RELIGIOUS MODERATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE VIEWS OF AL-AZHAR AND THE MINISTRY OF RELIGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

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Abstract

This research aims to determine how the view of the Al-Azhar interpretation book and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia relates to religious moderation. These two interpretations both discuss the notion that Muslims have a unique concept of thinking in religious matters. This research is a field research (field research). This study's data includes descriptive qualitative research that explains and describes Religious Moderation: A Comparative Study of the Views of Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

Keywords: Da'wah, Contributions, Legal Behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The central idea intensified in this era is the discussion of the nature of religious moderation. All expressions for Muslims when they have *mutasyaddiun* or extreme patterns or liberal people will be rejected; this happens because the essence of Islam is moderate, and this is actualized in several Islamic teachings both in terms of worship in QS. Al-Isra/17: 110, in terms of economics such as QS. Al-Isra/17: 29 and QS. al-Furqan/25: 67, and finally, regarding social

behaviour QS. Al-Rahman/55: 7. All of these explain how moderation is inherent in Islam as a whole in all aspects.

Religious moderation manifests in several aspects, both in religious moderation or *diniyah*, moderation in the scope of politics or *siyasah*, moderation in social issues or *iqtisadiyah,* and moderation in social aspects or *taamuliyah*. (Kholid Syeirazi, 2021: xii). So, someone who has an extreme and liberal nature will be criticized by the Prophet PBUH and stated loudly that the best thing was the one in the middle.

The idea of moderation emerges and becomes the epicentre of the solution to deviations in religion. Religious moderation should be applied in religious life and the state because of the massive population growth, diverse beliefs and religions, and the spread of hundreds of nations and tribes on this earth, which makes opportunities for differences laden with conflict.[1]

The understanding of juxtaposing moderation as a form of pluralism that facilitates tolerance in faith so that it does not have an identity in religion is wrong. This error occurs because the nature of moderation proclaimed by the scholars has not touched massively on the people who judge it, so the explanation and argument that moderation is not simplistic but is the key to addressing diversity without violence and absolute freedom paths.

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[1] Edelman, Mark and Sandra Charvat Burke, *Creating Philanthropy Initiatives to Enhance Community Vitality*, Staff General Research Report, no. 12951, Iowa State University, Department of Economics, 2008, https://ideas.repec.org/cgi-bin/htsearch?q=philanthropy, accessed 23 Jun 2015.

Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia are two institutions keen on spreading the slogan of moderation in religion. Both institutions do this in response to the deviations that occur and the treatment of extremism by a handful of individuals in the name of religion, especially Islam, so that with an understanding of the nature of moderation, it can be lost amid society.

When comparing these two institutions, the essence of the difference lies in the relationship that arises in their backgrounds. Therefore, understanding the similarities and differences between the two institutions is vital to analyzing them to become the leading benchmark and reference in viewing the nature of religious moderation for society as a whole.

Based on this description, the author tries to raise the discussion of Religious Moderation: A Comparative Study of the Views of Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia so that the formulation of the problem in this study is how the nature of religious moderation in the views of Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religion and how the similarities and differences between Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religion about religious moderation.

METHODS

According to Lexy.J. Moleong, a qualitative approach is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behaviours (Lexy J. Meleong, 2007: 4). Related to the research to be studied this type of research is *field* research. In terms of the data contained in

this research, this research includes descriptive qualitative research, namely research that explains and describes Religious Moderation: A Comparative Study of the Views of Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Activities in qualitative data analysis are interactive and continuous until completion, ensuring that the data is complete. These activities include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. (Sugiyono, 2010: 341)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

(1) Moderation

The word moderation comes from the Latin moderâtio, which means moderation (neither excess nor deficiency). It also implies self-control (from being overly excessive or lacking). The Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) provides two definitions of moderation: 1. n the reduction of harshness, and 2. n the avoidance of extremes. If we say, "That person is moderate", the sentence means that the person is reasonable, mediocre, and not extreme. In English, the word moderation is often used in the sense of average, core, standard, or non-aligned. In general, moderation means promoting balance in beliefs, morals, and dispositions when treating others as individuals and dealing with state institutions.[2]

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[2] Fogg, Kevin William, "The Fate of Muslim Nationalism in Independent Indonesia", PhD. Dissertation, Yale University, 2012, http://gradworks.umi.com/35/35/3535314.html, accessed 16 Feb 2016.

The word moderation in Arabic means *al-wasathiyah*. Linguistically, *al-wasathiyah* comes from the word *wasath*. Al-Asfahaniy defines *wasath* with *sawa*, the middle between two boundaries, or with justice, the middle, the standard, or the mediocre. *Wasathan* also means guarding against uncompromising and even leaving the line of religious truth.

Moderation is known as *wasath* or *wasathiyah*, which has the same meaning as the words *tawassuth* (middle of the road), *i'tidal* (fair), and *tawazun* (balanced). In Arabic, the word wasathiyah is "the best option". According to Arabic language experts, wash means "everything good according to its object". For example, the word "generous", which means an attitude between miserly and wasteful, or the word "brave", which means an attitude between timid (*al-jubn*) and desperate (*tahawur*), and many other examples in Arabic. (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019)

Whatever word is used, they all imply the same meaning: fair and balanced. In this context, it means choosing a middle-ground position between various options. This shows that moderation has a style that is neither lacking nor excessive in something; this form is applied in any field, especially in religion.

(2) Religious

In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, religion is adhering to (embracing) religion, worshipping, obeying, living a good life (according to religion), and being very worshipful, very fond of, and essential. Thus, religion is an attitude that makes religion the leading guide in running life. This causes all the problems that occur, making religious people able to find solutions that come from religion itself.

Thus, religious moderation is the balance that a person sees in addressing issues related to religion; by making a style of moderation in spiritual life, the nature that leans left and right, extreme and liberal, can be avoided. The nature of religious moderation is a way that can show us how to address differences; the form or attitude of moderation is a manifestation of the true religion of Islam, which Islam teaches to address but also shows the real religious identity in a balanced way.

Knowledge of balance in religion is supported by insight into things that are deviant in religion, which serves not to subjectively judge the views of others. Because of the implications that can occur if knowledge is confined to one perspective, a person only views what he embraces as the absolute truth even though, in reality, he is in deviation.

(3) The Legal Basis of Religious Moderation

The legal basis that supports the application of religious moderation can be taken in the Qur'an and Sunnah; this is the central axis when we want to know more about the nature of moderation itself to see how the nature of moderation, the two sources of law can explain the properties and principles contained therein.

The equivalent word that means religious moderation in the Qur'an and Hadith has been aligned by Islamic experts with the word *wasathan*. This word is then expanded with various meanings, terms and terms as follows:

The use of the word *wasath is* addressed and attributed to Muslims in QS. al-Baqarah/2: 143:

شَهِيدًا وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ (١٤٣) ...

Translation:

And likewise, we have made you (Muslims) a just and chosen people so that you may bear witness to the deeds of men and that the Messenger (Muhammad) may bear witness to your deeds (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014).

- Balance in matters of worship is also explained in QS. al-Isra/17: 110:

وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ سَبِيلًا (١١٠).

Translation:

Say: "Call upon Allah or call upon Ar-Rahman. By whichever name you call, He has al asmaaul husna (the best name) and does not raise your voice in your prayers nor lower it and seek a middle way between the two".

In some conditions, the Qur'an recommends being moderate so that the balance in religious life can be carried out correctly and does not cause harm to oneself and social life.

In the Hadith, the Prophet also implies how the urgency of moderation is as follows:

The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged his followers not to be excessive and to live a balanced life between the life of this world and the hereafter.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَنْ يُنْجِيَ أَحَدًا مِنْكُمْ عَمَلُهُ قَالُوا وَلَا أَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ وَلَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَغَمَّدَنِي

اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ سَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا وَاغْدُوا وَرُوحُوا وَشَيْءٌ مِنَ الدُّلْجَةِ وَالْقَصْدَ تَبْلُغُوا.

(al-Bukhari 1987)

Meaning:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺsaid, "One of you will not be saved by his deeds," so the Companions asked, "Not you, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Not me, except Allah has mercy on me. So do your deeds according to the Sunnah and act with balance. Leave in the morning and leave in the afternoon, and (do) a little time (for prayer) at night, intention and intention, and you will arrive."

The Prophet PBUH also explained that excessive religion leads to destruction as HR. Al-Nasa'i as follows:

قَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ غَدَاةَ الْعَقَبَةِ وَهُوَ عَلَى رَاحِلَتِهِ هَاتِ الْقُطْ لِي فَلَقَطْتُ لَهُ حَصَيَاتٍ هُنَّ حَصَى الْخَذْفِ فَلَمَّا وَضَعْتُهُنَّ فِي يَدِهِ قَالَ بِأَمْثَالِ هَؤُلَاءِ وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوَّ فِي الدِّينِ فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمُ الْغُلُوَّ فِي الدِّينِ

(Abu Abd Rahman al-Nasa'i1420)

Translation:

The Messenger of Allah told me on the morning of 'Aqabah, and he was in his vehicle, "Get me some," so I got some pebbles for him that were pebbles for throwing. When I placed them in his hand, he said, symbolizing the pebbles, "Do not exaggerate in religion, for what destroyed those before you was exaggeration in religion."

These two sources of law recommend living with a moderate concept in religious life, even in all matters. The nature of *ta'assub* or fanaticism in all matters causes chaos in life because when a person is inclined to one thing, it will cause juxtaposition on the other side. Islam has an attitude not to live like that.

From the description that explains the definition and legal basis of the nature of religious moderation, it has inherent principles and becomes a unique style. This style is specific and differentiates between moderate and other religious understandings. These principles are:

1. Justice ('*Adalah*)

Fairness in religious moderation aims to achieve equality and balance between the fulfilment of rights and obligations. Fulfilment of rights does not mean eliminating obligations, and vice versa, because the correlation between rights and obligations runs parallel without intersecting with each other. Thus, Islam upholds fairness for all parties, as in QS. al-Maidah / 5: 42:

$$\text{وَإِنْ ...}\quad (٤٢)\;\text{حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ}$$

Translation:

And if you decide their case, then decide between them justly, surely Allah loves the just. (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019)

This verse implies that all servants should be fair in social life and give others what is their right and obligation. When fairness is not created, and the fulfilment of rights and responsibilities is not carried out, inequality will arise and cause people to tend towards extremes.

2. Balance (*Tawazun*)

Combining aqli and naqli arguments proves the principle of balance in religious moderation. In the history of Islamic civilization, previous groups have carried out the imbalance between the two and caused chaos and war. This is evidenced by the understanding possessed by the Khawarij group, which is more textual in understanding the arguments, and the muktazilah, which uses more reason in viewing the text.

The khawarij is a group that thinks narrowly, has simple knowledge, sees messages based on personal motivation and is not based on data and logical consistency, relying more on the message's source (container) than the content of the message. (Sukring, 2016) While the Muktazilah is a school of theology that prioritizes reason so that they get the name of Islamic rationality with the basic teachings of theology in matters of tawhid, justice, promises and threats, the place between two places, and the problem of Amar makruf nahi Mungkar. [3]

The Asy'ariyah understanding applies the concept of tawazun in religion, which can combine the use of *naqli* and *aqli* arguments. The concept of tawazun is used to examine a problem and then look for common ground in the *naqli* argument. The elaboration between the two is confirmed by revelation so that all aspects can be stable and balanced.

The emergence of Ash'ariyah as a wasathiyah teaching aims to dismiss the extremes shown by the Khawarij and Mu'tazilah. Al-Ash'ari accepted the ratio because he was previously a Mu'tazilah follower and was heavily influenced by Greek logic. However, he did not use ratio or reason as the sole instrument for discovering truth.

3. Tolerance (*Tasamuh*)

The position of tolerance in religious life and the state has limits that must be set so that pluralism can be clear and different from moderation in religion. When

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[3] Iqbal, J., "Democracy and the Modern Islamic State", in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. by John L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, 1983.

differences touch the theological realm, all attitudes related to belief are absolute properties that must be planted, and there is no room for tolerance. Sheikh Ahmad al-Thayyib confirmed this in the international congress when discussing the nature of moderation in religious life.

However, when the state's life is related to the social sphere, efforts to build tolerance in theological aspects, such as praying and worshipping together, are an idea that has been carried out for a long time. (Suheri Suheri and Yeni Tri Nurrahmawati2022) Thus, the concept of tolerance is a moderate attitude in religion but does not touch the private realm of faith because moderate understanding does not force someone to have the same understanding as him but mutually maintain and respect what they understand without any element of violence.

History of Al-Azhar and Ministry of Religious Affairs

Before further examining the moderation views of two institutions that have a mission to spread moderation to Muslims, the history of their establishment has its urgency so that the background and style of these two institutions can be better understood.

a. Al-Azhar al-Syarif

Al-Azhar Mosque was founded by Jawhar al-Siqilli, leader of the Fatimid caliph al-Muizz, on 24 Jumadilawal 359 AH/4 April 970 AD, a year after the founding of Cairo. The construction took almost 27 months, then opened for

prayers on Friday, 7 Ramadan 361 H coinciding with the 21st of Ramadan June 972 AD, and was soon converted into an institution of scientific studies and is associated with the naming of the Al-Azhar Mosque and associated with Fatima Al-Zahra, daughter of the Prophet and wife of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib, who was most likely affiliated with the Fatimids.

After Sultan Al-Nasir Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi's collapse of the Fatimid dynasty on 3 Muharram 567 AH / September 11 1171 AD, he suspended Friday prayers and established several Sunni schools to compete in his scientific preaching to eliminate the Shia sect in Egypt. With this step, he restored Sunni doctrine to Egypt with vitality and activity, thus ending Al-Azhar Mosque's relationship with the Shia sect.

Al-Azhar mosque witnessed a significant transformation under Mamluk rule (648-923 AH/1250-1517 CE). Friday prayers were repeated in 665 AH/1267 CE, and soon, the Mamluk sultans returned to Al-Azhar's scholarly activities and then directed these activities to the Sunni style (according to the four madhhabs). For Egypt and the Islamic world, especially after the fall of Bagdad in the east, the rift of Islamic power in Andalusia and North Africa, and the hopes of Muslims centred on him. So, he carried out the scientific and religious mission that fate had bestowed upon him. It became a tremendous Islamic university visited by seekers of knowledge from every country, and it has become a destination for scholars of the Islamic world in the east and west of the earth.

The sciences taught at the Al-Azhar Mosque grew at that time. They varied in the study of branches of the science of creed, law, Arabic language and philosophy, historical and architectural studies, and other sciences. The learning process at Al-Azhar Mosque is often known as the portico.

b. Ministry of Religious Affairs RI

As stated by K.H.A. Wahid Hasjim as published in the book Sedjarah Hidup K.H.A. Wahid Hasjim and Scattered Garlands (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1957: 856). "After running from August to November of that year, it was felt that religious matters, which in practice were mixed with other matters in several hands (departments), could not be left unattended. It was felt that it was necessary to centre religious matters on the one hand (department) so that such matters could be separated (distinguished) from other matters. Therefore, a Ministry of Religious Affairs was established to form the first Parliamentary Cabinet. This model of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is essentially a middle way between the theory of separating religion from the state and the theory of uniting religion and the state."

The proposal for establishing the Ministry of Religious Affairs emerged at the Central Indonesian National Committee (KNIP) plenary session held on November 25-27, 1945. The Central Indonesian National Committee (KNIP) was the Indonesian Parliament for the period 1945-1950; the plenary session was attended by 224 members, including 50 people from outside Java (representatives of the Regional National Committee). KNIP Chairman Sutan Sjahrir chaired the session with the agenda of discussing the KNIP Working Committee (BP) report, the election

of the new membership / Chairman / Deputy Chairman of BP KNIP and the course of government.

In the plenary session of the KNIP, the proposal for the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs was submitted by representatives of the Indonesian National Committee of the Banyumas Prefecture, namely K.H. Abu Dardiri, K.H.M Saleh Suaidy, and M. Sukoso Wirjosaputro. They were KNI members from the Masyumi political party. Through the spokesperson of K.H.M. Saleh Suaidy, the KNI Banyumas delegation proposed, "So that in this independent Indonesia, religious affairs should not only be assigned to the Ministry of Education, Teaching and Culture but there should be a special and separate Ministry of Religion".

The establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the Sjahrir II Cabinet was stipulated by Government Stipulation No. 1/S.D. dated January 3, 1946 (29 Muharram 1365 H), which reads; President of the Republic of Indonesia, Considering: the proposal of the Prime Minister and the Working Committee of the Central National Committee, decided: To establish the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The government announced the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs on Radio Republik Indonesia. Haji Mohammad Rasjidi was appointed by President Soekarno as the First Minister of Religious Affairs. H.M. Rasjidi was a scholar with a background in modern Islamic education and later became known as a prominent Islamic leader and Muhammadiyah figure.[4]

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[4] Hosen, Nadirsyah, "Shari'a & Constitutional Reform in Indonesia", Master Thesis, Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2005.

Similarities and Differences between Al-Azhar and Ministry of Religious Affairs' Views on Religious Moderation

From the background described earlier, Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia are two institutions that aim to educate and solve problems. Although their methods are different, their final mission goals are met in a series of moderation.

Al-Azhar is one of the oldest educational institutions in the world and has become a mecca for religious knowledge. Its efforts in spreading *washatiyyah* by forming study methods and shaping students' intellectual and emotional reasoning have been the key to its survival for more than a century.

While the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia is an official institution under the government that has the function and purpose of fostering people of various religions, regulating the implementation of education and maintaining the continuity of society in religion can be calm and not cause friction between one another. (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022)

This section will discuss the similarities and differences between Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in viewing the nature of religious moderation and the efforts made so that a moderate understanding can be achieved as a whole.

1. Moderation between religion and culture

Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Affairs have the same view regarding the relationship between religion and culture. The combination of the two

emphasizes that both faith and culture, as long as they are not in conflict with each other and can run according to their flow, culture will not be rejected by religion.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs argues that culture and religion are two things that do not need to be contradicted because cultural development should respect the principle values in religion. Likewise, the development of religion should maintain the diversity of cultures, traditions, and customs in Indonesia because both have been able to walk together and pass on values, norms, and ethics that have proven successful in uniting the diversity of Indonesian society.

The moderate concept in religion when looking at culture is to make the culture one of the elements that should be maintained because, throughout the history of mankind, culture in the majority in Indonesia has existed since long before religion came, so that cultural values are very characteristic of society, even culture has become one of the sources of law in the state. However, some things become essential concepts in cultural issues, namely, as long as the values possessed by the culture do not conflict with religious values, especially Islam.

2. Moderation between religion and education

The relationship between religion and education in moderation is carried out by Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in different ways. Still, the two institutions' endpoint is that they can integrate the education system with moderate methods or the term *wasathiyyah manhaj*.

School and campus activities must be mobilized to oversee religious moderation, which means creating an atmosphere of life including information

through various channels as far as possible, not to undermine the character of moderation that has grown and developed in society, which undoubtedly influences students in educational institutions. Educational institutions that should be the driving force of religious moderation include formal and non-formal ones, including pesantren, majlis taklim, Sunday schools, pasraman, etc. Schools are the proper means to spread the sensitivity of students to differences. Opening space for dialogue, teachers provide an understanding that religion brings the message of love, not hate, and the school system is free of these differences.[5]

Through educational institutions, the Ministry of Religious Affairs makes formal and non-formal institutions a means of spreading moderate understanding by teaching the nature of moderation and respecting differences without blaming anyone. This is the best effort applied by the Ministry of Religious Affairs because the main task and function of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in this case, is only to direct. However this still needs to be neatly organized and difficult to control because the institutions that play a direct role in educating their students to moderate understanding are different from the Ministry of Religious Affairs itself.

Al-Azhar does something different in educating its students. Al-Azhar's efforts to implement religious moderation in the scope of education with the formation of proficiency in Arabic for children, followed by the recitation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet along with the sciences that support it, then after that

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[5] Fogg, Kevin William, "The Fate of Muslim Nationalism in Independent Indonesia", PhD. Dissertation, Yale University, 2012,

strengthening in the field of creed and the sciences of usuluddin, fiqh, and tasawwuf, even at this stage, Al-Azhar seeks to juxtapose all these branches of science against the development of the times in each phase.

The efforts made by Al-Azhar in the field of education are a form of moderation in educating its students so that the mindset of students studying under Al-Azhar can help them understand the realities of the past and present and see the future. So, stagnation of thinking and exclusiveness in seeing new things are acceptable, and we should not consider them a threat that can be a seed of division.

Al-Azhar's ease in implementing its ideals and manhaj is that the educational institution can directly teach the nature of moderation, from the most basic to the most complex.

3. The concept of moderation against extremes

In stemming extremism and radical attitudes, these two institutions have their own ways of counteracting them. This is due to the conditions of the place and society, which are faced with the issue of extremism, which is proliferating. However, the common point between these two institutions is moderate understanding. This understanding can be a filter or filter against deviant issues so that one is able to think critically when responding to them.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia views that the influence of extremism occurs because of a person's inability to filter and process data scattered on the internet. Currently, the factors that can contribute to the

growth of narrow religious understanding are increasingly complex, not only arising from the family environment, friendships, or lessons at school but also from information available on the internet. (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019)

With the rapid development of the internet, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has taken several strategic steps to tackle extremism through religious moderation. First, Religion-Based Healthy Internet Literacy; second, Counter Radical Site Movement. Third, Mainstreaming Counter-Radical Opinions in Social Media. The last is the Friendly National Movement in Cyberspace (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia KEMENAG RI, 2022).

With this strategic step, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia views that the best way to counteract extreme understanding is through the internet media, because the internet has an influence that can reach all elements without exception. So the way to overcome this is to increase moderate content that can cover deviant things.

However, Al-Azhar has a different view on how to counter extremism. Al-Azhar views the source of conflict and extremism as not instilling the curriculum of unity of the ummah from an early age; many scholars who do not focus on the unity of the ummah and accuse and remove it from the lap of religion because of khilafat issues, and the last reason is the attitude of the scholars who confine themselves to certain madhhabs so as to open a wide door to ignite wars because of these differences. (Ahmad al-Tayyeb, n.d.)

What Al-Azhar did in response to radical and extreme attitudes was to hold an international conference and say loudly that the concept of *Hakimiyyah*, the call to leave the homeland, and jihad synonymous with war were wrong. Through manhaj ahlusunah waljamaah is the way Al-Azhar goes through to reach the core teachings of Islam, by knowing the nature of Islam, extreme and radical traits can be overcome and avoid deviation.

Thus, the efforts made by al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in counteracting extreme understanding are to spread the insights of religious moderation, both through the internet as a bridge to channel their thoughts and through strengthening education and international conferences conducted by al-Azhar.

CONCLUSION

Religious moderation is the nature of the balance that a person sees in addressing issues related to religion; by making the style of moderation in spiritual life, the extreme and liberal nature can be avoided, and deviant behaviours come out of the middle and the rules. The nature of religious moderation is a way that can show us how to address differences; the form or attitude of moderation is a manifestation of the true religion of Islam, which Islam teaches to address but also shows the real religious identity in a balanced way.

The legal basis for moderation in all matters is contained in the Qur'an, and the behaviour of the Prophet is enshrined in the Hadith, both in matters of worship,

exercising rights and obligations, and even in world life. Fairness, balance, and tolerance are the main characteristics of religious moderation,

Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Religious Affairs are institutions that are keen on spreading moderation. Although their tasks and strengths are different, the way these two institutions spread moderation in the context of culture, education, and counter-terrorism has a different diversity, but the main goal of their efforts is for Muslims to have a moderate concept of thinking, especially in religious matters.

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