

Values of Islamic Moderation in the Idea of Islam Nusantara

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Abstract: This study aimed to examine the Ideas of one prominent Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) preacher named Prof. Dr. KH. Said Agil Siraj about the values of Islamic moderation in the idea of Islam Nusantara while preaching in Jombang, Indonesia in the opening of NU Conference in 2015. Through content analysis of Said Agil Siraj's preaching that was uploaded on YouTube media this study found that first, the value regarding nationality, the form of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and Pancasila as the basis of the state is final. There is no need to formalize Islam as the basis of the state, but make the religion is used as an ethical foundation. Second, the value of diversity, that diversity is a wealth of the Indonesian people, therefore it must be grateful for caring for that diversity. One way is by tolerating. Third, the value of humanity, that every human being should be treated in a humane way. Therefore, every action carried out in violent ways is contrary to human values. Fourth, With the idea of Islam Nusantara, Nahdlatul Ulama wants Islam to be able to blend harmoniously in people's lives without having to eliminate existing traditions.

Keywords: Values, Islamic Moderation, Islam Nusantara

I. Introduction

The ideology and movement of radicalism that has grown recently has made various intellectual circles and social organizations aware of making various efforts, by studying the causes of its growth and looking for solutions on how to overcome it. In this regard, there have been many studies written by previous experts. Mahmood Mamdani for example, an Indian-born Muslim intellectual who now teaches at Columbia University, New York, USA wrote a book entitled "A Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror". In this book, he explores the growth of radicalism in Islam. In his opinion, the growth of radicalism in Islam cannot be separated from the role of the West in facilitating the growth of a global Islamic network on a large scale which gained momentum in the Afghanistan war as resistance to the invasion of the Soviet Union in the 1980s (Mahmood Madani, 2004).

Another writer who pays attention to the growth of radicalism in Islam is David Cook. Through his work entitled "Understanding Jihad", he emphasized that the violent and sadistic acts inherent in radical Muslims are due to the doctrine of *takfir* which implies that Muslims can become targets for the implementation of jihad (David Cook, 2005). Another similar work was also written by Fawaz A. Gerges, in his book "The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global" (2005). "According to him, the influence of the ideas of Islamic fundamentalists such as Ayman al-Zawahiri (a follower of Wahhabism) regarding the need for jihad is not only addressed to unjust regimes in the country, but also to anyone who is considered unjust throughout the world" (Fawaz A. Gerges, 2005). Now these ideas have a tremendous impact on the development of radical Muslims in the world.

In Indonesia, hard-line movements have also grown in the name of *jihad* (war to defend Islam) as the basis of their struggle. These movements include the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Laskar Jihad, and the Indonesian Mujahideen Council (MMI). There are also non-violent organizations, but which strongly reject the idea of democracy and a national state, namely Hizbut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) (Burhanuddin Muhtadi, 2012). The culmination of the radical Islamic movement that brought the ideology of *jihad* was the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (NIIS) or ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). The emergence of NIIS or ISIS was a confirmation of the views that made Islamic ideology a justification for carrying out violence and discrimination (Zuhairi Misrawi, 2014).

In overcoming various radical ideologies and movements, in Indonesia there are several Islamic organizations that promote the ideology of moderation. One of them is Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) which carries the idea of Islam Nusantara. As explained by Azyumardi Azra in his book entitled "Indonesia, Islam and Democracy: Dynamics in a Global Context", NU is one of the major Islamic organizations that fights for the ideas of moderation (Azymardi Azra, 2006).

This research intends to conduct a study of the values of Islamic moderation offered in the idea of Islam Nusantara through one of the main figures, namely Prof. Dr. KH. Said Agil Siraj. He is a leading Muslim intellectual in Indonesia. General Chairperson of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board for the 2010-2015

period, one of the main initiators of the birth of the idea of Islam Nusantara. What are his ideas about the values of Islamic moderation in the idea of Islam Nusantara? This research will examine them in more detail

II. Methodology

It is a kind of qualitative research. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of words, notes related to understanding, meaning and value. In this regard, it is important to express what Moleong explained, namely that the qualitative method is a method of finding and providing interpretations that is carried out by analyzing the data obtained systematically (Lexy J. Moleong, 2000). The main data source in this research is a speech delivered by Prod. Dr. KH Said Agil Siraj delivered at the 33rd NU congress in Jombang, East Java, Indonesia which took place on 1-5 August 2015 with the theme: "Strengthening Islam Nusantara for Indonesian civilization" taken via You Tube. The second source of data in this research comes from several books and written works in the form of magazines, journals, research results or other works related to this research topic. This research was carried out in three stages, namely, first, orientation, second, exploration stage, and third, data analysis and interpretation stage. At the orientation stage, researchers seek information from various sources related to the research topic through books, journals, magazines and other supporting sources. In the exploration stage, researchers searched for and studied lectures delivered by respondents (Prof. Dr. KH. Said Agil Siraj), and explored books, articles and research related to the themes discussed. At the analysis stage, the researcher describes and interprets the data to answer the research problem. The data analysis technique in this research uses descriptive-analytical methods (Moh. Nadzir, 1996). This method is carried out by describing data that has been found in the field, after which it is analyzed sharply and in depth and strengthened through a study of existing theories.

III. Literature Review

1. Moderate Islam

a. Terminology of Moderate Islam

The term "moderate Islam" consists of two words, namely "moderate" and "Islam". The word "moderate" means middle, moderate, or not excessive. In Arabic it is known as *al-wasathiyah*, which can mean the middle, the best or the perfect. Terminologically, moderate Islam means Islam that takes the middle path. In viewing and resolving all problems, it always tries to take the middle path, looking for the best, prioritizing an attitude of tolerance and mutual respect. In this way, all problems can be solved by not beating each other and staying away from confrontational and anarchic attitudes. This is in line with Khaled el Fadl's view in his book "The Great Theft" as quoted by Zuhairi Misrawi that moderation is an ideology that takes a middle path from two paths, namely neither extreme right nor extreme left (Zuhairi Misrawi, 2010). According to al Fadl, a moderate Muslim means that they do not treat their religion like a monument of dust, but they treat it within the framework of an active and dynamic faith. They are able to appreciate the achievements of other people who preceded them even though they live in the present era.

b. Basic Principles of Moderate Islam

In the book "Religious Moderation" written by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019) explains that religious moderation has two basic principles, namely: fair and balanced, and balance: First, Fair and balanced means putting something in its place or putting something in accordance with its proportions. Fair means not leaning too left and not leaning too right. They balance rights and obligations. Not only are their rights demanded but they also carry out their obligations, or not only carry out their obligations while their rights are not fulfilled. A person is said to be fair and balanced towards himself when his physical rights and spiritual rights are fulfilled equally, so that they are not biased against one another. Second, balance, shows a person's perspective on something or someone that favors togetherness and emphasizes human values. A person's behavior is considered to fulfill balance when their actions provide goodness and benefits to all human without harming any of the people.

There are three characteristics that make a person easily act fairly and balanced. These three characters are First, wisdom. In order for someone to do something wisely, they must have a broad view of their religion. A person who only has partial knowledge and understanding of his religion will certainly find it difficult to act wisely. Second, sincerity. A sincere person will behave and act without burden. He will do everything sincerely without feeling any pressure from anyone. Third, courage. Someone needs a courageous attitude so that they do not hesitate in making decisions and implementing their decisions. Without courage, a person cannot possibly act on something that in his view will be risky for himself (Mohamad Salik, 2019).

In relation to religion, someone is said to be moderate when they do not impose their beliefs on others or force others to do something according to their beliefs. M Hashim Kamali as quoted by the Ministry of Religion (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019) explains that the principle of fairness and balance in the concept of religion is

that a religious person must have the enthusiasm to find common ground on understanding his religion. They should not be extreme in their views.

In relation to national life, the Indonesian Ministry of Religion explains that a moderate attitude can be seen from four indicators, namely: 1) having a national commitment, 2) being tolerant, 3) being non-violent, 4) being accommodating to local culture (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). This last theory will be used to study the values of moderation in the idea of Indonesian Islam, which is the main topic of this research discussion.

2. Islam Nusantara

a. Terminology of Islam Nusantara

There are several opinions regarding the term "Islam Nusantara". According to Muhajir, Islam Nusantara is the understanding and practice of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago as a result of the dialectic between the text of the Shari'a and local reality and culture (Ahmad Sahal et al, 2015). Bizawie also expressed an opinion that Islam Nusantara is a unique Indonesian style of Islam, a combination of theological Islamic values with local traditional values, culture and customs in the country (Ahmad Sahal et al., 2015).

A more complete opinion was expressed by Ahmad Sahal that Islam Nusantara is a way of life for Muslims living in the Indonesian archipelago in the contemporary or current era by implementing Islamic teachings as a whole. These ways of life are not only related to the issue of *ubudiyah* (worship related to Allah), but also related to the issue of *mu`amalah* (related to human relations) while still focusing on the benefit of the people. So, Islam Nusantara is an Islam that respects the local cultural context and is enthusiastic about placing beneficial values in it (Ahmad Sahal et al., 2016).

b. Characteristics of Islam Nusantara

Islam Nusantara has distinctive characteristics that differentiate it from the characteristics of Islam in other regions, especially Middle Eastern Islam. The Indonesian archipelago has a number of unique features that are different from other regions, starting from geographical, socio-political, tradition and civilization aspects. This uniqueness then became a consideration for the ulama in practicing Islam in the archipelago. Ultimately, this uniqueness forms the color of Islam Nusantara which is different from the color of Islam in the Middle East (Mujamil Qomar, 2015).

According to KH Ma`ruf Amin, Islam Nusantara basically has three important pillars or pillars, namely *fikrah*, *harakah*, and *amaliyah*. First, *Fikrah* (thought) includes a moderate way of thinking, namely that Islam Nusantara is in a position that is not textualist, but also not liberal. Second, *Harakah* (movement), namely the spirit of taking action aimed at doing improvements. Third, *Amaliyah* (real action), namely that Islam Nusantara as the identity of Aswaja NU emphasizes that everything that *Nahdliyin* (follower of NU) does, must be born from a rationale based on *fiqh* and *usulfiqh*; discipline that is our basis for connecting the practices ordered by the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (KH. Ma`ruf Amin, 2015).

IV. Research Findings and Discussion

A. Research Findings

This section describes the speech related to the idea of Islam Nusantara delivered by the General Chairperson of the for the 2010-2015 period, Prof. Dr. KH. Said Agil Siraj, at the opening of the 33rd Nahdlatul Ulama Congress in Jombang, East Java on August 2015 with the theme: "Strengthening Archipelago Islam for Indonesian civilization", via You Tube media (KH. Said Agil Siraj, 2019).

The main points of the speech are as follows:

1. Islam Nusantara is not a new madhab, path or new sect, but is a specialty or typology that is owned by the people of the Indonesian archipelago. The uniqueness of Islam Nusantara is that Islamic behavior blends harmoniously with the culture in the archipelago which is in accordance with sharia guidelines.
2. In the concept of Islam Nusantara, traditions, culture and customs are actually used and utilized as a means of preaching in the archipelago. Thus, an Islam was born that was civilized, polite, prioritized common sense, and made its adherents love and defend their homeland physically and mentally. Islam Nusantara is the Islam of *Ahlussunnahwal Jamaah* which was inherited from the saints (*wali*), especially Wali Songo (nine saints)
3. Converting to Islam in the Indonesian archipelago is an extraordinary blessing and good fortune for us, therefore we must be grateful for it. The way to do this is to continue the struggle of the Wali Songo by preserving the culture that exists in the archipelago and using this culture as a means to develop Islam.
4. Islam Nusantara is based on four spirits;
 - 4.1. **Ruhud Dini (religious zeal);** Religious enthusiasm does not mean enthusiasm to legalize religion, making religion the basis of the constitution, but the emphasis is on the spirit of good morals, as in

- the main mission of the Prophet Muhammad SAW "Indeed, I was sent by Allah to glorify morals." Having good character in the context of a state means being firm in thinking and acting and flexible in behaving, as has been exemplified by previous Muslim scholars.
- 4.2. **Ruhul Wathoniyah** (spirit of nationalism): Between Islam, Islamic teachings and nationalism do not need to be contradictory, on the contrary, they complement each other. Islam will become strong because of the national spirit, likewise this nation will become strong when it is filled with Islamic values. Allah has given us a vast and rich homeland, so we must maintain its integrity and independence in all aspects of life, political, economic, legal and other things.
 - 4.3. **Ruhut Ta`adudiyah** (spirit of diversity). Diversity is the nature of the Indonesian people. The vastness of the territory, diversity of ethnicities, culture, traditions and customs are riches that other nations do not have. This diversity requires us to connect and try to get to know each other, as well as build and work together.
 - 4.4. **Ruhul Insaniyah** (humanitarian spirit). This idea was pioneered by KH Hasyim As'ari regarding the need to build a spirit of brotherhood on the basis of humanity. This will bring peace without war. When a dispute occurs, what is prioritized is deliberation or dialogue and not vice versa. We should all realize that we come from the same descent, from the same grandparents, namely the Prophet Adam and Siti Hawa, so we must be brothers, except for those who have violated the law.
 - 4.5. As a religious and social organization, NU should continue to strengthen the teachings of *Ahlussunnahwal Jama'ah* with its scholarly foundations that reflect the character of *Ahlussunnahwal Jama'ah* and also be strengthened by its readiness to face the changing times. As was done by the NU's founding ulama, from the beginning onwards NU must be based on pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), with pesantren morals, pesantren culture, and cannot be separated in terms of values, lines of struggle, ways of thinking and ways of acting.

Based on the theory that has been explained in the previous theoretical framework, the researcher examines the values of Islamic moderation that exist in the idea of Islam Nusantara as mentioned in the main points of the speech above, based on four indicators, namely: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence and accommodating to local culture, as described below:

1. National commitment

In this regard, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)'s national commitment to the idea of Islam Nusantara regarding the form of government cannot be doubted. For NU, the Republic of Indonesia is a fixed price, and Pancasila is the sole principle of the state that cannot be negotiated. Thus, the religious spirit promoted in the idea of Islam Nusantara is not the spirit of legalizing and formalizing Islam as the basis of the state, but rather making Islam the ethical basis of the state. Religion functions to make Muslims, who constitute the majority of Indonesia's population, have noble morals, capable of creating peace without war. In the idea of Islam Nusantara, religion and the spirit of nationalism cannot be confronted, both complement and strengthen each other, the existence of religion will strengthen the state, and the existence of the state will become a ground for the growth and development of religious teachings.

2. Tolerance

From the explanation of the speech above, it is clearly seen that, in the idea of Islam Nusantara, diversity is a natural trait that must be accepted as it is as *sunnatullah* (a gift from God). Diversity of ethnicity, nation and religion is a gift that must be grateful for. To be grateful for this is by caring for it so that existing differences do not become a cause for divorce, but instead become capital so that we can get to know each other and learn from each other. Therefore, in the idea of Islam Nusantara, tolerance is the key to the unity of these various differences. Tolerance means mutual respect for each other, not demeaning each other and not insulting each other, but trying to understand each other, and trying to find points of similarity, and points of strengths with each other so that we can learn from each other.

3. From the essence of the speech above, it can be concluded that the spirit built into the idea of Islam Nusantara is the spirit of humanity. The main goal is to be able to build a brotherhood on the basis that humans are the same and equal. In a state life, each other has the same level, each other needs and fulfills each other. When people have the same view on this matter, there will be no acts of violence committed by one another. When a dispute occurs, what is prioritized is deliberation and enthusiasm to find common ground and a resolution.

4. Accommodating to local culture

From the gist of the speech above, it is clear that Nahdlatul Ulama is the main pioneer in efforts to accommodate local culture. From the idea of Islam Nusantara, it shows that this idea wants culture and

traditions to merge harmoniously in the life of Muslim society. Implementing Islamic teachings while maintaining existing traditions as long as they do not conflict with Islamic teachings is permitted. Or, even if possible, use existing local culture and traditions as a means to carry out Islamic preaching. This has been done by the Wali Songo and proven successful in preaching the spread of Islamic teachings in the archipelago.

B. Discussion and Interpretation

Based on the data described above, a conclusion can be drawn that Nahdlatul Ulama, with its idea of "Islam Nusantara", is in line with the ideas of moderate Islam. As in the theory above, it is stated that to see the moderation of a person's or an organization's attitude, it can be seen from four things, namely: 1) their national commitment, 2) their tolerance, 3) anti-violence, 4) accommodating to local culture (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

First, related to national commitment. Nahdlatul Ulama supports the form of a unitary Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). For them, the Republic of Indonesia is a fixed price, and up to now there is no form of state that is most suitable for Indonesia, except the Republic of Indonesia. They also support Pancasila as the basis of the state and the 1945 Constitution as the basis for national life.

Second, tolerance. Nahdlatul Ulama is well aware that Indonesia is a plural nation, consisting of various tribes, nations, religions and cultures. So, the only way to live peacefully in this diversity is to be tolerant of each other. Tolerance means mutual respect and understanding of each other, as well as supporting each other in order to achieve common goals, namely a just, prosperous, safe, peaceful and prosperous life.

Third, non-violence. Nahdlatul Ulama is committed that as an embodiment of tolerance, a person or people must not commit violence against other people. It is not permissible in the name of a particular religion or tribe to commit acts of violence against other religions or tribes. All problems that arise in national life must be resolved in a peaceful and compromising manner with no one being defeated by one another.

Fourth, accommodating to local culture. Nahdlatul Ulama is of the view that the local culture possessed by the Indonesian people is a wealth that must be preserved. There is no need to use it in the name of religion, then the culture in society will be eliminated. Islam does not prohibit someone from preserving the culture of their respective regions as long as the culture or tradition is good, beneficial, and does not conflict with Islamic teachings.

This is in line with the views of Prof. Quraish Shihab. According to him, in acculturation with culture, Islamic teachings are divided into three; First, Islam sometimes rejects the culture that applies to local communities. Second, Islam sometimes accepts the culture that prevails in local society, but partially revises it. Third, Islam sometimes approves of existing culture without providing any revision (Fathurrahman Kayadi, 2015). Thus, accommodating existing local culture in practicing religion is fine, as long as the culture or tradition does not contain evil and does not conflict with Islamic teachings.

The above commitments are in line with the characteristics of Islamic moderation as written by Dr. Muchlis M. Hanafi in his book *Islamic Moderation: Countering Religion-Based Radicalization*, regarding the characteristics of Islamic moderation, namely 1) understanding reality (*Fiqh fi al-Waqi*), where in reality, the world is always changing and developing, therefore understanding the teachings Islam must also continue to be developed to adapt to the existing context of life, 2) understand priority fiqh (*fiqh al-awlawiyyat*) 3) Provide convenience in religion. 4) understand religious texts comprehensively. 5) Be tolerant and respectful of each other. 6) Understand the *sunnatullah* in creation. God did not create everything immediately, but he had to do a lot through the process. Likewise, in preaching, there needs to be a process, as exemplified by the Prophet in carrying out his preaching (Muchlisson Rochmat, 2019).

V. Conclusion

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that: *First*, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) with the idea of Islam Nusantara wants to reaffirm that the form of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and Pancasila as the basis of the state are final. NU's spirit regarding nationality is a spirit not in order to legalize Islam as the basis of the state, but to make religion an ethical basis, guiding the Indonesian people to have good morals. The idea of Islam Nusantara is a form of the nationalist spirit of Muslims towards their nation. *Second*, for Nahdlatul Ulama, diversity is a wealth for the Indonesian nation, therefore it must be grateful for by caring for this diversity, by being tolerant, respecting one another. This has been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW in conveying Islamic teachings to society. With his example and wise methods, Islam can be well accepted by society. *Third*, the spirit built by NU is the spirit of humanity, that every human being should be treated in a humane way. Therefore, every dakwah and action carried out in a violent, indiscriminate manner and without regard for the rights of other people violates human values and is contrary to the values of Islamic teachings. *Fourth*, Nahdlatul Ulama is the main pioneer in efforts to accommodate local culture. With the idea of Islam Nusantara, Nahdlatul Ulama wants Islam to be integrated harmoniously into people's lives without

having to eliminate the traditions that exist in society. This has been exemplified by the Wali Songo in their preaching. They do not eliminate the traditions and culture that exist in society, but instead use them as a means of preaching.

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