faiz Syukron Makmun, Katib Syuriah PBNU, calls on every *nahdliyyin* resident to be obedient to religion as well as love the nation and state (nationalist).

NU's commitment and contribution to upholding national politics in Indonesia is undeniable. Since its establishment in 1926, NU has been known as one of the persistent Islamic organizations in the history of Indonesia's independence struggle. Islamic boarding schools became pockets of resistance to colonialism. The kyai and students in many regions bravely and tirelessly took action against colonialism. The peak was when *Hadratus Shaikh* K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari inflamed the call for a Jihad Resolution on October 23, 1945. The Jihad Resolution is an invitation to NU residents in particular and Muslims in general, to carry out *jihad fi sabillillah* (read: war) against the colonizers. The following is the content of the Jihad Resolution [38]:

- a. Indonesia's independence which had been proclaimed on August 17, 1945, must be maintained.
- b. The Republic of Indonesia, as the only legitimate government, must be defended and saved, even though it asks for the sacrifice of property and soul.
- c. The enemies of the Republic of Indonesia, especially the Dutch who came by piggybacking on the tasks of the allied army (American-British) in terms of prisoners of war of the Japanese nation, would certainly use political and military opportunities to recolonize Indonesia.
- d. Islam, especially NU residents, is obliged to take up arms against Belanda and his comrades who want to return to colonize Indonesia.
- e. This obligation is Jihad which is an obligation for every Muslim (*fardlu 'ain*) who is within a radius of 94 KM and the law is *fardu kifayah*.

The call for the Jihad Resolution ignited and pumped the people's spirit to resist colonialism. All the people's forces were mobilized and moved towards Surabaya until there was a fierce war between the fighters and the British troops on November 10, 1945. Facing the fighters, the British troops were desperate, even one of their leaders was shot dead. Surabaya can also be recaptured by the fighters. The battle of November 10, 1945, was a historic event because the British together with NICA (Allies) who *incidentally were the* champions of World War II could be conquered by the students and soldiers of Surabaya. The victory of the fighters was thanks to the call of the NU Jihad Resolution and the success of Tomo's oration in igniting the spirit of war against the allied forces and NICA. The spirit of jihad against the allies and NICA flared everywhere. The pesantren has been transformed into the headquarters of Hezbollah and Sabillilah. The lively atmosphere colored people's lives. The NU Jihad Resolution triggered the Battle of November 10, 1945, in Surabaya, which is now commemorated as Heroes' Day [39].

The Concept and Manifestation of Religious Moderation in the Context of Muhammadiyah

1. The Concept of Religious Moderation in the Perspective of Muhammadiyah

Moderat or Wasathiyah as the basic religious attitude in Muhammadiyah has its foundation in the verse of the Qur'an about the ummatan wasatha. The term is enshrined in the Qur'an Surah al-Baqarah verse 143. According to Ilham Ibrahim, the early generation of mufassirs referred to Islam as a middle group or *the wasathan ummatan* in the context of Christian spiritualism and Jewish materialism. Meanwhile, Ibn Katsir said that the ummatan wasatha describes the ideal picture, the best ummah (khair al-ummah) as stated in the Qur'an Surah Ali

Imran verse 110. In short, in the context of Islam, wasathiyah means a middle ground between two extreme camps [40].

The concept of Wasathiyah Islam often comes to the surface when violence arises in the name of Islam. According to Quraish Shihab, in his interpretation of this verse, the term *wasath* refers to everything good and by the context. Therefore, Muslims are expected to make the wasathiyah principle a guideline. Over time, the meaning of *wasath* has expanded to "middle," which means that Muslims need to interact, dialogue, and be open to all parties. Without openness to the surrounding environment, including the global environment, how can they exercise the role of fair witnesses or wise mediators?

The second concept related to religious moderation in Muhammadiyah circles is the concept of Darul Ahdi Wa Shahadah. This concept is often referred to as Muhammadiyah Political Ideology. As decided in the 47th Muhammadiyah Congress in Makassar in 2015, Muhammadiyah views Indonesia as a Pancasila state, which then the Pancasila state is seen as the state of Darul Ahdi Wa Syahadah.

Darul Ahdi means a consensus country or a state of agreement, *ijma* of all citizens regardless of religion, ethnicity, language, ethnicity, or skin color. While Darusyadah is, a witness country. The point is that by agreeing on all the differences that we have, we must prove as a testimony that we will work hand in hand to build the nation and state as a commitment in the process of building an advanced and superior national civilization.

Muhammadiyah has a firm commitment to realize Muslims as *khayra ummah*, which is the best ummah as stated in QS. Ali Imran: 110, "*You are the best people born for man, commanding the makruf, preventing from the unrighteous, and believing in Allah.*" With this foundation, Muhammadiyah strives to form Muslims who are not only superior in faith but also play an active role in spreading goodness and preventing evil in society.

In addition, Muhammadiyah is also determined to make Muslims a *wasatha ummah* (middle class) who maintain a balance between this life and the hereafter. This principle is by QS. Al-Baqarah: 143, "*And thus We made you a middle ummah so that you may bear witness to mankind and the Messenger (Muhammad) to bear witness to you.*" By becoming a moderate and fair people, Muhammadiyah encourages the creation of a harmonious, tolerant, and open society to diversity.

Furthermore, Muhammadiyah emphasizes the role of Muslims as *martyrs 'ala al-nas*, namely witnesses to human life. This role requires the ummah to not only pay attention to themselves but also make a real contribution to the improvement of human life at large. In this spirit, Muhammadiyah directs its da'wah to be a blessing for the universe, as stated in QS. Al-Anbiya: 107, "*And We did not send you (Muhammad) but to be a blessing to the whole world.*"

With this commitment, Muhammadiyah continues to encourage Muslims to become agents of social transformation that bring goodness, peace, and justice. Through education, social services, and a comprehensive da'wah movement, Muhammadiyah strives to create a civilization based on universal Islamic values and able to provide real benefits for all mankind.

There are eight criteria of Wasathiyah Islam that Muhammadiyah has said, namely (1) *Attawassuth*, which is a position in the middle and straight path, (2) *al i'tidal* means behaving proportionately, fairly, and responsibly with what is done, (3) *at tasamuh*, which is acknowledging that if there is a difference with another person or with another group, always respect it. Be tolerant, tolerant, and open-minded in all aspects of life; (4) *asssyurah* is deliberating. i.e. relying on consultation that solves problems; (5) *al islah*, peace; (6) *Alqudwah*, giving birth to noble initiatives and leading for human welfare. (7) *almuwatanah* establishes a state, a nation, and respects citizenship. (8) *attawazun* means balanced in all respects, including in the use of *all* (evidence derived from rational reason) and *naqli* (derived from the Qur'an and Alhadith).

In the document of the State of Pancasila as Darul Ahdi wa al-Syahadah, ten points of interpretation of Pancasila in the view of Progressive Islam are also formulated which are in line with the personality of Muhammadiyah.

- a. Charity and fight for peace and well-being.
- b. Multiply friends and increase brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah).
- c. Have a broad view by holding fast to the teachings of Islam.
- d. Religious and community in nature.
- e. Paying attention to all laws, laws, regulations, as well as legitimate national policies and philosophies.
- f. Doing amar ma'ruf nahi munkar and being a good example.
- g. Active in the development of society with the intention of islah and development by Islamic teachings.
- h. Cooperate with any group of Muslims in the effort to broadcast and practice Islam, as well as defend their interests.
- i. Assisting the government and cooperating with other groups in maintaining and building the country.
- j. Be fair and corrective inward and outward wisely.

The ten points of Pancasila interpretation that are in line with the Muhammadiyah Personality are important formulations that strengthen and bind the members of the Organization to advance and contribute to the progress of Indonesia [41].

Reading the various descriptions related to the Muhammadiyah version of religious moderation above, there is no doubt that although Muhammadiyah rarely heralds the concept of Religious Moderation, it is very explicitly depicted in its various views and even those from official sources of the organization explaining that Muhammadiyah is in line with the government's policy on Religious Moderation.

Religious Moderation as a policy rolled out by the Indonesian government in 2018 has been running with various variations of activities and also its dynamics. The response of the community to this discourse both before and after it was regulated is quite varied. Pros and cons are inevitable. Besides, there are religious mass organizations that are indeed "natural" moderate even before this regulation, so that they can run in line with this policy. However, not a few groups of religious organizations have had a line of struggle that tends to be rigid in adapting to Indonesian culture, so it seems that the existence of this policy does not affect their style of expressing their religion. There are also groups of academics who take this policy very critically and contribute in the form of enlightenment to the community according to academic traditions.

The question is to what extent this policy has been successful by the goals set by its formulators. The answer is at least that it can be said that it is still in the process with various supports as well as challenges. What is certain is that no policy does not require the support and participation of various parties by their respective roles and functions. As academics, whatever form of participation, we must always be in line with the academic nature that prioritizes openness as well as critical disposition.

2. Manifestation of Religious Moderation in the Context of Muhammadiyah

- a. Muhammadiyah conducts moderation according to organizational culture or manhaj

According to Abdul Mu'ti, whether or not there is a religious moderation program, Muhammadiyah always sets principles by the Muhammadiyah Manhaj which is wasathiyah. The concept of Wasathiyah has been owned for a long time and continues to be practiced and developed in the lives of Muhammadiyah citizens.

Muhammdiyah has supporting concepts, for example, Darul Ahdi Was Syahadah. The concept produced by the Makassar Congress emphasizes how Muhammadiyah's political attitude and views towards the Pancasila state once again affirms two things: actually with

Darul Ahdi, Muhammadiyah does not have an agenda to change the basis of the Pancasila state and change the political system in Indonesia so that the statement in the '45 Constitution of Indonesia that Indonesia is a unitary state of the Republic is not a *question*. In Muhammadiyah, Pancasila as the basis of the state is also not a question in Muhammadiyah, it has been accepted as something in quotation marks, yes *given*, because it has become an agreement and there is a historical background as well. Muhammadiyah accepts this not only because there is a historical responsibility that the basic formulation of the state of Pancasila involves Muhammadiyah leaders (Karno, Ki Bagus Hadikoesoemo, Pak Kasman Singodimejo) and secondly, there is also the responsibility to carry out tasks in the future [42].

The Muhammadiyah organization *manhaj* encourages Muhammadiyah to develop a tolerant religion and this is certainly in line with Religious Moderation.

b. Realistic Manifestation is not a 'Gimmick'

The practice of religious moderation in Muhammadiyah is manifested in realistic tolerant behavior. For example, giving students in Muhammadiyah educational institutions the right to worship according to their religion. Providing services to Muhammadiyah Hospital without distinguishing between religion and affiliation. Religious moderation does not need to be shown with gimmicks, such as interfaith greetings that read the greetings of 6 religions.

"People can still just say Assalamualaikum, good morning, good afternoon, good afternoon, then the prosperous greetings are finished, there is no need until then it is complete plus the Pancasila greetings, later if religion is added, what else. In my opinion, it is a bit of a gimmick like that, it does not reflect a moderate attitude in the view of Muhammadiyah" [42].

Muhammadiyah considers realistic manifestations/real actions more important than symbolic things and imagery alone.

c. Avoid formalities

Muhammadiyah's way of moderation is carried out while still paying attention to the organizational culture and avoiding the hustle and bustle that tends to be formalities. Formalities are also feared to lead to a tendency to become Religious Moderation as a tool to map citizens who are pro-government with those who are not. According to Mu'ti, the moderation training that has been rampant in recent years is not much different from what the New Order has done in the form of the Alignment of Guidelines for the Appreciation and Practice of Pancasila (P4).

"Similar to the P4 training in the past, Muhammadiyah also did not dissolve in the hustle and bustle, yes, please let the government do what is part of the religious moderation program as part of the realization between the government's version of religious moderation and the moderate attitude in Muhammadiyah, yes, especially regarding certain attitudes that we sometimes give notes to me to be capital, it does not have to be like that" [42].

Excessive formality will be counterproductive to Religious Moderation which was initially enthusiastic about middle and anti-extremism. So formalities should not be a new extreme.

d. Puritan-Inclusive: Faith-firm moderates

Muhammadiyah, especially through the concept of Abdul Mu'ti, expects a moderate attitude that is far from the image of soft faith and syncretic.

"..... Sorry, for example, the inappropriate interpretations of moderation, have been criticized by various circles. For example, being moderate is interpreted as a soft attitude, the middle attitude is interpreted as an attitude that does not show a certain position in religious matters, or sometimes it is interpreted precisely as a syncretic attitude, because for reasons of moderation, then various behaviors tend to mix up one religious teaching or belief, so this is what I think in various records" [42].

Therefore, Abdul Mu'ti offers the concept of puritan-inclusiveness, which is the view that Muhammadiyah citizens must be puritanical in religion in the sense of having a firm and firm

faith in maintaining the main things in religion. At the same time, it must be inclusive in the sense of being able to accept differences, not discriminating in providing services to the people and being able to cooperate with anyone as long as it is in line with the organization's vision.

Synergy Pattern of Government, NU, Muhammadiyah

1. Position of the Three Actors

Manuel Castells, through his theory of *network of power* and *network society*, provides a powerful analytical tool to understand the relationship between the government and mass organizations. With the tool of the theoretical framework, the findings in this study can be explained in three aspects, namely the position of the three actors, the identity of the three actors, and the synergy pattern of the three actors.

Regarding the position of the three actors, it can be explained in several points. *First*, is the aspect of forming a power network. In this case, it seems that there is dominance in the Network. Castells explained that actors who have access to network centers tend to have more power. In this case, the government and NU can be considered as part of the core of the power network. The government chose to partner with NU because these mass organizations have ideological closeness, appropriate resources, and a willingness to support government programs without significant criticism. NU, as part of the core network, gained legitimacy and resources from the government, strengthening its position in civil society. However, Muhammadiyah has a different position because it is not a core part of the network that is formed. Muhammadiyah, although it supports government programs, is on the fringes of the power network because of its critical position. This critical attitude makes the government seem 'reluctant' to make Muhammadiyah the main partner. Even if it is entered as a core network, it is very possible to affect the stability of the power network that has been built strongly, namely with NU.

Second, the position of the three actors also shows the fragmentation or segregation and polarity of the Network. Castells highlights that networks are often fragmented, creating clusters that are not directly interconnected. Muhammadiyah which lacks a relationship with NU, or vice versa, reflects this fragmentation. This fragmentation, according to Castells, can stem from ideological differences, competition for resources, or efforts to maintain the identity of the group. This fragmentation of networks weakens the potential for cross-group collaboration, even though they both support the same goal (government programs). The existence of a 'distance' between NU and Muhammadiyah certainly creates polarization in civil society.

Third, the influence of the media and representation in the network. Castells emphasized that power also lies in the ability to control information and meaning. In this context, the government and NU may use certain media or narratives to strengthen their legitimacy. The ideological closeness between the Government and NU is increasingly 'klop' because government actors are also filled with many NU cadres, especially in the network of implementers of this religious moderation program. On the other hand, Muhammadiyah, with its critical reasoning, can create an alternative narrative, but their limited access to the network center makes the counter-narrative not have a significant impact. Then, no less important, the disconnect between NU and Muhammadiyah is also caused by the lack of effective communication channels. The government's communication pattern, for example, received criticism from Muhammadiyah, where the letters sent seemed to be only formalities so Muhammadiyah responded with a moderate level [\[42\]](#).

Fourth, the position of these three actors can be seen as a Power Relation. In a networked society, power operates not only through hierarchy but also through control over the network itself. The government, through an alliance with the NU, controls the flow of resources, legitimacy, and social influence. Muhammadiyah, although it supports the government, chooses to maintain autonomy because it does not want to be part of the network structure controlled by the government and NU.

By describing the four points of analysis on the position of the three actors, through Castells' theory, this finding can be understood as the dynamics of power relations in a network society, where (1) the government and NU form the core of the power network, (2) Muhammadiyah is on the periphery of the network, supporting the government but with criticism, so it does not have full access to the core of the network, (3) The fragmentation between NU and Muhammadiyah reflects segregation in the network of civil society, which ultimately weakens the potential for more inclusive collaboration. Therefore, the strength in the implementation of the Religious Moderation program lies in the ability to manage relationships, allocate resources, and produce meaning.

2. Three-Actor Identity Model

The position of the actor determines the identity model that can be a marker of each actor. Identity by Castells is indeed positioned as a source of conflict. He also emphasized that identity plays an important role in social movements in the information age. This study found that the Government, NU, and Muhammadiyah have different identities.

First, the Government and NU *Legitimizing Identity*. This type of identity is pinned to actors who support and strengthen institutional power. In the government's relationship with NU, NU plays the role of a core partner in the power network. Ideological closeness and support for government programs have made NU gain greater legitimacy. This is reinforced by access to resources and institutional support provided by the government. In other words, NU uses its identity to strengthen its existing power network. At the same time, the Government leverages its partnership with NU to create stability and control in civil society, especially to gain support without significant criticism.

Second, Muhammadiyah has a *Resistance Identity*. Although it does not appear as a form of resistance to domination, the critical position of Muhammadiyah and its involvement or "different" role as Muhammadiyah's choice, explains this identity. Muhammadiyah is in a marginal position in the power network, Muhammadiyah develops an identity of resistance through criticism of the government and NU. This critical attitude led to exclusion from the core of the power network but also provided space for Muhammadiyah to maintain its autonomy. This fragmentation is a form of resistance to the dominance of the government-NU network, although it still supports government programs at a certain level.

Third, both the Government, NU, and Muhammadiyah, three play *Project Identity*. This type of identity is activated to change the social structure by creating a new vision of society. Muhammadiyah, even though marginalized, has the potential to build an alternative narrative through the media and its community. This vision can offer a more inclusive and independent model of society from the dominance of existing power networks. The government and NU are both more focused on maintaining the status quo, so opportunities to create a new vision tend to be limited. However, the government can take advantage of the polarization between NU and Muhammadiyah to maintain control, instead of encouraging social transformation. Although that possibility remains, there is no indication of that direction in the study's findings.

The dynamics between the government, NU, and Muhammadiyah show complex interactions in the network society. NU strengthens the legitimacy of institutional power (*Legitimizing Identity*), while Muhammadiyah emerges as an actor of resistance (*Resistance Identity*). However, the potential to create *Project Identity* is more visible in Muhammadiyah, although it is limited by its access to the center of the power network.

3. Three-Actor Relationship Pattern

The Religious Moderation Program as a national program has been supported by both NU and Muhammadiyah mass organizations. The pattern of synergy between the Government, NU, and Muhammadiyah in implementing the Religious Moderation program can be illustrated in the following diagram.

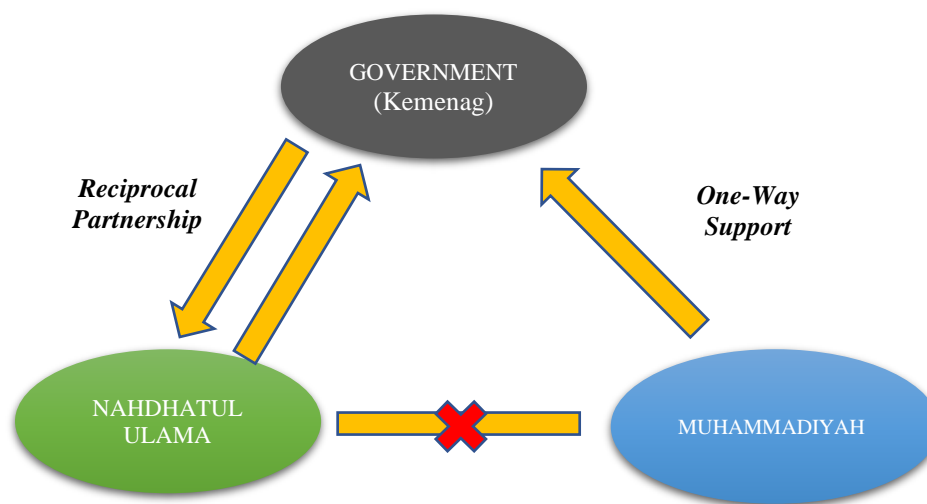


Figure 1. Three Actors Synergy Pattern

This pattern shows that NU has a closer partnership with the government in the form of two-way cooperation. In this case, the NU community, both personally and institutionally, is more involved in working with the government in the Religious Moderation program. At the same time, Muhammadiyah also supports the Religious Moderation program in its own way so that it does not cooperate with the government in the form of programs.

In the communication pattern, the Government has tried to coordinate with all parties, including Muhammadiyah. This study has not succeeded in finding the intensity of each communication, so it is uncertain whether the government's communication to various parties is balanced. However, in terms of response, it appears that Muhammadiyah is less responsive than NU mass organizations. This has an impact on the dominance of NU's involvement compared to Muhammadiyah in religious moderation programs. To better understand this pattern, the following is an analysis of each actor.

a. The government is the initiator and the main motor

Religious Moderation is a program initiated by the government. The assumption that Religious Moderation is an initiation of NU is not confirmed. It is undeniable that the values of Religious Moderation are in line with the values mainstreamed by NU even before the Religious Moderation program existed. However, as a national program, Religious Moderation is not an institutionally initiated program by NU. It is the government that has since the beginning tried to formulate a social engineering formula that can be a solution to the nation's problems related to religious life.

Since Indonesia entered the Reform Era, freedom has become wilder, providing space for the growth of ideas, attitudes, and even movements with intolerant characteristics. Not a few of these intolerant groups have transformed into destructive radical forces and even terror groups. This condition makes society more fragmented and creates unhealthy social relations. The government cannot remain silent when citizens experience this crucial problem. So the Religious Moderation Program was launched as one of the solutions, which is expected to be the main solution.

This solution is not a new offer because in concept and practice it is not much different from previous programs that have been launched since Indonesia was still young. For example, the Trilogy of Harmony program requires harmony between people of the same religion, harmony between people of different religions, and harmony of religious people with the government. Religious Moderation is the same as the Trilogy of Harmony in terms of the basic concept. It's just that the values that are fought for and the indicators of success are expanded. For example, by adding anti-violence and respect for local traditions.

The government as the initiator has tried to involve all components of society. Islamic organizations and other religions have been invited to get involved. However, the response to this invitation is quite diverse. Some enthusiastically welcomed and proactive, but some responded just as a formality and were less active, and some even seemed reluctant to participate.

However, the government remains the main driving force, especially after Religious Moderation was inaugurated as a national program by the president. Financial support and facilities are provided adequately to ensure that the Religious Moderation program runs. The government then increasingly organized Religious Moderation into a program with a clear and long-term roadmap.

b. NU as the main partner

During the administration of President Joko Widodo, it is undeniable that NU had a very friendly relationship with the government, moreover, the Minister of Religion chosen by the president was one of the best cadres of NU. *This privilege* seems to facilitate NU's efforts to contribute more to the Religious Moderation program launched by the government. This can be seen from the involvement of NU cadres in Religious Moderation programs.

For example, in some trainings, TOT, and programs to strengthen Religious Moderation, participants affiliated with NU often take the dominant portion. Including the trainers involved, most of them are NU cadres. Even if there are Muhammadiyah cadres, the number is not so significant. However, this does not mean that cadres other than NU are hampered. As evidence, there are Aisyiyah cadres who have become instructors of Religious Moderation [43].

c. Muhammadiyah as the main supporter

Muhammadiyah supports the Religious Moderation program because the values brought are indeed needed by this nation. However, Muhammadiyah chose to focus on similar efforts that have become *ijtihad* and Muhammadiyah traditions. For example, Islam Wasathiyah and the concept of Darul Ahdi Wa Syahadah. The implementation of this concept for Muhammadiyah is already a form of great support for Religious Moderation because it has the same values.

If there is an impression that Muhammadiyah is not involved in the Religious Moderation program, of course, it only arises from a formalistic view. In the sense that Muhammadiyah does not stutter and does not participate in the frenzy of voicing the word Religious Moderation. However, even though it does not use the word Religious Moderation, in practice it still campaigns for Wasathiyah Islam and the concept of Darul Ahdi Wa Shahadah everywhere. For example, many Muhammadiyah schools and campuses have non-Muslim students. This is proof that the practice and concept of Darul Ahdi Wa Syahadah have been carried out by Muhammadiyah.

d. Three Actors Synergy Pattern

The government as the initiator and main motor in the Religious Moderation program. NU is the main partner of the government because it uses the same terms as the government and involves its cadres in religious moderation programs funded by the government. Muhammadiyah, although it does not use the same terms as the government and does not access much government funds for Religious Moderation, still moves to spread the spirit of moderation with terms typical of Muhammadiyah and organization funds. Therefore, Muhammadiyah can be called the main supporter of Religious Moderation, even an independent supporter.

4. Criticism of Religious Moderation Programs

One of the academic criticisms of religious moderation comes in the form of a book "The Politics of Moderation and Religious Freedom: A Critical Review." edited by Zainal Abidin

Bagir and Jimmy M.I. Sormin. The following explanation is taken from several reviews in the book.

Religious moderation has become a *global security discourse* since Malaysia proposed the *International Year of Moderation* in 2019 and was successfully approved as a resolution by the UN General Assembly. This idea is considered in line with the global security agenda in the context of *the War on Terror*. Therefore, Indonesia also responded very quickly, as evidenced by including religious moderation in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) [44].

However, Religious Moderation is considered only as a new vocabulary for government policy, replacing previous similar policies such as the Trilogy of Harmony that has been used in the New Order era. Thus, Religious Moderation can be seen as a form of "religious politics" using state infiltration to regulate religious life, which should be free from anyone's intervention. This means that Religious Moderation is an effort to *govern religion par excellence* or an effort to tame religion.

Efforts to tame religion are carried out because it is believed that there are religious camps that are not benign (radical, exclusive, terrorists). In the context of Islam, this effort in turn presents a defense of "Islam Mazhab Negara" (official Islam) which has an inclusive and moderate character. If that is the case, then the state is building a hybridity (fusion) between certain religious patterns and nationalism. The implication is that religious groups whose pattern is not the same as the government's religious pattern will immediately be accused of not being nationalist. In essence, in Indonesia, there have been *state-sanctioned pathways to God*. This also means a rejection (not approved) if there is a certain religious path that is not in line with the path chosen by the state. This is the reason why Religious Moderation deserves to be called religious politics.

CONCLUSION

Religious moderation in Indonesia is a pivotal strategy to promote harmony within the country's rich diversity of ethnicities, religions, and cultures. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this initiative is grounded in principles of peace, respect for human rights, and adherence to national values. Religious moderation seeks to strike a balance between religious practices and views, steering clear of extremism or radicalism. With the 2020-2024 roadmap, the program focuses on institutional strengthening, public services, community empowerment, and embedding the values of moderation into the state framework. These efforts are closely tied to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, which emphasizes the need for peace, justice, and strong institutions to support sustainable development. The program's four key success indicators—national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and cultural accommodation—reflect its alignment with the broader goals of building a peaceful and inclusive society. While significant progress has been made, challenges remain, particularly in achieving robust cross-sector synergy among the primary actors: the government, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah. NU contributes to religious moderation through its inclusive ideology, rooted in the principles of wasathiyah (moderation), which emphasize tolerance, balance, and justice. Through the concept of Islam Nusantara (Islam of the Archipelago), NU integrates Islamic values with local cultural practices, reflecting the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy to all creation). As a close ideological partner of the government, NU plays a crucial role as a pioneer in implementing religious moderation programs, contributing to the SDGs by fostering peaceful coexistence and respect for diversity. Similarly, Muhammadiyah upholds religious moderation through its concept of Wasathiyah Islam (Islamic moderation), emphasizing harmony in national and religious life. Its approach, Darul Ahdi Wa Syahadah (a land of consensus and testimony), reinforces Indonesia's identity as a consensus-based nation that upholds inclusivity without compromising faith. Muhammadiyah's contributions align with SDGs by promoting tolerance, reducing inequalities (Goal 10), and strengthening partnerships for sustainable development (Goal 17). Despite these commendable efforts, the synergy between the Ministry of Religious

Affairs, NU, and Muhammadiyah remains a challenge. NU's close ideological alignment with the government often contrasts with Muhammadiyah's critical stance, although the latter still supports initiatives aligned with its vision. This fragmentation affects the overall effectiveness of collaboration, which is essential for achieving the common goal of religious moderation. Strengthening this synergy is critical, as it would enhance the implementation of programs and contribute to broader national and global objectives. Religious moderation plays an essential role in achieving the SDGs, as it directly supports efforts to create peaceful and inclusive societies, reduce inequalities, and strengthen partnerships across sectors. The unique dynamics of cooperation between the government, NU, and Muhammadiyah underscore the importance of fostering mutual understanding and collaboration to address fragmentation and optimize their collective contributions. Moving forward, greater emphasis should be placed on integrating the efforts of these three actors to ensure that the principles of religious moderation are effectively implemented and sustained. By overcoming challenges in cross-sectoral synergy, Indonesia can strengthen its commitment to religious moderation as a foundation for achieving the SDGs and ensuring long-term peace, stability, and sustainable development.

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Author Contribution

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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