

PAPER
THE ROLE OF NAHDLATUL ULAMA (NU) IN FIGHTING
FOR RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIA

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THE ROLE OF NAHDLATUL ULAMA (NU) IN FIGHTING FOR RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIA ¹

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A. Introduction

Nahdlatul Ulama (hereinafter referred to as NU) is the largest Indonesian religious organization founded on 16 Rajab 1344 H (31 January 1926 AD) in Surabaya by some prominent Muslim clerics, most of whom were leaders of *pesantren* or Islamic boarding schools. The purpose of the organization's establishment was to apply the teachings of *AhlussunnahwalJama'ah* or Aswaja-based Islam. In the matters of *aqidah*, NU followed Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Asyari (260 H/ 873 M - 324 H/ 935 AD) and Abu Mansur al-Samarqandi al-Maturidi (d. 333 H/ 944 AD); in fiqh, it followed one of the four schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i, and Hambali) both in *qauli* and in *manbaji*; and in Sufism, it followed Imam al-Junaid al-Baghdadi (d. 297 H) and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (450-505 H/ 1058-1111 AD). NU is an integral part of the Sunni discourse, and if we look further, the founding fathers of NU had very close ties with the Haramain (Mecca-Medina) scholars under the rule of the Ottoman Turks who at that time took the Sunni or Aswaja-based Islam.²

Mitsuo Nakamura in *The Radical Traditionalism of the Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia* stated that NU is one of the oldest Islamic religious organizations in

¹THE Paper is presented in The International Seminar "ISLAM, MULTICULTURAL AND RADICALISME" In The Mobility Program Held Indoenesia Higher Institution Under The Supervision Of The Minister of Religious Affairs Of Indonesia, In International Islamic University College Selangor (KUIS), 24 – 27th, 2019,

²Cholil Nafis, *Masalah Garis Perbatasan Nahdlatul Ulama: Hujjah Aqidah dan Amaliyah Kaum Nahdliyin*, (Jakarta: Lembaga Bahtsul Masail Nahdlatul Ulama, 2008), p. 4.

Indonesia.³ NU was born in the midst of a very strong pesantren atmosphere and culture, where doctrines of *traditional Islam* have taken root. KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah (Leader of Pesantren Tambakberas, Jombang, East Java) and KH. Hasyim Asyari (Founder of Pesantren Tebuireng, Jombang, East Java) played a crucial role in the early period of NU.⁴

KH. Hasyim Asyari, the founder of NU, was born on 4 Robiul Awwal 1292 H/ 10 April 1875 AD in Gedang Village, Diwek District, Jombang Regency, East Java. He is a scholar, thinker, and fighter who was awarded the National Hero. He is the third out of 11 children of the couple Kyai Asyari and Nyai Halimah. From the lineage of both mother and father, KH. Hasyim Asyari is connected to Sultan Pajang and then to Maharaja Majapahit Brawijaya V.⁵ He was the first Rais Akbar (the great leader) of NU. KH. Hasyim Asyari did not just create an Islamic organization but also had consistent thoughts and ideologies that later served as the NU's main foundation as stated in *Qanun Asasi* (The Basic Principles). He also wrote a book named *Ablussunnah wal Jama'ah*. The two books were implemented in the NU's *Khittab* and served as the main reference for the NU followers in thinking and acting in the social, religious, and political life.⁶

A religious movement, NU has actively participated in building and developing communities that are devout to God, intelligent, skilled, noble, peaceful, just, and prosperous. This ideal is realized through a series of endeavors that are based on religious teachings typical of NU's personality, or what came to

³Mitsuo Nakamura, "The Radical Traditionalism of the Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia: A Personal Account of the 26th National Congress, June 1979, Semarang," *Japanese Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1981): 187-204.

⁴Faisal Ismail, "The Nahdlatul Ulama: Its Early History and Contribution to the Establishment of Indonesian State," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 5, no. 2 (2011): 247-282. Please see Umi Masfiah, "Pemikiran Pembaharuan KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah Terhadap Lahirnya Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)," *International Journal Ihya'Ulum al-Din* 18, no. 2 (2017): 217-234.

⁵K Ng H Agus Sunyoto, "KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, Sang Ulama Pemikir dan Pejuang" in Ahmad Baso, K Ng H Agus Sunyoto, and Rijal Mummaziq, *KH. Hasyim Asy'ari Pengabdian Seorang Kyai Untuk Negeri*, (Jakarta: Museum Kebangkitan Nasional Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2017), p. 37.

⁶Ahmad Zubaidi, "Kontribusi Hadhratusy Syeikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari dalam Menegakkan NKRI" in Ahmad Baso, Agus Sunyoto, and Rijal Mummaziq, *KH. Hasyim Asy'ari Pengabdian Seorang Kyai Untuk Negeri*, (Jakarta: Museum Kebangkitan Nasional Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2017), p. 97.

be called the NU's *Khittah*.⁷ Such a personality plays an important role, especially in this disruption era where the Indonesian people are facing various challenges in maintaining the sovereignty of the country. Mubarok and Hamid in *The Rise of Radicalism and Terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia* argued that Indonesia and Malaysia have become barometers of terrorist networks in Southeast Asia. They revealed that the growing network of terrorism and radicalism has changed the character of Islam in Southeast Asia. This fact, according to them, significantly influences the image of a peaceful and moderate Islam.⁸ Several attempts to prevent terrorism in Indonesia have been done, but it still thrives in the country.⁹

Indeed, transnational crime has changed the face of Indonesia. It has helped lead to the rise of Islamic radical groups that justify all forms of violence. The rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, for instance, has had a serious impact on Indonesia. ISIS's influence is claimed to spread to almost every province in Indonesia. Some Indonesians have even become its sympathizers, supporters, loyalists (by taking an allegiance or *baiat*), and fighters in Iraq and Syria. ISIS's development in Indonesia has created worries and discomfort endangering personal safety and public security, as well as the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia.¹⁰

Nowadays, various religion-based radical doctrines continue to develop. The doctrines oppose and threaten the unity of the Republic of Indonesia. One such doctrine is *khilafah*. By most Muslims and the Pancasila supporters, *khilafah* is considered a serious threat to the Republic of Indonesia, since the constitution does not place any particular religion as the basis of the State. Meanwhile, according to the *khilafah* followers, the implementation of social life in Indonesia is deemed deviant or not in accordance with sharia, though many legislative

⁷ M. Bisri Adib Hattani (ed), *Khittah dan Khidmah Nahdlatul Ulama*, (Pati: Majma' Buhuts An-Nahdliyah Roudloh Al-Thohiriah, 2014), p. 42-43.

⁸ M. Zaki Mubarok and Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The Rise of Radicalism and Terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Review of Islam in SouthEast Asia* 1, no. 1 (2018): 29-43.

⁹ Idhamsyah Eka Putra et al., "Tackling Islamic Terrorism and Radicalism in Indonesia by Increasing the Sense of Humanity and Friendship," in *Handbook of Research on Examining Global Peacemaking in the Digital Age* (IGI Global, 2018), 94-114.

¹⁰ Usman, Fenomena Eksistensi Islamic State Of Iraq And Syria (Isis): Ancaman Terorisme Di Indonesia. *Kosmopolitan*, 2(2) in Nur Alim et al., "Singularitas Agama: Identifikasi Aliran Dan Paham Radikal Di Kendari," *Al-Ulum* 18, no. 2 (2018): 271-300.

products in the country have been in line with the Islamic norms.¹¹ Different understanding of Islamic teachings and religious practices within the Indonesian Muslim communities is also another cause triggering radicalism and violence in the name of Islam. Other factors enabling radicalism in Indonesia are related to social, political, and economic problems.¹²

Rigid religious practices and fundamentalism are also an inevitable fact in the Muslim world recently. In general, Islamic fundamentalism can be seen from several indicators. The first is the literal interpretation of the scripture. The second is the refusal of hermeneutics and reason to be used in interpreting the Qur'an. The third is the rejection of pluralism and relativism concepts for they are considered to reduce the sanctity of the sacred texts. The fourth is the refusal of historical and sociological approaches because they may lead people away from the literal doctrines of the scripture.¹³ It is within this context that religious moderation meets its importance.

Religious moderation is a nomenclature put forward by the former Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Saifuddin. He has started echoing the term since the beginning of his leadership at the ministry. Religious moderation is interpreted as a perspective, attitude, and behavior that always take a middle way and act fairly; it doesn't take an extreme position in religious matters. A person who practices religious moderation is then called a moderate. Lukman Hakim's ideas of religious moderation are related to the fact that, in Indonesia, diversity is inevitable, be in religion, culture, language, ethnicity, and so on. In religious matters, this diversity often results in excessive and extreme attitudes leading to truth claims towards religious interpretations. In turn, it creates prolonged conflicts.

However, the term *moderate* has been mistakenly understood as *liberal*, or those who are not firm in practicing Islamic religion (*kaffah*). Such

¹¹Abdul Wahid, Sunardi Sunardi, and Dwi Ari Kurniawati, "DOKTRIN KHILAFAH SEBAGAI ANCAMAN TERHADAP KONSTRUKSI NEGARA HUKUM INDONESIA," *Yurispruden: Jurnal Fakultas Hukum Universitas Islam Malang* 1, no. 2 (2018): 206–220.

¹²Choirul Mahfud et al., "Religious Radicalism, Global Terrorism and Islamic Challenges in Contemporary Indonesia," *JURNAL SOSIAL HUMANIORA (JSH)* 11, no. 1 (2018): 8–18.

¹³Ali Muhtarom et. al., *Islam Agama Cinta Damai, Upaya Menepis Radikalisme Beragama*, (Semarang: Pilar Nusantara, 2018), p. xix.

misunderstanding must be corrected because religious moderation is basically a term equivalent to *wasathiyah* (the middle way). The term also means *i'tidal* (fairness) and *tawazun* (balance). Religious moderation is, hence, part of the essential teachings of Islam. Being a moderate means having a firm stance and a high religious spirit. In this sense, one must be able to identify the main religious teachings, where he must have a firm stance, and the interpretations of religious teachings, where he should show a tolerant stance and should respect people of different views.¹⁴

Studies on the role of NU in fighting for religious moderation in Indonesia have been conducted by several researchers. First, Musawar, Mualimin Mochammad Sahid, Ahmad Nur Jihadi, and Setiyawan Gunardi wrote *Moderate Islam as a Solution to Pluralism in the Islamic World: The Experience of Indonesia*. Their study concluded: *first*, moderate Islam is a model of Islamic teachings that take the middle way in social life. Considering Indonesia as a country with various cultures, customs, and ethnicities, moderate Islam accommodates local cultures, promotes the friendly face of Islam, and strengthens democracy in Indonesia. *Second*, the moderate Islam brought by Walisongo has fluctuated from time to time. In the pre-independence period, Islam did not receive enough support from President Soekarno. However, after Indonesia's independence, moderate Islam began to receive attention, especially during President Soeharto and President Habibie's period. In President Wahid and President Yudhoyono's period, many Islamic groups were formed. Moderate Islam has increasingly come to the fore under President Jokowi's administration. The Indonesian people from various backgrounds are strongly united by the Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Moderate Islam has developed in accordance with the identity of the Indonesian nation.¹⁵

¹⁴Oman Fathurrahman, "Kata Pengantar", in Abdur Rahman Adi Saputra et. al., *Rumah Moderasi Beragama: Perspektif Lintas Keilmuan*, (Yogyakarta: Bening Pustaka, 2019), p. 5-6.

¹⁵Mualimin Mochammad Sahid, Ahmad Nur Jihadi, and Setiyawan Gunardi, "MODERATE ISLAM AS A SOLUTION TO PLURALISM IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD: THE EXPERIENCE OF INDONESIA," *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)*, 2019, 1-24.

Second, a study by Nur Syam and Nawawi entitled *Islam Nusantara Berkemajuan sebagai Basis Moderasi Islam di Indonesia* concluded that Islam brought by NU and Muhammadiyah has made a tremendous contribution to religious practice and understanding in Indonesia. The NU's *Islam Nusantara* and the Muhammadiyah's *Islam Berkemajuan* have been able to present Islam that is friendly, accommodative to local wisdom, and cooperative with the state. While NU has successfully reconciled the relationship between Islam, State, Pancasila, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, Muhammadiyah has successfully encouraged its people to practice Islam elegantly. A combination of the two, *Islam Nusantara Berkemajuan* is claimed to be able to promote a friendly Islam in both national and international arena, sensitive to contemporary human rights issues, gender, *khilafah*, and become a counter-discourse against radicalism, fundamentalism, and terrorism.¹⁶

Third, a study conducted by Hasbiyallah, Muh. Sulhan, and Heri Khoiruddin entitled *Transformation of the Education of Moderate Muslim Society: A Thought Study of Nahdlatul Ulama* concluded that the transformation of moderate Muslims in Indonesia is very much needed considering that Indonesia is a country whose population is of different religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages. This diversity requires Muslims to take a peaceful and tolerant stance. NU offers four conceptions, *i.e. tawasut, tasamuh, tawazun, and amarma'rufnabimunkar*. These conceptions gave birth to Islam Nusantara that educates people with the principles of democracy, equality, justice, brotherhood, and peace. Therefore, public education of moderate stance can be pursued by following Islam Nusantara because this type of Islam has been capable of communicating with the local culture without abandoning the Islamic divine values **when campaigning** equality, freedom, and justice.¹⁷

Fourth, a research conducted by Alexander R. Arifianto entitled *Islam Nusantara: NU's Bid to Promote Moderate Indonesian Islam* revealed that as the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, NU has sponsored various international

¹⁶Nur Syam and Nawawi Nawawi, "Islam Nusantara Berkemajuan Sebagai Basis Moderasi Islam Di Indonesia," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 13, no. 2 (2019): 303–322.

¹⁷Moh Sulhan and Heri Khoiruddin, "Transformation of the Education of Moderate Muslim Society: A Thought Study of Nahdlatul Ulama," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2017): 25–50.

conferences as part of its strategy to promote Islam Nusantara around the world. Although the concept of *Islam Nusantara* is still being debated, even by NU scholars, this organization has shown its commitment to bring *Islam Nusantara* to the Muslim community, both in Indonesia and in the world.¹⁸

Fifth, research by Zakiya Darajat entitled *Muhammadiyah dan NU Penjaga Moderatisme Islam di Indonesia* concluded that moderate Islam is characterized by a strong belief that Islam comes with revolutionary teachings that have been able to transform ignorance into a noble culture and civilization. The success of Islam in changing world civilization is evidence of its flexibility and adaptability to the dynamics of the times. It means that a rigid understanding of Islamic teachings will make Islam obsolete and abandoned by its adherents. Therefore, Islamic movements, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, must consistently show the true mission of Islam, *i.e.* to bring mercy to the world.¹⁹

This study seeks to reveal the values of moderate Islam instilled in NU followers and to examine the role of NU in fighting for religious moderation in Indonesia.

B. Discussion

In Arabic, moderation is commonly known as *wasath*, *wasathiyah*, or *tawassuth* meaning a middle position. It is also equivalent to *i'tidal* (fairness) and *tawazun* (balance). Those who apply this *wasathiyah* principle are called *wasith*. Whatever words are used to represent moderation, they all imply the same meaning, *i.e.* fairness that means to choose a middle position among various extreme options. The word *wasith* has even been absorbed by Indonesian to refer to *wasitor* "referee", which may have three meanings, *i.e.* intermediary (such as in trade, business), reconciler between disputants, and leader of a match. The word *wasath* also means "all that is good according to its object." For example, the word *generous* refers to an attitude between *stingy* and *wasteful*; *brave* refers to an attitude between *coward* (al-jubn) and *reckless* (tahawur), and many other examples in Arabic.

¹⁸Alexander Raymond Arifianto, "Islam Nusantara: NU's Bid to Promote 'Moderate Indonesian Islam,'" 2016.

¹⁹Zakiya Darajat, "Muhammadiyah Dan NU: Penjaga Moderatisme Islam Di Indonesia," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017): 79–94.

The opposite of moderation is excessive, or *tatharruf* in Arabic, which means extreme and radical in English. The word *extreme* may also mean "to go too far, to go from end to end, to turn around, and to take the opposite action or path". In the Great Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), *extreme* is defined as "the very end, the highest, and the hardest."²⁰

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia explained that one of the basic principles of religious moderation is to maintain a balance between two things, such as between *aql* (reason) and *wahy* (revelation), physical and spiritual matters, rights and obligations, individual and communal interests, obligation and volunteerism, religious texts and *ijtihad*, ideas and reality, the past and the future, and so on. Thus, the essence of religious moderation is a fairness and balance in viewing, addressing, and practicing all the pair concepts above. In the KBBI, the word *fair* means: 1) impartial; 2) siding with the truth; and 3) appropriate and not arbitrary. The word *referee* that refers to someone who leads a match can be interpreted as someone who is not one-sided, but prefers the truth. Meanwhile, *balance* refers to perspective, attitude, and commitment to always side with justice, humanity and equality. It doesn't mean *to abstain*. Those who have a balanced attitude are firm but not harsh. They always side with justice, and their siding does not take away other people's rights. Balance can be considered as a way to do something sufficiently, neither excessive nor less, neither conservative nor liberal.²¹

NU, as the major mass organization in Indonesia, lives in a national and global context. This organization is expected to be able to adapt to the demands of the times but not lose its identity. NU needs to increasingly solidify the bases for ways of thinking and behaving that are able to answer the problems of *ummah*. Such bases must be reflected by both individuals and organization, as well as in any decision-making process. This means that everything must be based on *Khittah Nabdhliyah*. The existence of the NU's *Khittah* is intended to identify NU's

²⁰Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), p. 16.

²¹Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), p. 19.

true identity. This way, NU will be accepted by all people as a representation of *Islam rahmatanlil 'alamin*. The bases are shown as in Figure 1 below:

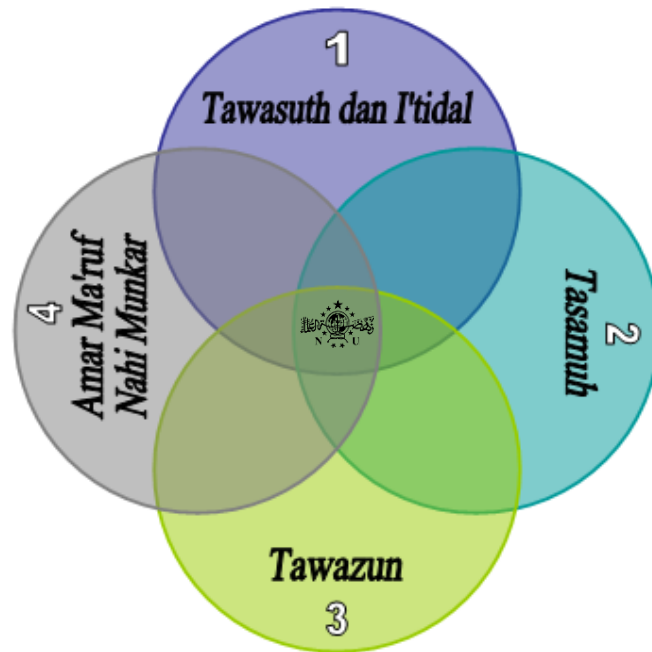


Figure 1:the bases for thinking and acting for NU followers

1. *Tawasuth* and *i'tidal*(moderate and firm)

The two terms refer to a middle attitude that is not extreme (*tatharruf*) to the right nor the left. *Tawasuth* and *i'tidal* are a determination in upholding principles. They are the bases of behaving and acting straight, as well as avoiding all forms of *tatharruf*. With these two bases, NU will become a role model that can be flexible to all groups.

2. *Tasamuh* (tolerant)

NU considers differences as the inevitable. There is nothing wrong with being different. The diversity of religions and cultures that exist in social life is the God's will to dynamize life towards the perfection of His creations. It is how people address differences that often create problems. Therefore, NU makes *tasamuh* as one of its main bases. *Tasamuh* is a tolerant attitude towards differences,

in religious, social, and cultural matters. Tolerance requires an effort to find a meeting point, not differences. Then, departing from that point, brotherhood (ukhuwwah) can be developed, among fellow religious followers, country origin, and humanity.

3. *Tawazun* (balanced)

Tawazun should be applied in all fields. It is meant to maintain a balance between two things, such as between *aql* (reason) and *wahy* (revelation), physical and spiritual matters, rights and obligations, individual and communal interests, obligation and volunteerism, religious texts and *ijtihad*, ideas and reality, the past and the future, and so on. With this basis, one should not be exaggerated by ignoring other considerations.

4. *Amar ma'ruf nabi munkar* (ordering kindness and preventing evil)

Amar ma'ruf means to always encourage good deeds, to be beneficial for life together, and to prevent all things that can undermine the values of life. Meanwhile, *nabi munkar* in NU is carried out elegantly (*ma'ruf*) in the framework of maintaining human dignity, starting from the self, family, environment, and society. These two joints of *amar makruf* and *nabi munkar* are absolutely necessary to sustain physical and spiritual happiness.

In addition to the aforementioned bases of thinking and acting for the NU followers, there is also *mabadik boiriummah*. *Mabadik bairiummah* is a fundamental step in forming the best *ummah* or generation. It is a movement carried out by NU for the formation of the best generation, that is, those who are able to carry out the tasks of building civilization on earth by realizing the order of life that is

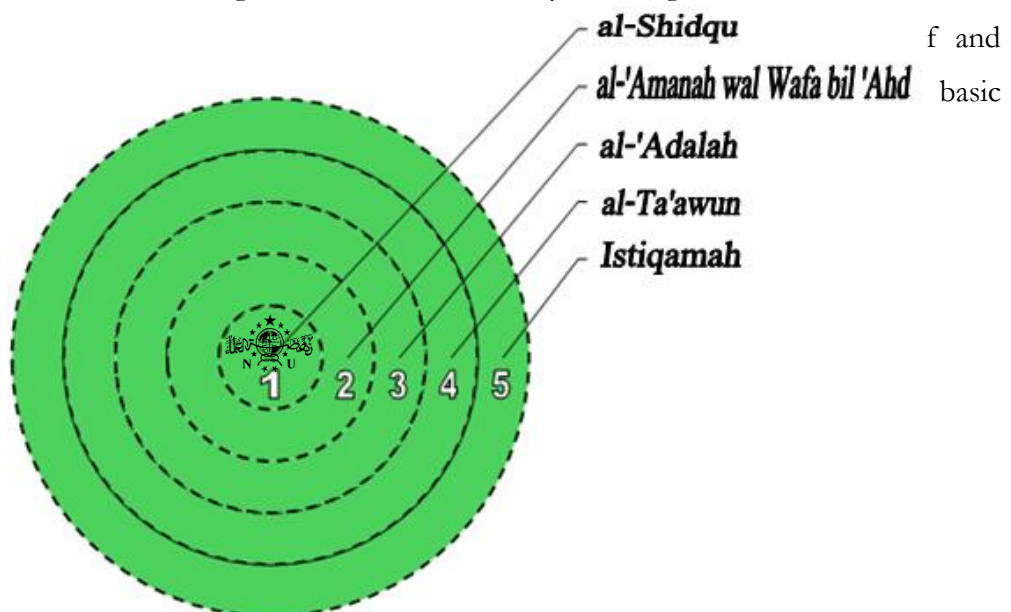


Figure 2:the basic principles of *mabadikeboiriummah* for NU followers

1. *As-shidqu*(honest)

This principle implies honesty, truth, sincerity, and openness. This shows that the attitudes and actions of NU followers must go through strict selection. Honesty is implemented in intentions, words, actions, and beliefs. It is meant to ensure what is done is driven by good intentions to achieve the blessing of God the Almighty (sincere). Being honest in speech ensures that what is said is in accordance with the intention and is done in a good manner. Honesty and truth are a unity of words with deeds, speech with thought. What is spoken is the same as what is inside.

Being honest in this case means not being fickle, deliberately distorting facts, or providing misleading information. It also means self-honesty. With this basic principle, one must avoid lie, manipulation of facts and data, cunning, evil thinking, evil wills, and other wrong doings. Honesty also means not to ignore principles by sacrificing the interests of the people for personal interests.

2. *Al-amanah wal-wafa bil 'abd*(trustworthy and keeping promises)

This point contains two interrelated terms, namely *amanah* and *al-wafabilahdi*. *Amanah* includes all duties, responsibilities, and authorities that must be carried out, whether or not there is an agreement. Meanwhile, *al-wafabilahdi* is only related to the agreement. These two terms are combined to obtain a unified meaning that covers: trustworthy, faithful and true to promises. Trustworthiness is a characteristic that is placed on a person who can carry out all the duties, responsibilities and authority he has, whether it is *diniyah*(religious matters) or *ijtima'iyah* (social matters). With this characteristic, people avoid all forms of neglect of duties and responsibilities, as well as abuse of authority and position. This is so because essentially every human being is a leader. Trustworthiness,

loyalty, commitment, and dedication to duties will guarantee personal integrity in carrying out responsibilities and authorities. *Al amanah walwafabil 'abdi*, together with *ash shidqu*, is generally a measure of high credibility in front of other parties; it is an important condition in building various collaborations.

3. *Al-'adalab*(fair)

Al-'adalab means being objective, proportional, and obedient to principles. This point requires people to hold on to objective truth and put everything in its place proportionally. Personal sentiments, emotions, and egocentrism are from being fair. Fairness refers to the self, other people, organization, and group. Deviations against fairness can plunge someone into a fatal mistake in taking a stand against a problem. The chaos of life order is caused by the absence of this fair attitude. Unequal treatment before the law occurs, as the law is carried out according to the interests of those in power. Public trust in the law has decreased, and people are taking justice into their own hands. A fair attitude is also needed in responding to differences, conflicts and disputes between several parties. The potential for chaos can be controlled by fair attitude.

The absence of *al-'adalab* may not only create a mistake, but also add to the complexity. This is so especially if the dispute involves a conflict between various parties. With an objective and proportional attitude, this kind of distortion can be avoided. Another implication of *al-'adalab* is being loyal to the rules, rational and clear of thought. In making decisions, it is also found in allocating the right man on the right place. Indeed, policies are often needed in dealing with certain problems. However, everything must remain on the basis (principle) of action that is mutually agreed upon.

4. *At-ta'awun*(helping)

At-ta'awun is the main foundation in the order of community life since humans cannot live alone without the help of other parties. The meaning of *ta'awun* includes helping, loyalty to friends, and mutual cooperation in kindness and piety. Imam al-Mawardi links *al-birr* (goodness) with human willingness and piety with the will of Allah. To have both is to find perfect happiness. *Ta'awun*

also means reciprocity from each party to give and receive. Therefore, the *ta'awun* attitude encourages everyone to try and be creative in order to have something that can be donated to others and to common interests. Al-Maidah verse 2 explains:

“Cooperate with one another in goodness and righteousness, and do not cooperate in sin and transgression. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is severe in punishment.”

5. *Istiqamah* (konsistent)

Istiqamah means *ajeg-jegeg* (consistency), continuity, and sustainability. *Ajeg-jegeg* means not to shift from the path (*thariqah*) or provisions of Allah and His Messenger, guidance given by *salafussalib* (pious past scholars), and rules agreed upon. The manifestation of *istiqamah* is to be consistently good in any condition. Next, continuity means the relationship between one activity and another, and between one period and another, so that all of them are inseparable and serve as a mutually supporting unit like a building. Meanwhile, sustainability implies that the implementation of these activities is basically a continuous process without experiencing stagnation; it is a progressive process.²²

Historically, NU has championed the values of religious moderation as a basis for thinking and acting for NU followers and as a formation of *mabadi'khoiriummah* (formation of the best generation) before the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs emphasized that in the context of a state, the principle of moderation in the early days of independence could unite prominent figures that had a variety of ideas, political interests, religions, and beliefs. Everything moves to the middle to look for a common ground to jointly accept the form of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) as a collective agreement. The willingness to accept the Republic of Indonesia as the final form of statehood can be categorized as a tolerant attitude in accepting the concept of the nation-state.²³

Several roles that have been carried out by NU include:

²² Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU), *Hasil-Hasil Mukhtamar Ke-33 Nahdlatul Ulama*, (Jakarta: Lembaga Ta'lim wan Nasyr PBNU, cet II, 2016), p. 322-328.

²³ Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), p. 22.

1. *Dārus salām* (home of peace)

After NU was established, the position of traditional *pesantren* was getting stronger, more importantly in 1936 in the NU congress in Banjarmasin when NU declared to create the *dārusalām* (home of peace) in Indonesia. In 1937 when other Islamic mass organizations formed a federation body of Indonesian Islamic parties and associations known as MIAI (Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia), KH. Hasyim and KH Wakhid Hasyim were asked to become the leaders.²⁴

According to KH. Said Aqil Siradj, the Muslim clerics or *kyais* in the 1936 NU congress in Banjarmasin has emphasized and initiated the Republic of Indonesia as the *darussalam* (home of peace), not *darul Islam* (home of Islam or Islamic state). He further emphasized that the NKRI must be maintained for its sustainability, enhanced its integrity by upholding its sovereignty. Maintaining the integrity of the nation and upholding its sovereignty is a manifestation of giving benefit to the *ummat* and promoting *ukhuwah wathoniab* and *ukhuwah Islamiyah*.²⁵

2. The Jakarta Charter

On June 22, 1945, a small committee named BPUPKI (The Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Independence) consisting of nine people, *i.e.* Abikusno Tjokrosujoso, Abdul Kahar Muzakir, Agus Salim, KH. Wahid Hasjim (from the Islamic group), Soekarno, Mohammad Hatta, Achmad Subarjo, Muhammad Yamin, and A.A. Maramis (from the nationalist group), signed a collective agreement known as the Jakarta Charter. This name was first given by Muhammad Yamin because the signing of the Charter coincided with the anniversary date of Jakarta on June 22. This name was then unanimously agreed upon by the BPUPKI members to mention in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution.

²⁴ Agus Sunyoto, *KH. Hasyim Asy'ari: Pengabdian Seorang Kyai Untuk Negeri*, (Jakarta: Museum Kebangkitan Nasional Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2017), p. 45

²⁵ <http://www.nu.or.id/post/read/53944/setia-nkri-ketum-pbnu-tegaskan-rumusan-muktamar-1936> retrieved on August 25, 2020.

The Jakarta Charter, according to Ir. Soekarno as the chairman of the committee, was the result of an uneasy compromise between the nationalists and the Islamic groups.²⁶ The Jakarta Charter reads in full:

Whereas independence is a genuine right of all nations and any form of foreign occupation should thus be erased from the earth as it is not in conformity with humanity and justice;

Whereas the struggle of the Indonesian independence movement has reached the blissful point of leading the Indonesian people safely and well before the monumental gate of an independent Indonesian State which shall be free, united, sovereign, just and prosperous;

By the grace of Almighty Allah and urged by the lofty aspiration to exist as a free nation;

Now therefore, the people of Indonesia declare herewith their independence;

Pursuant to which, in order to form a Government of the State of Indonesia that shall protect the whole people of Indonesia and the entire homeland of Indonesia, and in order to advance general prosperity, to develop the nation's intellectual life, and to contribute to the implementation of a world order based on freedom, lasting peace and social justice, Indonesia's National Independence shall be laid down in a Constitution of the State of Indonesia, which is to be established as the State of the Republic of Indonesia with sovereignty of the people and based on the belief in the One and Only God, with the obligation to abide by Islamic law for adherents of Islam, on just and civilized humanity, on the unity of Indonesia and on democratic rule that is guided by the strength of wisdom resulting from deliberation/representation, so as to realize social justice for all the people of Indonesia.²⁷

In the formulation of the Jakarta Charter, several Muslim figures, including KH. Wahid Hasyim who is an NU key figure, took part. This formulation is the starting point in fighting for the independence of the Republic of Indonesia.

²⁶ Mr. Mohammad Roem, "Kata Pengantar", in Endang Saifuddin Anshari, *Piagam Jakarta 22 Juni 1945 Sebuah Konsensus Nasional Tentang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia (1945 - 1949)*, (Jakarta : Gema Insani Press, 1997), p. xiv. In Mujar Ibnu Syarif, "Spirit Piagam Jakarta Dalam Undang-Undang Dasar 1945," *Jurnal Cita Hukum* 4, no. 1 (2016).

²⁷ Quoted from Redaksi Sinar Grafika, *UUD 1945 Hasil Amandemen*, (Jakarta: Sinar Grafika, 2002), p. 78-79. In Mujar Ibnu Syarif, "Spirit Piagam Jakarta Dalam Undang-Undang Dasar 1945," *Jurnal Cita Hukum* 4, no. 1 (2016).

3. The jihad resolution

The emergence of jihad resolution by KH.HasyimAsyari in 1945 could not be separated from the arrival of the Allies supported by NICA (The Netherlands Indies Civil Administration). This situation drove Islamic leaders to declare a jihad resolution. At that moment, the NU top figures held a meeting in Surabaya on 22 October 1945 and issued a Jihad Resolution mandating that the struggle for independence was a holy war (jihad).²⁸

Martin van Bruinessen²⁹ maintained that the birth of the Jihad Resolution was inseparable from the role of Hizbullāh, especially after the gathering of kyais from all over Java and Madura at the ANO (AnsorNahdlatulOelama) office on October 21, 1945. After an emergency meeting one day and night, then on October 22, the call for *jihad fī sabilillah* was declared that was later known as the Jihad Resolution. NU saw that a threat to the state having declared its independence and having had its own constitution (UUD 1945) was intolerable. Therefore, on October 22, 1945, this organization issued a Jihad Resolution. The NU top figures who initiated this Jihad Resolution included KH. HasyimAsyari (1875-1947 AD), KH. WahabHasbullah (1888-1971 AD), KiaiBisriSyansuri (1886-1980 AD), and KiaiAbbadBuntet (1879-1946 AD).³⁰

4. The Sole Principle of Pancasila

²⁸Muhammad Rijal Fadhli and Bobi Hidayat, "KH. HASYIM ASY'ARI DAN RESOLUSI JIHAD DALAM USAHA MEMPERTAHANKAN KEMERDEKAAN INDONESIA TAHUN 1945," *SWARNADWIPA* 2, no. 1 (2018).

²⁹Martin van Bruinessen dalam NU: Tradisi, Relasi-relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru, (baca: KH. Hasyim Asy'ari: Menjaga Tradisi Pesantren), 1997, p. 76 in Amin Farih, "Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Dan Kontribusinya Dalam Memperjuangkan Kemerdekaan Dan Mempertahankan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI)," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 24, no. 2 (2016): 251-284.

³⁰Abdul Wahid, *Peranan Pondok Pesantren Buntet Cirebon bagi Kemajuan Lingkungan Pendidikan di Lingkungan Sekitar 1958-2009*, (Semarang: Universitas Negeri Semarang Press, 2012), hlm. 72. Please see: Abdul Ghoffir Muhaimin, *The Islamic Tradition of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat among Javanese Muslim* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), p. 71. In Amin Farih, "Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Dan Kontribusinya Dalam Memperjuangkan Kemerdekaan Dan Mempertahankan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI)," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 24, no. 2 (2016): 251-284.

The discourse on the application of Islamic sharia by certain group of Muslims will never stop in the country, even though they realize that the struggle to replace Pancasila is never an easy job, like the war carried out by Darul Islam and Indonesian Islamic Army (DI/TII) to create an Islamic State in Indonesia (NII). Some groups of Indonesian people also once wanted to replace the Pancasila with a communist ideology proven by the 1948 PKI (Communist Party of Indonesia) Rebellion in Madiun and the 1965 Thirty September Movement (known as Gestapu).

With inclusivity towards diversity, it is expected that the Indonesian nation will be able to bring their people to a just and prosperous atmosphere, without having to insist the application of Islamic sharia to the public and state domains. Religion is a private matter between creatures and God, while the state belongs to all citizens of various backgrounds who live in the same country and have equal rights before the law.³¹

At least four NU leaders publicly supported NU's acceptance of Pancasila as its sole principle. They were KH. Ali Ma'shum, KH. Achmad Siddiq, KH. As'ad Syamsul Arifin and KH. Abdurrahman Wahid. KH Achmad Siddiq played the most decisive role with his middle formula for accepting Pancasila. Discussion in NU about Pancasila as the sole principle began in the 1983 national conference at the KH As'ad Situbondo' pesantren. During the conference, KH. Achmad Siddiq met President Soeharto to discuss the place of Islam. The formula proposed by KH. Achmad Siddiq was approved by President Suharto, that Pancasila is not a religion, and, thus, it cannot replace religion or change the position of religion.³² After the conference, KH. As'ad went to Jakarta to meet President Soeharto who declared Pancasila as the sole principle of the state and

³¹Muhammad Ali Chozin, "Peran Asas Tunggal Pancasila Dalam Membendung Gerakan Ideologi Islam Garis Keras," *Jurnal Islam Indonesia* 1, no. 01 (2009): 9–25.

³²Martin Van Bruinessen, *Nahdliul Ulama: Tradisi, Relasi-Relasi Kuasa dan Pencarian Wacana Baru*, online edition at <http://www.kmnu.org>, diakses pada Mei 2002. In Achmad Kemal Reza, "Responses of Islamic Organisations to The Enactment of Pancasila as Asas Tunggal For Mass Organisations in Indonesia," *Al-Qanun: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pembaharuan Hukum Islam* 11, no. 2 Des (2008): 381–401.

wanted NU to adopt it. Again, KH.As'ad argued that Pancasila was not against Islam and, therefore, NU would accept it.³³

The traditionalist groups respond to this issue in a moderate way. In fact, NU is the first mass organization to accept Pancasila as its organizational principle. NU, which is generated by Kiai Achmad Siddiq and young figures such as Abdurrahman Wahid, has succeeded in accepting Pancasila while maintaining Islamic *aqidah* as the basis for its organizational activities.³⁴

Einar Martahan Sitompul in *NU & Pancasila* stated that since its birth, NU has always shown a flexible approach in responding to political developments. The culmination of this flexibility is the acceptance of Pancasila as its organizational principle.³⁵ This indicates that NU recognizes Pancasila as the nation's philosophy and as the basis for the Republic of Indonesia.

5. PBNU's response to the RUU HIP

When various objections to the Pancasila Ideology Guidelines Bill (Rancangan Undang-Undang Haluan Ideologi Pancasila or RUU HIP) appear,³⁶ PBNU gave a stance to strengthen Pancasila as a national consensus. There are two crucial attitudes by PBNU in maintaining moderation, that is, concerning point number seven and eight. In point number seven, NU states that mistakes that have occurred in the past regarding the monopoly on interpretation of Pancasila must not be repeated. However, this is not an excuse to justify the expansion or narrowing of the interpretation of Pancasila in a regulation that regulates the Pancasila political democracy and the Pancasila economic democracy as in the RUU HIP.

³³ Ali Haidar, "Al-Islam wa al-Pancasila fi Dau'i Kifah Nadlatul Ulama (NU)", *Studia Islamika*, 1 (3) 1994. p. 103. In Achmad Kemal Reza, "Responses of Islamic Organisations to The Enactment of Pancasila as Asas Tunggal For Mass Organisations in Indonesia," *Al-Qanun: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pembaharuan Hukum Islam* 11, no. 2 Des (2008): 381–401.

³⁴ Asep Saiful Muhtadi, *Komunikasi Politik Nahdatul Ulama*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2004), p.147. In Zuhri Humaidi, "Islam Dan Pancasila: Pergulatan Islam Dan Negara Periode Kebijakan Asas Tunggal," *Kontekstualita: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 25, no. 2 (2010): 37097.

³⁵ Einar Martahan Sitompul, *NU & Pancasila*, (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2010), p.7.

³⁶ <https://www.nu.or.id/post/read/120720/ruu-hip-bisa-sulut-konflik-ideologi-yang-bikin-gaduh> retrieved on August 26, 2020.

Meanwhile, regarding point number eight, obsession to interpret Pancasila in an expansive manner will have a negative effect in the form of the strong control of the state in people's lives. Excessive strengthening of the BPIP (the Pancasila Ideology Development Board) can regenerate BP7 (the Education Development Agency for the Implementation of the Guidelines for Living and Practicing Pancasila) as in the New Order era, which in practice became a tool of censorship of community ideology. The excessive strengthening of Pancasila will erode its spirit as a unifying ideology, which in turn can lead to clashes of norms in society.³⁷

C. Conclusion

NU is the largest religious organization in Indonesia, and even in the world. Although NU is not a political party that wishes for power, the organization is not automatically separated from the political dynamics in Indonesia. It has played a strategic role in realizing religious moderation in Indonesia, an idea that may not be found in any other country. The values promoted by NU in realizing moderate Islam are by mainstreaming the bases of thinking and acting, as follows: (1) *tawasuth* and *i'tidal* (moderate and firm); (2) *tasamuh* (tolerant); (3) *tawazun* (balanced); and (4) *amar ma'ruf* and *nahi munkar* (ordering kindness and preventing evil). Meanwhile, to form the best *ummat* (generation), NU introduces the principles of (1) *as-shidqu* (honest); (2) *al-amanah walwafa bil 'ahd* (trustworthy and keeping promises); (3) *al-'adalah* (being fair); (4) *at-ta'awun* (helping); and (5) *istiqamah* (consistent). These values **should** indicate NU's commitment to caring for the unity and integrity of the Republic of Indonesia.

Since Indonesia's pre-independence, NU has grounded the values of moderation, both to fellow NU followers and in the context of national life. The role of NU can be seen in promoting the concept of the *darus salam* (home of peace or peaceful state), the formulation of the Jakarta Charter, the jihad resolution, the sole principle of Pancasila, and the firm stance in the RUU HIP

³⁷PBNU, *Sikap PBNU Terhadap RUU HIP: Perkuat Pancasila sebagai konsensus kebangsaan*. Jakarta, 16 Juni 2020.

stating that Pancasila is a meeting point (kalimatun sawa') mutually agreed upon as the basis of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

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