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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS MODERATION POLICY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: RESISTANCE AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

This study aims to critically examine the politics behind the government's policy on religious moderation within the context of Islamic religious education. Initially intended as a response to the rise of radicalism in Islamic religious education in Indonesia, the policy has instead transformed into another form of radicalism, driven by grassroots fanaticism and the rigid implementation of religious moderation by government institutions—particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These institutions tend to eliminate ideas deemed radical or threatening to state stability without providing space for dialogue or seeking common ground. Using a qualitative approach through a literature review method, this study finds that the infiltration of religious moderation into the Islamic education curriculum is a political strategy by the state to hegemonize the Muslim community and suppress groups considered disruptive to national political stability. However, this effort has triggered resistance and symbolic violence among the public and educational institutions. The findings imply the urgent need for the government to reform the administration of Islamic religious education to ensure that religious moderation does not become a tool of symbolic violence: (1) the government must detach its political interests from religious education, (2) implement inclusive



Islamic education across different schools of thought (madhhab) to foster a strong sense of moderation among students, and (3) minimize symbolic violence in religious education, as it contradicts the very values of religious moderation itself.

Keywords: *Government Policy, Religious Moderation, Islamic Religious Education, Symbolic Violence.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkritisi politik kebijakan moderasi beragama yang diterapkan oleh Pemerintah, dalam konteks pendidikan agama Islam. Semula moderasi beragama dimaksudkan untuk menghadapi gelombang radikalisme di dunia pendidikan agama Islam di Indonesia, namun yang terjadi justru kebijakan moderasi beragama ini menjadi arus radikalisme yang lain, yang ditimbulkan oleh fanatisme masyarakat akar rumput dan pelaksanaan pendidikan agama Islam di tingkat lembaga Pemerintah, dalam hal ini Kementerian Agama, terhadap ideologi baru ini (moderasi beragama). Mereka ingin menghabisi pemikiran-pemikiran yang dianggapnya radikal atau mengancam stabilitasi pemerintahan, tanpa membuka ruang dialog untuk mencari titik temu (jalan tengah) dari perbedaan pemikiran tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu kajian pustaka dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa dalam kebijakan moderasi beragama yang diinfiltrasikan Pemerintah dalam kurikulum pendidikan agama Islam di Indonesia merupakan salah satu cara negara secara politis menghegemoni masyarakat muslim untuk melawan kelompok-kelompok yang dianggapnya mengganggu stabilitas politik negara Indonesia. Namun hal tersebut justru melahirkan resistensi dan kekerasan simbolik di kalangan masyarakat dan lembaga penyelenggara pendidikan. Penelitian ini berimplikasi terhadap keharusan Pemerintah untuk melakukan pembenahan terhadap penyelenggaraan pendidikan agama Islam yang ada di Indonesia, agar moderasi beragama tidak menjadi alat pemerintah untuk melakukan kekerasan simbolik dipenyelenggaraan pendidikan agama Islam: 1) Pemerintah harus melepaskan kepentingan politisnya dalam penyelenggaraan pendidikan agama Islam. 2) Dalam penyelenggaraan pendidikan agama Islam, pemerintah harus menerapkan pendidikan Islam lintas aliran atau madzab, hal ini demi menciptakan sikap moderat yang kuat di antara peserta didik atas perbedaan yang ada dalam pemikiran umat Islam. 3) Meminimalisir kekerasan simbolik terhadap penyelenggaraan pendidikan agama Islam, yang mana kekerasan simbolik dalam dunia pendidikan justru mencederai nilai-nilai dari moderasi beragama itu sendiri.

Kata Kunci: *Kebijakan Pemerintah, Moderasi Beragama, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Kekerasan Simbolik.*

A. Introduction

The role of Islamic Religious Education in transforming the values of religious moderation as a collective heritage in Indonesia is currently being highlighted by the majority of Muslims themselves. There are still many cases in the world of Islamic



religious education in Indonesia that undermine the values of religious moderation. (Ma'arif & Hadi, 2021) In fact, there are still many cases of religious exclusivity practiced by individuals and educational institutions in teaching Islamic teachings. (Faozan, 2022) Research by PPIM-UIN (2015 and 2016) also revealed serious problems with the writing of textbooks for religious studies in public schools, as they contain radical understandings of jihad, stories of war and murder, and expressions of extremism in religion. The PPIM research also elaborated on the respondents' perceptions. A total of 37.7 percent of respondents considered "jihad" to be *qitāl* (war). A total of 23.3 percent of respondents considered suicide bombing to be jihad. Thirty-four percent of respondents considered that apostates should be killed, and 33.3 percent of people were intolerant of minorities. (Abdallah, 2016) This shows that Islamic Religious Education has not been able to serve as a catalyst for fostering tolerant and moderate attitudes in religion. Therefore, since 2015, the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has been aggressively campaigning on issues related to religious moderation, particularly through education. (Arif, 2020)

However, the policy of religious moderation through education implemented by the government, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is not without problems. Religious moderation, which was originally intended to stem the tide of radicalism and religious fundamentalism, has now become a double-edged sword for the sustainability of religious moderation, which has been organically embedded at the grassroots level, when it is turned into a political policy in Islamic education. From 2017 to 2021, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has issued various policies to counter the spread of radicalism, with the risk of national disintegration. Religious moderation, which was originally a very important part of maintaining the unity of the nation and the unity of Indonesia, has become a political policy in education, leading to grassroots battles over which Islamic education can be categorized as moderate, while the definition of moderate Islam is still dominated by community organizations close to those in power. (Ma'arif & Hadi, 2021) This has made Islamic education *stakeholders* at the implementation level feel confused when teaching Islam *comprehensively*. This is because many symbols found in Islamic education are always viewed with suspicion by the government as symbols of Islamic mass organizations or movements that are banned, or at least viewed with political caution.



Symbolic violence in the implementation of moderate religious learning policies in the realm of Islamic religious education can be found in Kediri in 2019. The government was very paranoid about the term "khilafah," which is familiar to the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) mass organization that had been disbanded by the government. (Ditemukan Soal Khilafah, Kemenag Kediri Gelar Ujian Ulang, 2019) In fact, there was no intention in the questions tested, which did discuss fikih siyasah (Islamic political science), to indoctrinate students to accommodate the thinking of the HTI organization. (Marzuki, 2021) In the study of political jurisprudence, it is common to use the term khilafah to refer to the system of power in the past; it is not a term that is exclusively used by HTI. (Firdaus, 2017) In essence, this has led some people who are opposed to the government to easily accuse the government of Islamophobia. (Irawan & Nasution, 2021) This is highly contradictory to the situation in Indonesia, which is one of the countries with the largest Muslim population in the world.

Muhamad Parhan et al. state that this Islamophobia can occur because the Islam presented in the public sphere is a harsh, intolerant, and hateful Islam. (Parhan dkk., 2020) This is exacerbated by media reports that narrate the government discriminating against certain Islamic groups. Therefore, the solution offered is that narratives in the public sphere, both in the mass media and educational institutions, must have Islamic values that *are rahmatan lil al-amin*. (Istriyani, 2016) Therefore, this study aims to critique Islamic political policies presented in the public sphere, particularly in Islamic religious education, which promote a moderate Islam that originates from the grassroots rather than from the government's tendency toward political hegemony and the use of religious moderation as a closed ideology in the dialogue of Islamic religious education.

In addition, research by Musawar et al. states that moderate Islamic politics in Indonesia, through the two most dominant religious organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, has developed moderate Islam as a response to its multicultural and multireligious diversity. Moderate Islam is based on the teachings of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, which originated from *civil society* movements in the fields of law, theology, and Sufism, characterized by tolerance, moderation, and acceptance of others. The model of moderate Islam embraced by these two organizations has been accepted globally through the opening of branches in several Western and Middle Eastern countries, proving that it can be a solution for creating peace and harmony in the world. (Musawar dkk., 2019)



Therefore, the research conducted by this researcher aims to affirm the findings of the study, namely that effective religious moderation minimizes conflict in the world of education by avoiding the politicization of religious moderation through the curriculum or making religious moderation indoctrination a single ideology in combating radicalism in the world of education.

B. Method

This study uses a library research approach that contains studies and analyses of data obtained through various key literature relevant to the research question (Kuhlthau, 1994). The main data was obtained from government policy documents on the implementation of religious moderation in Islamic education. The data obtained was then analyzed in three stages: data reduction, data display, conclusion, and verification (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Data reduction is the process of selecting and focusing the research through strict selection of government policies that have an impact on the implementation of Islamic religious education in Indonesia. After the data was obtained, it was then categorized descriptively and analyzed through an interpretive process to find meanings in line with the research objectives (Ambert dkk., 1995). In its presentation, the data was tested against various relevant literature or theories. In the final section, the researcher drew conclusions from the verified data. The conclusions were answers to the research questions posed.

C. Results and Discussion

Results

Religious Moderation Policy

There are several terms that are used interchangeably with policy. Abdul Wahab, as quoted by Sholih Muadi, states that the term policy is often equated with the terms goals, programs, decisions, laws, provisions, proposals, and grand designs. (Muadi, 2016) Muadi further explains that policy is essentially a guideline for action. This guideline can be very simple or complex, general or specific. Basically, policy is defined as a series of actions proposed by an individual, group, or government in a particular environment, indicating the obstacles and opportunities for implementing the proposed policy in order to achieve a specific goal.



Any country, including Indonesia, will face various issues that must be resolved for the benefit of the wider community. The issue of radicalization in Indonesia, which has caused conflict and threatened the unity of Indonesia, has become a widespread concern for the government, experts, religious leaders, and the wider community. When the issue of radicalization has become a matter of widespread public concern, then it becomes the government's agenda, and subsequently, through a series of political processes, it is decided and followed by actual actions for the public interest, thus giving rise to public policy. As explained by Gerston, quoted by Tatag Sudrajat et al., public policy is a combination of basic decisions, commitments, and actions made by people who hold authority in the government (Sudrajat dkk., 2021). According to Dunn, public policy is a decision or choice made by a government agency or official related to defense, energy, health, education, and crime control. (Dunn, 1994)

The policy of religious moderation is based on Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan with the following considerations: (RI, 2020)

1. The lack of stability in character education and morals
2. Weak understanding and practice of religious values.

To establish religious values as the moral foundation of the nation, religious values can be transformed to shape individuals who are faithful and pious, have noble character, have a noble personality, and are beneficial to themselves and their environment.

3. The lack of religious moderation to strengthen tolerance and harmony. It is necessary to develop a moderate religious outlook and attitude in order to build mutual understanding, maintain diversity, and strengthen unity among people of different faiths. The perspective of religious moderation refers to the view that religious communities must take the middle path in their religious practices (). The proper practice of religious values by all communities, accompanied by appreciation and respect for differences, is expected to become a unifying force for the nation. The Religious Harmony Index declined from 75.4 in 2015 to 73.8 in 2019. This decline in the index illustrates the continuing weakness of tolerance, equality, and cooperation among religious communities.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, with its mandate as an operator and facilitator of life and religious services, supports 3 of the 7 national development agendas in the 2020-



2024 RPJMN. The three national development agendas have been formulated into the Ministry of Religious Affairs' strategic program for 2020-2024. One of the national development agendas that is a priority program for the Ministry of Religious Affairs is the national policy on Mental Revolution and Cultural Development with the following programs: (*Tiga Program Prioritas Nasional RPJMN IV 2020-2024 Jadi Point Penting Kementerian Agama*, t.t.)

1. Mental revolution and Pancasila ideology development.
2. Enhancing the advancement and preservation of culture.
3. Strengthening religious moderation.
4. Enhancing a culture of literacy, innovation, and creativity for the realization of a knowledgeable and character-building society.

The direction and policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs aim to maintain continuity and enhance Indonesia's strategic role and position in the global perspective on religious, cultural, and social issues. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has actually declared religious moderation as the mainstream in building the Indonesian nation in the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The vision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia for 2015-2019 declares "The realization of an Indonesian society that is religious, harmonious, intelligent, and prosperous in body and soul in order to create a sovereign, independent Indonesia with a personality based on mutual cooperation." This vision serves as the legal umbrella for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to improve the quality of harmony in the lives of religious communities in the context of nationhood, statehood, and religion. 's policy of religious moderation is not only an important program at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but has also reached the end of the learning process targeting teachers, lecturers, and students in madrasas, schools, Islamic boarding schools, diniyah education, and universities through Islamic Religious Education subjects.

The Directorate General of Islamic Education has made religious moderation the mainstream for providing quality, competitive Islamic education that is responsive to developments in Islamic scholarship in the dynamics of modern civilization and builds an inclusive attitude towards religion. The religious moderation policy was initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the 2015-2019 period and continued with a program to strengthen religious moderation as designed in the Ministry of Religious Affairs' 2020-



2024 Strategic Plan. As a follow-up to the Strategic Plan, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has issued Minister of Religious Affairs Decree Number 93 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation for Civil Servants of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In addition to civil servants, the strengthening of religious moderation can be followed by non-civil servant supervisors of the Ministry of Religious Affairs or the general public.(Markum & Winarno, 2020)

Meanwhile, the religious moderation policy that was established in 2019 is still ongoing. Thus, the policy of inserting religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education is an activity that was initiated in the 2015-2019 period.(*Inseri Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ujian Sekolah PAI Dan PPKB*, t.t.) Since 2018, the Religious Moderation Working Group at the Ministry of Religious Affairs has produced several products, including books on the implementation of religious moderation, videos/films, and the insertion of religious moderation in various activities of the Directorate of Islamic Education. In the 2015-2019 medium-term development plan, inter-religious conflicts and acts of terrorism were recognized as threats to the nation and state (). However, the government's policy in dealing with radicalism was formulated in nine priority agendas called Nawa Cita, which include:(Soleman & Noer, 2017)

1. Bringing back the state to protect the entire nation and provide a sense of security to all citizens.
2. Ensuring the government is always present by developing clean, effective, democratic, and trustworthy governance.
3. Developing Indonesia from the periphery by strengthening regions and villages within the framework of a unitary state.
4. Strengthening the state's presence in reforming the system and enforcing laws that are free of corruption, dignified, and trustworthy.
5. Improving the quality of life of the Indonesian people and society.
6. Increasing the productivity of the people and competitiveness in the international market so that the Indonesian nation can progress and rise together with other Asian nations.
7. Realizing economic independence by driving strategic sectors of the domestic economy.
8. Carrying out a revolution in the character of the nation.



9. Strengthening diversity and reinforcing social restoration in Indonesia.

Thus, the policy of inserting religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education is rational and incremental. This model is a combination of two policy formulation models, namely rational and incremental. According to Riant Nugroho, this model is like an approach using two cameras. A front camera with *a wide angle* to see the whole picture and a rear camera with *a zoom* to see the details (Riant,2016). A rational approach with a broad angle produces policies that are broad but not detailed. Meanwhile, incrementalism produces policies that focus on patterns that have been observed at a smaller level, thus requiring more in-depth observation.

Religious moderation policies that are rational-incremental in nature, when viewed from the policy-maker's perspective, can be described as follows: 1) Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 national medium-term development plan and Presidential Regulation No. 7 of 2021 concerning the national action plan for the prevention of violent extremism leading to terrorism. 2) Mandate as operator and facilitator of life and religious services Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for 2020-2024. 3) Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 7272 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education. 4) Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 93 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation for Civil Servants of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. 5) Madrasahs as targets Schools as targets, Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs, and universities.(Anwar & Muhayati, 2021)

This shows the hierarchy and structural relations of *policy makers*. The level of religious moderation policy makers is the government through Government Regulation No. 18 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 Medium-Term Development Plan and Presidential Regulation No. 7 of 2021 concerning the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism. A policy requires the regulation of policy implementers. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has a mandate as an operator and facilitator of religious life and services, establishing Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for 2020-2024, which stipulates a



strategic program for strengthening religious moderation. Bromely refers to this level of policy as the organizational level. At the operational level, the Director General of Islamic Education issued Decree No. 7272 of 2019 on Guidelines for the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education and the Minister of Religious Affairs issued Decree No. 93 of 2022 on Guidelines for the Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation for Civil Servants of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Similarly, with the patterns of interaction that occur in society, the insertion of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education at the school, madrasah, pesantren, madrasah diniyah, and university levels involves Islamic Educational Institutions with the targets of teachers, lecturers, students, and the wider community. Therefore, the religious moderation policy initiated by Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Syaifuddin in 2019 is responsive and reflects a sense of justice in society and accommodates community participation.(Dewi, t.t.) From a legal policy perspective, there are three categories of legal decision-making, namely responsive, repressive, and autonomous.

Discussion

Resistance to Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia

Resistance to religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia cannot be separated from the social reality that shows a high number of cases of intolerance and violations of religious freedom.(Hamayotsu, 2021) Data from the Setara Institute (2022) recorded 175 incidents of violations of freedom of religion and belief (KBB) with 333 actions throughout the year. Of that number, 168 actions were carried out by state actors—mainly local governments (47 actions), the police (23), and state educational institutions (14)—while 165 actions were carried out by non-state actors such as citizens (94), individuals (30), religious organizations (16), and even the Indonesian Ulema Council (16). These figures show that education and state apparatus are actually involved in producing intolerance, even though normatively they are expected to be at the forefront of enforcing moderation.(Wardah, 2023a)

The same report also shows an increasing trend in disturbances at places of worship, from 16 cases in 2017 to 50 cases in 2022. Of that number, churches (21 units) were the most targeted, followed by mosques (16), Buddhist temples (6), prayer rooms (4), Hindu temples () (2), and indigenous places of worship (1). Cases of lecture rejections



also rose sharply, from only one case in previous years to 14 cases in 2022, eight of which occurred in East Java. The trend of religious blasphemy also increased from 10 cases in 2021 to 19 cases in 2022. East Java even ranked as the most intolerant province with 34 incidents, surpassing West Java (25 incidents), which had always been in first place since 2007.(Wardah, 2023b)

When compared with field findings, this data confirms that resistance to religious moderation is not only present in the public sphere but has also seeped into the educational sphere. Islamic education teachers in a number of public schools and madrasas, especially in East Java, tend to reject the concept of moderation, which they consider to be a political instrument of the government.(Wardah, 2023a) They continue to teach religion using a dichotomous pattern—right and wrong, heaven and hell—and provide little space for interfaith dialogue. In some madrasas, students even feel that the religious education they receive only emphasizes memorization of religious principles without connecting religious teachings to everyday social practices.(Afwadzi dkk., 2024)

Resistance is also evident in the PAI curriculum, which is considered top-down and ignores local wisdom. Community leaders in East Lampung, for example, say that religious moderation in textbooks does not provide space for locally-based practices of moderation such as village deliberations or interfaith selamatan traditions, which are actually forms of tolerance in practice. As a result, the concept of moderation promoted by the government is perceived as a single narrative that disregards the community's experience of cultural moderation.(Abdullah, 2016)

The correlation between Setara Institute's data and PAI practices reveals a paradox: on the one hand, the state promotes religious moderation, but on the other hand, state actors themselves are perpetrators of violations of religious freedom. This tension has given rise to resistance in Islamic education. Teachers, students, and the community see moderation as nothing more than a slogan, not substance, because the social reality shows increasing intolerance. Therefore, the renewal of PAI must be directed towards a more dialogical, contextual, and socially-based approach. In this way, the value of moderation will not remain a slogan, but will be truly internalized in the lives of students and harmonized with the multicultural reality of the Indonesian nation.

Unraveling the Complexity of Religious Moderation Politics in Islamic Religious Education



1. Detaching the Political Interests of Religious Moderation as an Ideology of Islamic Education

Regarding countries using their ideology to dominate their societies, this has indeed been done for a long time. In the view of sociologists such as Bourdieu, who introduced the concept of *field* to explain the relationship between education and power, the two cannot be separated. Bourdieu's concept of *field* criticizes the curriculum (subjects) as a realm of power for the government to assert its authority over the people it leads in accordance with its interests. (McNay, 1999) In the political context of religious moderation as an ideology in Indonesia, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has a mandate as an operator and facilitator of life and religious services, establishing the Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for 2020-2024, which stipulates a strategic program to strengthen religious moderation. Bromely refers to this policy level as the organizational level. At the operational level, the Director General of Islamic Education issued Decree No. 7272 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education and the Minister of Religious Affairs issued Decree No. 93 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation for Civil Servants of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. (Bromley, 2000) Similarly, with the patterns of interaction that occur in society, the insertion of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education at the school, madrasah, Islamic boarding school, madrasah diniyah, and university levels involves Islamic Educational Institutions with the targets of teachers, lecturers, students, and the wider community.

Giroux, in his book *Border Crossing: Culturur Workers and the Politics of Education*, criticizes the relationship between education and power using the term "*the cultural turn*." According to him, the concept of cultural turn can inspire a number of complex theories about the importance of culture, language, discourse, difference, agency, power, and politics. (Giroux, 2005) According to Giroux, there is a power struggle in education because there is a relationship between state ideology and education, whereby state ideology must be included in the curriculum taught in all schools. (Giroux, 2006)

In the context of Islamic education, which carries the ideology of religious moderation as stated in the policy of religious moderation, which is rational-incremental when viewed from the policy-making level, it can be described as follows: 1) Presidential



Regulation No. 18 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 national medium-term development plan and Presidential Regulation No. 7 of 2021 concerning the national action plan for the prevention of violent extremism leading to terrorism. 2) Mandate as operator and facilitator of life and religious services Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for 2020-2024. 3) Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 7272 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education. 4) Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs No. 93 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation for Civil Servants of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. 5) Madrasahs as targets Schools as targets, Islamic boarding schools and Madrasah Diniyah, and universities. This confirms that from the outset, the government had the intention of instilling religious moderation as a new ideology for the National Awakening Movement () to counter the old Islamic education ideology, which it considered to have radical values and threaten national disintegration.

However, the thinking and policies adopted by the government still only accommodate a few dominant Islamic religious groups in Indonesia, one of which is Nahdlatul Ulama. Yudi Latif states that the government does have the authority to represent the dominant group in order to maintain the existence of society and to uphold the ideology of the state.(Latif, 2006) However, the reality on the ground is that, in addition to the government having political interests with NU, NU itself often clashes "personally" with groups it considers radical by becoming the "religious moderation police" for groups that oppose NU and the government.(Aminah, 2016)

This makes NU the sole interpreter of religious moderation for other Islamic groups, giving the impression that NU's Islamic education is the only form of religious moderation, while other Islamic groups are forced to follow it. Of course, this is not good for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, which has a variety of characteristics.(Sari, 2018) Each group has its own view of the value system that it holds as the foundation of its life. This value system is called a sub-ideology, so that in a pluralistic nation there are sub-sub-ideologies and the national ideology becomes a consensus of various interest groups (the result of a consensus of various sub-ideologies). A diverse society places a higher



value on humanity, social justice, democracy, nationalism, kinship, and devotion to God Almighty as the national ideology enshrined in Pancasila. (Syarif, 2021)

Regarding NU's political interests in implementing the ideology of religious moderation, Abdurrahman Wahid once said that history clearly shows that the greatness of Islam is not due to ideology or politics, but rather through Sufism, trade, and teaching. So, the level of education and *Islamic brotherhood* can be a form of feedback. If a person's level of education is high or their way of thinking is democratic, they will not be quick to judge and will be able to treat differences of opinion as opportunities for discussion. Such Muslims will gain more value in their lives and have more alternatives for finding the truth and solving various crucial social problems. (Sa'diyah & Nurhayati, 2019) Thus, it is imperative for Muslims to be educated to understand social and cultural dynamics, as well as the dynamics of their own education. They must be educated to be able to discuss the welfare of the people and the rights of others to practice their religion and be given the opportunity to do so without being dictated to by certain groups.

In a pluralistic society, it is necessary to respect the development of all forms of culture. This is because culture is one of the factors that binds society together in order to create a harmonious life for a nation and society in the context of building a more advanced life in the era of globalization and modernization. Culture, as a product of society, is a fundamental aspect of human existence that must be preserved, because it creates unity in diversity. Humans are social beings who carry natural biological and psychological characteristics as well as the historical background of their ethnic group, namely cultural experiences and collective heritage. Thus, human behavior, attitudes, and values are greatly influenced by the culture of society. Human behavior is the result of a socialization process, and socialization always occurs in the context of ethnicity, culture, and religion. (Baidhaw, 2010)

Based on the above perspective, Islamic religious education in Indonesia is indeed a space for contesting the interests of the state in fighting for the position, influence, prestige, status, or ideology of the state through an ideology called religious moderation. In the discourse of religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education, there is a curriculum that contains a series of symbols or cultural values that have elements of political interest for the government as the ruling power to be produced or distributed through the world of education. According to the critical analysis of sociologists, this



contestation of interests places the state in a dominant position over its people. For them, the discourse of religious moderation infiltrated into Islamic religious education is a mechanism for creating obedience from school principals, teachers, and students to the government. Religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education in Islamic Educational Institutions can be implemented through textual discourse, learning, and social interaction at school, but to achieve true religious moderation, Islamic Religious Education must be freed from the political elements of its curriculum and the ideological interests of certain Islamic groups.

2. Minimizing Symbolic Violence in Islamic Education through the Politics of Religious Moderation

Several studies have explored the 2013 school curriculum as a product of the state.(Hidayat, 2021) There is indeed great potential for the state (and its government) to spread its ideology. The national school curriculum usually presents a homogeneous selection of knowledge, fixed values, and universal truths, which the state considers important to learn. Unsurprisingly, they usually aim to create ideal citizens who are loyal and patriotic and realize the aspirations of the state. Whether this goal is realized is through a process of indoctrination. When required to be loyal and patriotic without being encouraged to be critical, they usually do not realize that they are being indoctrinated.(Yunus & Salim, 2018) According to , Parker's view is that Islamic moderation integrated into the curriculum, which is regulated by various state regulations, is based on the selection of knowledge and values that are in accordance with Islam and state ideology. The principle of Islamic moderation is in line with the principle of "Bhineka Tunggal Ika," which is a principle of equality and justice amid diversity to achieve unity. Islamic moderation in the national curriculum can contribute to the preservation of differences among students, whether in terms of talent, interests, abilities, needs, religion, race, ethnicity, or other differences. Preserving these differences increases the suitability of the curriculum to the needs of students in the context of a multicultural and pluralistic Indonesia. (Haryani, 2020)

Religious moderation means placing religious teachings in a balanced and fair manner. An important consequence of this awareness is that religious moderation is not placed excessively. Religious moderation chooses to adhere to religious principles rather



than falling into the liberal or extremist camps. Similarly, taking the middle path in Islamic attitudes cannot be interpreted as an irregular attitude or a lack of enthusiasm (ghiroh) towards religion. (Hilmy, 2015) A moderate understanding of religion is also used to address the issue of religious conservatism, especially that which is often referred to as the right wing. Therefore, an understanding of religious moderation that tends to target ultra-conservative movements cannot be said to be a complete understanding of religious moderation itself. As explained above, religious moderation is a balanced religious understanding, namely a religious understanding that is in the middle, not leaning to the right or left, so that religious moderation is not appropriate if it is only directed at mediating radical conservative religious understandings. (Munip, 2012)

In addition to being used as a counterbalance to activism, religious moderation also plays an important role in balancing religious beliefs that tend to lean toward liberal ideology (). Religious moderation, or what is known as Islam *wasathiyah*, does not lean toward either the extreme left or the extreme right in understanding Islam, as this would be one-sided and unbalanced. If religious understanding is unbalanced, it will become an unfair attitude toward the understanding of the essence of religion itself. To eliminate the negative impression of this radical ideology, religious moderation seems to be the right strategy to counter the concept of radicalism. Why do these two words always appear together in religious discourse? Does religion, especially Islam, always prioritize peace and harmony? Of course, religion, especially Islam, maintains peace and security. In fact, in religious abstinence, there are no restrictions on upholding the principle of truth in choosing beliefs, because religious principles are contained in a person's belief in their choice of belief. What needs to be emphasized here is that a person strongly believes in their own religion, but still respects and appreciates the belief choices of others who are different from them (Kisbiyanto, 2016).

In the context of minimizing symbolic violence in Islamic education, moderate attitudes and expressions encourage believers not to reject the views of others who are different, even when they are in power. Islamic groups like this will not hold on to their own interpretation of the truth. A black-and-white understanding of religion is not a moderate attitude because it involves coercion and a feeling of superiority, resisting other individuals or groups, as the government does with groups it considers radical, all of which it believes must be eliminated. This in itself negates religious moderation as a



whole. It needs to be clarified again, because currently there are still frequent misunderstandings by certain individuals or religious movements, especially regarding the concept of religious moderation by some Islamic religious movements, which is unclear and often results in a view of religious moderation that is only held by one Islamic group. This condition is because the principle of tolerance is contained in the meaning of moderation, , which has no norms or is based on ethical values. This understanding is more accurately described as an understanding of freedom or libertarianism rather than religious moderation.

D. Conclusion

This study finds that the government's infiltration of religious moderation into the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia is one way the state politically hegemonizes the Muslim community to counter groups it considers disruptive to Indonesia's political stability. This is certainly a departure from the main objectives of Islamic religious education itself. According to the 1977 conference of Islamic countries in Mecca, the main objectives of Islamic education are, first, to foster creativity, critical thinking, and innovation so that children's basic potential can be developed optimally. Second, Islamic education is a process of guiding and assisting students with divine values and human values, thereby forming a generation that is both faithful and *humane*. A faithful generation refers to people who adhere firmly to the teachings of Allah and His Messenger, while being humane refers to the ability to adapt to the surrounding environment. In other words, the goal of Islamic education concerns the function of humans as social beings and as individuals who respect differences. However, when religious moderation is infiltrated as a closed ideology, when the interpretation of religious moderation is controlled by certain Islamic groups, what happens in Islamic religious education is resistance among the community in educational institutions. This resistance even leads to symbolic violence in the implementation of Islamic religious education in schools, as happened in Jombang and Kediri regencies some time ago.

The findings of the above research imply that the government must reform the implementation of Islamic religious education in Indonesia so that religious moderation does not become a tool for the government to carry out symbolic violence in the implementation of Islamic religious education: first, the government must relinquish its



political interests in the implementation of Islamic religious education. even if religious moderation is part of Islamic education, it must be positioned as an academic entity, not as a political tool to eliminate differences between the government and radical Islamic groups. Second, in the implementation of Islamic education, the government must apply cross-sectarian or madhhab Islamic education in order to foster a strong moderate attitude among students towards the differences that exist in Islamic thought. This is also to avoid a monopoly on the interpretation of Islamic teachings, especially those related to religious moderation. Third, minimize symbolic violence against the implementation of Islamic religious education, as symbolic violence in the world of education actually undermines the values of religious moderation itself.

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