

Research Article

Religious Moderation: From Text to Context Based on *Maqasidu Shari'ah*

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Abstract

Religious pluralism is evident in the six religions officially recognized by the Indonesian state: Islam, Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Every religion tends to exhibit exclusive truth claims. While Muslims played an undeniably significant role in securing Indonesia's independence, the implementation of a constitutional state framework based on Pancasila and *maqasidu shari'ah* is expected to temper the impulse to establish a formal Islamic state within this pluralistic nation. This study aims to analyze how religious deradicalization can be achieved through a religious moderation approach grounded in *maqasidu shari'ah*. The study employed a qualitative approach using the content analysis method. The findings indicate a critical need to reconstruct the interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith from textualist readings to moderate, contextual interpretations that align with contemporary realities. In the Indonesian context, this reconstruction is urgent given the country's profound pluralism. This interpretive shift does not merely imply a rational or flexible reading; rather, it must remain structurally aligned with the core objectives of Islamic law (*maqasidu shari'ah*). Consequently, deradicalization in Indonesia is operationalized through a moderate religious framework derived from *maqasidu shari'ah*.



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Introduction

Indonesia is a developing nation widely recognized for its vast religious, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Due to this heterogeneity, the Indonesian populace has formed a cohesive entity that deeply values tolerance. This sociopolitical reality is encapsulated in the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), which signifies that despite disparate backgrounds, the population remains unified. Furthermore, Indonesia possesses the largest Muslim population globally, which serves as a notable model for Islamic moderation. Moderate Islam is a good religion, customs, ethnicity, and nation. Religious understanding is very important in the context of diversity in all fields (Syamsuriah & Ardi, 2022).

The foundational principle of Islam is moderation (*wasatiyyah*), which fosters harmonious coexistence across religions, customs, ethnicities, and nationalities. Nuanced religious understanding is critical for navigating diversity across all social spheres. In this paradigm, heterogeneity and plurality are viewed as manifestations of *sunnatullah*—the divine laws governing the universe and human affairs (Aziz & Sholikah, 2023). Theological frameworks suggest that human diversity, including the establishment of various tribes, ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic dialects, is intentionally structured within a cohesive global framework. Similarly, the coexistence of diverse legal schools of thought (*madhahib*) due to varying independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) operates within the broader unity of the Sharia, just as diverse beliefs exist under the umbrella of *ummatan wahidah* (a unified community). Because religious diversity is a manifestation of *sunnatullah*, its existence cannot be ignored (Junaedi, 2022).

In Indonesia, the majority of the population practices religious attitudes and behaviors aligned with moderation. These mutually accepted attitudes and behaviors foster interfaith harmony within the philosophical framework of Pancasila. The primary goal of religious moderation is to safeguard the integrity of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* by fostering mutual tolerance, empathy, and harmony while respecting divergent viewpoints. By mitigating sociopolitical pressures through moderation, religious values can be constructively integrated into daily life (Islamy, 2022). A defining characteristic of pluralistic Indonesia is the deeply rooted presence of religious faith and mutual trust among its citizens (Santoso et al., 2023). Six major recognized religions—Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism—prosper within the country. The founders of the nation established that embracing a religion is an inherent right of every citizen, a right that must be guaranteed by the state (Lestari, 2020).

Currently, Islam and its adherents face two primary challenges. First, certain factions tend to interpret religious scriptures in an extreme, rigid manner, attempting to impose these interpretations on Muslim culture, occasionally resorting to violence. Data concerning religiously motivated violence in Indonesia remains concerning. Reports from the Setara Institute indicate a fluctuating but persistent trend in violence committed in the name of religion and belief, with 217 incidents (329 cases) recorded in 2023,

209 incidents (327 cases) in 2020, and 200 incidents (327 cases) in 2019 (see Table 1). Second, an opposing extreme tendency involves excessive permissiveness in religious matters, leading to the uncritical acceptance of harmful ideas and practices from external civilizations (Sholikhah & Muvid, 2022).

Table 1. The Number of Violence Cases in the Name of Religion

No	Year	Incidents	Cases
1	2023	217	329
2	2020	209	327
3	2019	200	327

Radical factions often utilize foundational texts (the Qur'an and Hadith) alongside classical scholarly literature (*turats*), yet they interpret them textually without considering their historical and contextual backgrounds (*asbab al-nuzul*). Raised within a modern society while clinging strictly to archaic literalism, this group represents a generation out of sync with contemporary realities (Nurhuda & Setyaningtyas, 2021).

A significant research gap exists regarding how religious moderation can preserve national unity despite the dual threats of extremism and liberalism. This paper fills in the research gap as it provides an analysis of the religious moderation of Islam by understanding the religious scriptures using the contextual method based on *maqashidu sharia*. Religious moderation can navigate both threats by reflecting a commitment that upholds diversity, tolerance, rejection of all forms of violence in the name of religion, as well as acceptance and investment in the richness of culture and traditions that exist in society (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019).

A significant research gap exists regarding how religious moderation can navigate the dual threats of extremism and liberalism to preserve national integrity. Extremism is characterized by absolute, highly fanatical, and exclusive viewpoints that judge others as infidels (*takfir*), frequently sparking ideological and sectarian confrontations. Conversely, unbridled liberalism introduces negative socio-cultural impacts (Ramadhan & Islam, 2022). Furthermore, discourse surrounding the restoration of a caliphate state poses a direct challenge to Indonesian religious moderation. Prior to the 1998 *Reformasi era*, various Islamic movements engaged with this discourse (Setia, 2021) Groups such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) actively opposed the secular state model, criticizing nationalism, capitalism, democracy, and communism while proposing a caliphate structure as the solution to Indonesia's socio-economic problems (Wibowo, 2020).

This paper addresses this research gap by analyzing the moderation of Islam through a contextual interpretation of scriptures grounded in *maqasidu shari'ah*. Religious moderation balances these ideological extremes by reinforcing a commitment to diversity, tolerance, non-violence, and cultural wealth. This approach seeks to reconstruct exclusive, literalist interpretations that drive radicalization. *Maqasidu shari'ah*

serves as an ideal analytical foundation because the Indonesian state has already accommodated core Islamic values within its statutory regulations. Therefore, this study addresses the following central problem: *How can religion be deradicalized using a religious moderation approach based on maqasidu shari'ah?*

Method

This study employed a qualitative library research design. Data and information were systematically gathered from various literary sources, including books, academic journals, periodicals, and relevant empirical studies, to address the central research question (Amiruddin & Asikin, 2006). The inclusion criteria required literature focusing explicitly on religious radicalism and moderation frameworks. Conversely, the exclusion criteria omitted highly specific, isolated case studies of radicalization, as this research utilized a broader conceptual and philosophical approach.

The authors qualitatively explored the social phenomena surrounding religious radicalization using content analysis, which proceeded through three distinct stages: First, the foundational factors driving religious radicalization were traced and identified. Second, the identified causal factors were classified and described within the scope of this study. Third, these factors were philosophically analyzed using the *maqasidu shari'ah* framework to formulate a religious moderation model for deradicalization. A legal-philosophical approach using *maqasidu shari'ah* was selected because literature demonstrates that a primary driver of radicalization is an overly exclusive, literalist interpretation of scriptural verses. The validity and reliability of the study were maintained through a rigorous comparative analysis of conceptual frameworks. Finally, standard ethical considerations were strictly observed to ensure the integrity of the research findings.

Results

The Contextualization of Texts: Deradicalizing Religious Understanding

The findings of this study demonstrate that a primary characteristic of religious radicalization is a strictly literalist understanding of scriptural texts. Consequently, promoting a contextual understanding of these texts serves as a vital mechanism for religious moderation. For Muslims, the Qur'an and Hadith are the foundational sources influencing both private and public life. While the text of the Qur'an is historically fixed, its interpretation (*ijtihad*) is an ongoing human intellectual endeavor aimed at deriving contemporary meaning.

It must be acknowledged that the Qur'an is a sacred text that has been historically established, while understanding or interpreting a literary analysis. It is a product of human *ijtihad* in providing interpretation to find the meaning of these texts. In general, two interpretation techniques are known; namely the textual interpretation technique and the contextual interpretation technique. In analyzing Qur'anic texts, these two interpretation techniques have different focuses. The textual interpretation

technique focuses more on the text "as is", while the contextual interpretation technique, in addition to paying attention to the text, also considers the contextual elements that surround it (Nawas, 2019).

The word "textual" means relating to a topic; found in or relating to the main body of a book or essay (regarding the topic; based on the text or manuscript). While "contextual" means the part of a written discourse in the context of a certain word, necessary to point out the meaning; part of a description or sentence that can support or add clarity to the meaning; and important to show the meaning.

It can be said that the textual interpretation technique that is generally understood as understanding the text as "the text is". Texts are understood according to what is written. When the text of the Qur'an explains itself without having to pay attention to the elements that surround it, then the text is understood textually. Meanwhile, the contextual interpretation technique can be interpreted as a way, method, approach, or anything that refers to the context (reality). So, *contextual* means something that is related to or depends on the context. Therefore, contextual understanding in general can be interpreted as a tendency of a view that refers to the context (Adinugraha, 2020).

The contextual interpretation approach contains three main meanings, namely: (1) an effort to interpret in order to anticipate current problems that are generally urgent. So, the meaning of contextual is identical to situational; (2) an interpretation which sees the relationship between the past, present, and future; where something will be seen from the perspective of historical meaning in the past, functional meaning at present, and predicting the meaning (which is considered relevant) in the future; and (3) placing the relationship between the text of the Qur'an and its application (Saleh, 2007).

The following paragraph will examine arguments related to the basis of religious radicalism one by one. It must be admitted that there are verses of the Qur'an that textually have the potential to be used as a 'trigger' for acts of violence in the name of religion (Mustaqim, 2014). The Holy Qur'an, Chapter *al-Baqarah* (The She-Cow) [2]: 208 states as follows: "O you who believe, enter into the "Islamic religion" in its entirety." This verse is often used as justification for the concept of complete Islam with the formalization of the Islamic State. Islam must "formally" be applied in its totality in every aspect of Muslims' lives. Then, the concept of *al-Islâm Dîn wa Dawlah* emerged, where Islam is a religion and a state. As an implication, laws that are products of humans or state systems that are considered not based on Islam are considered as *thâghût*. They strengthen their views with the fourth verse, namely the word of Allah in the Holy Qur'an, Chapter *al-Maidah* (The Feast) [5]: 44 which reads: "Whoever does not rule by what Allah has revealed, then they are the infidels". If seen briefly, the above arguments can be a trigger to the creation of an exclusive Islam that leads to religious radicalism. However, upon careful observation, it can be seen that the believers of this interpretation are not thorough in understanding these arguments, both in terms of text and context, giving rise to narrow, extreme, and radical views which in turn give rise to terrorism.

In fact, if one deeply understands Chapter *al-Baqarah* verse 208, it can be understood that becoming a complete Muslim does not only regard the formal act of carrying out routine worship but much deeper than that, in essence, one must show good behavior, attitudes, and morals in socializing with fellow human beings. In doing so, they will reflect a complete Muslim. This is because the essence of completely following Islam is to have noble morals as the meaning of the Prophet's message is that he was sent to earth to perfect human morals so that they have noble morals that bring benefits and refrain from committing harm. Completely following Islam does not mean that Muslims must create an Islamic state, especially coupled with Chapter *al-Maidah* verse 44, that if they do not formally rule the Qur'an, they are deemed infidels.

The sentence *man lam yahkum bima anzallah* (Whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, then they are among the infidels) also needs to be deeply understood to prevent being caught up in formalities while forgetting its essence. The sentence that Allah has revealed is commonly understood as the Qur'an which is sharia Islam is the source of Islamic law. The Qur'an, which is the source of Islamic law, contains verses that are global in nature (*syumuliah and kulliyah*). In order for the Qur'an to function as *sholihun likulli makan wa zaman* (accepted in every era and place), it must be understood in the context of place and time. By contextually understanding the Qur'an according to time and place, it will definitely create differences. These differences can still be accepted as long as they are in accordance with the values and objectives of Islamic law, which is called *maqasidu shari'ah*. So, by understanding this, as long as something accommodates the values and objectives of Islamic law, it is exempted from the category of infidels as stated in Chapter *al-Maidah* verse 44. If this understanding is developed, it will create a religious moderation model that is far from religious exclusiveness and radicality. It is hoped that this religious moderation model can be called *rahmatan lil'alamin* (a blessing for all the universe).

Discussion

Maqasidu Shar'ah: Islamic Values

Linguistically, the term *maqashid syari'ah* is a combination of two words, namely *maqashid* and *syari'ah*. The first word is the plural form of *maqshud* which can be interpreted as intent or purpose. Experts of *ushul fiqh* (the study of general principles and methodologies to discover Islamic laws) interpreted the word *syari'ah* as part of the entire Islamic teachings and part of the Qur'an's great themes besides *aqidah* (belief in the basic Islamic principles) and morals. Terminologically, referring to Al Syatibi's opinion, *maqashid* can be defined as the purpose of the law revealed by Allah, namely to achieve human welfare in the world and the hereafter (Bakri, 1996). Epistemologically, *maqashid syari'ah* is interpreted as the wisdom behind legal provisions, the meaning of law, or the goals pursued by sharia. Other scholars equate *maqashid* with the

concept of *mashalih* or benefit which can be understood as an effort to attract benefits and reject harm (Auda, 2013).

The substance or central issue in *maqashid* is the discussion of *maslahah* which is considered the goal in every activity of the legal institution in Islam. This means that every legal institution in Islam is basically aimed at achieving *maslahah* (benefit) and avoiding various difficulties or harms. *Maslahah* in the context of *maqashid* discusses basic needs in human life which are grouped into three, namely *daruriyyat* (primary), *hajiyyat* (secondary), and *tahsiniyyat* (complementary). The first level is the primary need which, if not fulfilled, will potentially threaten human safety, both in the world and the hereafter.

According to Imam Ash-Syatibi, five things are included in this category, namely maintaining religion (*hifdz din*), maintaining the soul (*hifdz nafs*), maintaining reason (*hifdz aql*), maintaining honor and offspring (*hifdz nashl*), as well as maintaining property (*hifdz mal*) (Effendi, 2014). Then, in *dharuriyyat*, *maqashid sharia* is divided into five (which are called *al-kuliyat al-khamsah*), namely: first, *hifdz din* means maintaining religious norms from things that pollute them both in terms of faith and deeds. Second, *hifdz nafs*, namely collectively protecting the right to life of every individual and society and everything that can threaten their lives, such as eradicating infectious diseases and imposing punishment for perpetrators of murder and so on. Third, *hifdz aql* prevents defects in reason that can interfere with thinking power and creativity. This is because reason is crucial in fostering the spirit of exploring religious values. So, it must be protected from the things that damage it, such as alcoholic drinks, drugs and so on. Fourth, *hifdz nashl*, which means preserving the generations by facilitating the marriage process as well as avoiding any policies that can cut off the continuity of life such as vasectomy, tubectomy, and so on. Fifth, *hifdz mal*, meaning developing the people's economic resources, guaranteeing private property rights, and maintaining the security of said property. If each verse of law is examined, the reason for its formation will be found to be none other than to maintain the five principles above.

As for the level of *hajiyyat*, it is a secondary category of needs where if it is not realized it does not threaten safety, but will encounter various difficulties. In other words, things that humans need with the aim of helping humans feel light, spacious, and comfortable in overcoming the difficulties of the burden that must be borne in navigating life.

Meanwhile, the third level or *tahsiniyyat* is more of a complementary need where, if it cannot be fulfilled, it will not pose a threat to human welfare. This level of need is a complementary need (Effendi, 2014). *Tahsiniyyat* can also be called something that is necessary to create a more beautiful and harmonious life which can decorate social life and make humans able to better act in life's affairs.

For Muslims in Indonesia the limitation from the current interpretation is that the understanding *maqasidu shari'ah* (MS) in the concept of the Pancasila (The Five Principles that make Indonesia's ideals)

legal state is very important. Considering that Islam is the majority religion that has contributed to the establishment of this republic, understanding the concept of the Pancasila state with the MS approach is intended to ensure that the practice of religious teachings is not trapped in an exclusive manner that eliminates national insight. Although in Indonesia Islam is the majority religion, it does not use Islam as the basis of the state. Even so, Pancasila accommodates the objectives of Sharia (*maqasidu shari'ah*).

The implementation of *maqasidu shari'ah* in the concept of the Pancasila legal state can be seen as follows:

- 1) Protecting Religion (*al-Din*). In understanding the concept of protecting religion in the Pancasila Legal State concept, no government policy can conflict with religious beliefs. In addition, the state in this case the government must be able to maintain religious freedom and tolerance by enforcing the law on blasphemy as stated in Article 156 letter a of the Criminal Code.
- 2) Protecting Life (*al-Nafs*). In Islam, human life is a very valuable thing that must be guarded and protected. A Muslim is prohibited from killing another person or himself. The translation of the Chapter *al-Isra'* (The Night Journey) 17 verse 33, reads: "And do not kill a soul that Allah has forbidden (to kill it), except for one (reason) that is right." The understanding of protecting life in the Pancasila legal state concept is shown in how the state must be able to protect the lives of its citizens as stated in Articles 338, 339 and 430 of the Criminal Code. In addition, the state should not only make economically-oriented policies that can threaten the lives of its citizens.
- 3) Protecting the Mind (*al-Aql*). Muslims are obliged to guard and protect the mind. Islam advises Muslims to seek knowledge to the ends of the earth and forbids them from damaging their common sense, such as by drinking alcohol. The understanding of protecting the mind in the concept of the Pancasila legal state is shown in how the state must be able to protect the common sense of its citizens. It is carried out not only by prohibiting any product that can damage the mind such as alcohol and acts of pornography and pornoaction but also by educating the citizens and helping them train their common sense by guaranteeing proper education. This is in line with the mandate of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System.
- 4) Protecting the Family/Lineage (*al-Ird*). Maintaining the lineage is carried out by conducting marriages according to the regulations of the religion and the state. An understanding of the family in the Pancasila legal state concept is shown in how the state must be able to minimize adultery by enforcing Article 284 of the Criminal Code. In addition, to protect families from adultery, the government makes marriage easier for its citizens. Not only that, in the concept of modern *maqasidu sharia*, protecting the family can be done by improving each family's welfare to increase their family resilience.

- 5) Protecting the Wealth (*al-Mal*). Wealth is a crucial and valuable thing. Even so, Islam forbids Muslims from gaining wealth from illegal means such as by taking other people's wealth through theft or corruption. This is stated in Chapter *al-Baqarah* 2 verse 188 which says: "And do not some of you eat up the wealth of others among you by wrongful means." An understanding of protecting wealth in the Pancasila legal state concept is how the state must be present in the criminal act of theft by firmly and proportionally enforcing Article 362 of the Criminal Code. However, in the modern concept of *maqasidu as syariah*, the state can protect the wealth by improving the welfare of its people by opening up as many job opportunities as possible.

Understanding the concept of the Pancasila state with the MS approach is intended to ensure that the practice of religious teachings is not trapped in an exclusive manner that eliminates national insight. Although Islam is the majority religion that has contributed significantly to the Indonesian state, it does not necessarily mean that Islamic law is the basis of the state. Even, the Pancasila legal state has accommodated *maqasidu Shari'ah* (the purpose of *shari'ah*) and it has been implemented in the law.

Conclusion

The exclusive understanding of Qur'anic and hadith texts can be a trigger for the birth of radicalism in religion, which can potentially lead to extremism. To overcome this, a reconstruction of religious understanding must be carried out. One way is to reconstruct the understanding of the texts of the Qur'an and hadith from a textual to a more moderate contextual manner that is relevant to the conditions of the times. In the context of Indonesia, this is very urgent considering that Indonesia is a very pluralistic country in terms of religion, ethnicity, and culture.

The reconstruction in understanding religious texts is not merely a rational and contextual understanding. However, this understanding must be in line with the objectives of Islamic law (*maqasidu shari'ah*). So, in the context of Indonesia, a moderate religious understanding approach is carried out to deradicalize religion based on *maqasidu shari'ah*. This is done because the Indonesian state which is based on Pancasila has accommodated *maqasidu shari'ah* in its laws and regulations.

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Author's contributions

Conceptualization: M.Junaidi, Achmad Miftah Farid; **Methodology:** Kuswardhani; **Data collection:** Achmad Miftah Farid; **Formal analysis:** M.Junaidi, Kuswardhani; **Writing—original draft preparation:** M.Junaidi; **Writing—review and editing:** Achmad Miftah Farid; **Supervision:** Achmad Miftah Farid. All

authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of interest

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest

Data availability

Data is available upon request.

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