

THE DISSEMINATION OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION THROUGH THE POLICY OF THE INDONESIAN MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

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Abstract

This paper is a reflection on the policy of *Moderasi Beragama* (religious moderation) launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2019, which has been incorporated into the 2020-2024 Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN, *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah*). *Moderasi Beragama* is a strategic policy implemented by the Ministry of Religious Affairs for half a decade and has resulted in several accomplishments up to this point. This study sheds light on the Ministry of Religious Affairs' efforts to disseminate religious moderation through the ministerial policy by reviewing the implementation journey since its official enactment. The study results reveal that the policy of *Moderasi Beragama* has been effectively working over the past five years,

particularly within the Ministry of Religious Affairs itself, and has the potential for further development in the future. Although it still has a long way to go to become a “national habitus,” this policy has managed to attain certain achievements in accordance with its road map throughout the past five years.

Keywords: *Moderasi Beragama, Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, Religious Moderation.*

A. Introduction

In the aftermath of Suharto’s New Order (Orde Baru), the wave of the reformation period paved the ground for the various expressions of Indonesian Islam to reach the public sphere. Indonesian Islam has been expressed in a variety of forms from that era to the present, ranging from liberal-progressive trends to the emergence of conservative and even radical groups. Several representative studies affirm this (Bruinessen, 2013; Hasan, 2005; Makin, 2017). Thus, the post-Soeharto era has witnessed a new challenge in the religious sphere. If the context of national development was the main background during the New Order era and the condition of religious communities tended to be more homogeneous in which – according to van Bruinessen – “the open-minded discourse of the likes of Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid was almost hegemonic” in the public sphere, the case of post-Soeharto has witnessed very different picture in which inter-religious conflicts occurred for several years across the country and jihadi movements carried the banner of Islam into local conflict areas, in addition to the existence of terrorist groups with clear transnational connections that carried out horrific attacks as seen in the Bali bombings (Bruinessen, 2013).

Based on the Global Terrorism Database (START 2024), data presented by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), there were at least 301 incidents of terrorism in the form of bombings from 1970 to 2020, and 289 of them occurred in the post-Soeharto era (1998-2020). This excludes other forms of terrorism, including kidnappings, armed assaults, and others. This site records at least 850 cases of terrorism in Indonesia between 1970-2020, of which 701 cases of them occurred since the collapse of the New Order (1998) until now. Here, it can be seen that from that moment, there has been a significant increase in acts of terrorism that threaten religious harmony, a dilemma of a more democratic reform era, on the one hand, with the increasing emergence of religious extremism on the other (START 2024). At first glance, it was evident from a thread of mutual support between the “conservative turn” thesis developed by Bruinessen and his colleagues and the data provided by the START, although more investigations are needed.

However, the dynamics of scholarship related to this issue may show different findings or even criticize the above thesis at the level of detailed argumentation. Issues related to what terrorism is, who has the right to define it, and other issues are also currently being reviewed, especially in the changing geopolitical context. After all, studying a particular subject should be conducted autonomously while, of course, not forgetting the global dynamics. The Reformation era brought new challenges to religious life in Indonesia, which cannot be denied; therefore, it has become the very starting point for many studies on it. Sociologically, this dynamic brings, at least, to what might be called “the fragmentation

of religious authority,” in which various expressions of Indonesian Islam can freely contest in the public space, on the one hand, and the emergence of religious movements with more open transnational connections, on the other (Hasan, 2023; Kailani & Sunarwoto, 2019; Saat & Burhani, 2020). Within the spirit of democratization, on the one hand, and carrying the obligation to handle the religious sphere, on the other, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) of the Republic of Indonesia, for the last decade, has implemented the policy of *Moderasi Beragama* (religious moderation). It was first initiated during the period of Lukman Hakim Saifuddin (in office: 2014-2019) and was developed under Fachrul Rozi (in office: 2019-2020) and Yaqut Cholil Qoumas (current minister of religious affairs). This policy can be regarded as a step taken by the ministry at the policy level to respond to the development of the religious sphere after the Reformation.

This paper describes how this ongoing MORA policy acted as one of the most important strategies conducted by the ministry in handling contemporary religious development, particularly in the last decade and within the Reformation period in general. Therefore, this article explores the context within the formation and elucidation of essential elements in the policy, revealing how it aims to promote what the ministry considers a moderate perspective on religion.

B. The Principle of Religious Moderation: Reinventing the Legacy

To conceptualize the so-called “religious moderation,” MORA takes what might be called “empirical experiences

of religious moderation” from the past as the foundational principle to be reinvented. The policy of Moderasi Beragama (MB) originated from the quintessence of what might be called “religious moderation,” which is actually not a new one. It has been deeply rooted in the social and cultural capital of Indonesian society for a long time: the nature of tolerance, mutual respect, and the principle of “agree in disagreement.” It can be said that such fundamental values are the foundations of society in the archipelago for the formation of “religious moderation.” This kind of value lies principally in every religion, which basically teaches the same humanistic values. Moderation must be understood as a shared commitment to maintain a complete balance, where every member of the community, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, and political choice, must be willing to listen to each other and learn from each other to manage and overcome differences between people (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

The people of the archipelago have been historically reported to have the capital and tools to overcome the reality that was diverse in nature since the very beginning. Indonesia itself was built on the true awareness of a multicultural society. The founding fathers of the Republic of Indonesia recognized this multicultural fact as an invaluable wealth from making the Republic of Indonesia, which is based on *Pancasila* (Indonesian state philosophy consisting of five fundamental principles) (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). The awareness of multiculturalism and the instruments to handle it have precedents and are the legacy of the past. It is shown, for instance, by the national motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, “diversity in unity” or “divided yet one,” a phrase derived from

Kakawin Sutasoma composed by Mpu Tantular, a Majapahit poet in the 14th century.

The message of this 14th-century proverb (*sesanti*) is all about the call for harmonization in the context of religious life. In this case, the author of *Sutasoma* (Old Javanese poem) urged for peaceful relations between Hindus and Buddhists through his poetry, as they were necessary for the kingdom's growth and survival at that time. Hindu-Buddhism, or Sivaism, therefore, was a syncretic religion that incorporated local Javanese customs and modified Indian theological doctrines (Makin, 2016; Meuleman, 2006).

As a result of the foundational reasoning that MORA developed in the conception of religious moderation, this is considered to be one of the most fundamental conceptual beginnings. This illustrates that the people of the archipelago have always been aware of its diversity, both ethnic and religious (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

Another empirical experience of religious moderation used by MORA as historical legitimacy concerns the struggle for independence. In the context of the making of Indonesia, this moderation principle was one of the important things in the early days of the independence struggle that could unite the founding fathers, who had various opinions, political interests, religions, and beliefs. They all moved to the center to find common ground and jointly accept the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI, *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*) form as a collective agreement. The willingness to accept NKRI as the final form of state can be categorized as a tolerant attitude to accept the concept of the nation-state (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

The issue of religion also became an important discussion before the establishment of the Indonesian state in the early 20th century. The debate on this issue occurred amid efforts to form the official state philosophy, which later gave birth to Pancasila. The deletion of seven words in the first principle or pillar of the Jakarta Charter, “*Ketuhanan, dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari’at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya* (Belief in God with the obligation to implement Islamic sharia for its adherents),” reflected a turmoil in the formation of the state foundation at that time.

As there were some objections from non-Muslims, especially from Christians in eastern Indonesia, about the first principle set out in the Jakarta Charter, Mohamad Hatta approached some Muslim leaders to change article 1 of the Jakarta Charter to “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (Belief in One God)” without the seven words (Latif, 2011). The attitude shown by Indonesia’s founding fathers in the process of formulating the first pillar of Pancasila (Ismail, 1995; Maarif, 1983) was an attempt to mediate all differences and debates about religion in relation to the principles of the state. This kind of mentality led to the flexibility of not favoring one particular religion to be dominant, which became the official foundation of the state. This was one of the results of this kind of approach. Therefore, it can be said that the pillars of Pancasila are a way to manage religious differences and create harmony. The creation of this harmony is, of course, based on a compromise for the common good in a pluralistic country.

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This is among the historical legitimacy rooted in the empirical experience of religious moderation in the past as a foundation for conceptualizing religious moderation. In this case, religious moderation cannot be separated from tolerance as one of the major points of departure. From various previous discussions, it can be stated that religious moderation is a process, and tolerance is the result or outcome of religious moderation (Kementarian Agama RI, 2019). On the other side, tolerance is also one of the most important indicators of religious moderation (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020), as explained in the next session. Thus, it can be concluded that the policy of “religious moderation” attaches itself to what has long been the capital and ideals of the Indonesian nation itself, a set of principles represented by several key terms, including multiculturalism, tolerance, freedom of belief, and similar concepts in the context of building religious life in Indonesia.

In addition to attaching itself to a reinvented treasure of the past ideals, this policy, of course, should be considered as a continuation of what has long been implemented by MORA in the past. This is especially true with regard to the policy to build inter-religious harmony that has been initiated since the 1970s and remains on the MORA’s agenda today. It is just that different contexts also make the scale of priorities in the policies issued different. Before Moderasi Beragama became a state-sponsored policy, a series of discourses became a prologue to the making of this policy. The most notable of these is the *wasatiyyah* (balance or moderate discourse that has been going on since at least 9/11 and has become the geopolitical background for any discourse on moderate Islam.

The setting of 9/11 has indeed been crucial in shaping the notion of moderate Islam in various parts of the Islamic world, especially in the context of their foreign policy in response to America's Global War on Terror (GWOT) policy under George W. Bush (in office: 2001-2009) (Umar, 2016). However, it should not be forgotten that in addition to the geopolitical situation that shapes the moderate discourse in the context of GWOT, the history of Islamic thought in Indonesia also witnesses a discourse that is Indigenous to a similar discourse, although, in some ways, it has new significance as the context is also new. What MORA frames as "empirical experiences of religious moderation," as explained before, are among the pre-conditional discourses.

In addition, A. Najib Burhani's study of the idea of *al-tawassuth wa al-i'tidal* (moderate and harmonious) in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization's perspective, for instance, has shown the extent to which the issue of moderate Islam in Indonesia intersects with the GWOT policy and the extent to which it has autonomy and independence. He concluded that "what is obvious from this moderate position of the NU is that it is not merely an extension of the US policy on the war on terror or a continuation of its previous theological position" (Burhani, 2012). In this case, religious moderation policy emerges in a situation that is also specific and has moved away from the GWOT era, although they are still related to each other. Next, we will explain the process of the policy's emergence, its content, and what it has given to the dynamics of the religious sphere in Indonesia.

C. Moderasi Beragama: The Emergence of a Policy

Although it has been coined since 2015 with various discourses that preceded it, such as *Islam Wasatiyyah* and the likes, the socialization and promotion of the policy of Moderasi Beragama was carried out officially in 2019, a moment which Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, the minister of religion (in office: 2014-2019), refers to as the year of religious moderation (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). Previously, In November 2018, Saifuddin organized a gathering of religious and cultural leaders in Yogyakarta to discuss religious and cultural development. The meeting resulted in the “*Permufakatan Yogyakarta* (Yogyakarta Agreement),” which called for the harmonization between culture and religion. The forum also said that in the context of the nation-state, cultural development in Indonesia must respect basic religious values, as religious development should not lead to the destruction of Indonesia’s culture, traditions, and customs (Jahroni & Muhannif, 2019). In particular, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin delivered his response, which among its important points is not to put religion and culture in conflict as a commitment to nationality and statehood (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

At the end of the same year, he held another interfaith dialog. No less than 50 religious leaders, academics, and representatives of the millennial generation attended the meeting initiated in Ancol, Jakarta. This meeting discussed the phenomenon of religious life at that time, which prioritized formalistic aspects and away from the noble and substantive values of religion itself, which was published in the *Risalah Jakarta Tentang Kehidupan Bergama di Indonesia* (Jakarta Treatise on Religious Life in Indonesia). At that time,

Saifuddin called for the implementation of the contents of the Jakarta Treatise into the Ministry of Religious Affairs programs (Jahroni & Muhannif, 2019). As a culmination of this series, at a MORA national meeting in 2019, in a 45-minute speech, Saifuddin explained his main thoughts on religious moderation and proclaimed that year as the year of religious moderation (Jahroni & Muhannif, 2019).

This event cannot be separated from similar dynamics that occur at the geopolitical level, as in December 2017, the UN General Assembly passed a very intriguing resolution in 2019. The resolution, which is endorsed by every nation, declares 2019 to be a global year of celebration for three reasons. *The International Year of Indigenous Languages* takes place in the first place; *The International Year of Periodic Table* concerns the atomic valence table, as it is known in chemistry as the second; and the third is *The International Year of Moderation* (IYM2019). According to reports, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, the former prime minister of Malaysia, came up with the first idea for IYM2019 in an attempt to “counter the spread of extremism and radicalism by taking a position of moderation” (Bagir & Sormin, 2022; Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020).

It must be noted that the *wasatiyyah* discourse has become increasingly significant in Southeast Asia since 9/11. In 2017, Malaysia, under Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, for instance, made Islam Wasatiyyah the projected basis of the state, which will reinforce the existing governance foundations and become part of the supporting agenda for the transformation of the country’s development. For example, since 2012, Malaysia has established the Institut Wasatiyyah

Malaysia (IWM) in parallel with the aim of promoting the wasatiyyah approach across the country. IWM has conducted several programs explaining the wasatiyyah approach through seminars, workshops, dialog sessions, lectures, and circulation of published materials (Institut Wasatiyyah Malaysia, 2017). In spite of the existing comparable aspects, similar developments in wasatiyyah discourse also happened in Indonesia through several institutions, most notably the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI, *Majelis Ulama Indonesia*) (Amin, 2018).

In the context of Indonesia, a new development emerged in 2019 as MORA launched the Moderasi Beragama policy. In this same year, MORA, through its Research & Development and Training Agency (*Balai Litbang dan Diklat*), compiled a book containing the principles of the policy under the title “Moderasi Beragama (2019)” and “Buku Saku Moderasi Beragama (2019)”. Moderasi Beragama contains material related to the conceptual framework of religious moderation, empirical experience of religious moderation in Indonesia, and preliminary design for the policy implementation strategy. Subsequently, Moderasi Beragama was included in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN, *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional*), which is prepared by the Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency (*Kementerian Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional/Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional/Bappenas*). In this regard, one of the policy directions of RPJMN 2020-2024 is strengthening religious moderation to strengthen tolerance, harmony, and social harmony (Lampiran Peraturan Presiden RI, No 18 Tahun 2020).

Thus, during Fachrul Rozi's administration (2019-2020), Moderasi Beragama was formed as a working group based on the Decree of Minister of Religious Affairs No. 720/2020. This is a continuation of the RPJMN 2020-2024 mandate, which establishes MORA as the leading sector in implementing and strengthening religious moderation. Since then, the team has begun to prepare a document on the road map for strengthening religious moderation in 2020-2024 under the title *Peta Jalan (Road Map) Penguatan Moderasi Beragama 2020-2024* (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020). The road map is an important publication that further elaborates – mainly in terms of implementation – the material described in the Moderasi Beragama book published a year earlier. However, it should be noted that the publication is a “living document” that is, of course, subject to change as the dynamics change also (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020). However, the principles that have been formulated regarding religious moderation in the publication remain a common reference in interpreting and implementing the Moderasi Beragama policy itself.

D. Ongoing Developments

The development and strengthening of Moderasi Beragama continued under Yaquut Cholil Qoumas (current minister of religion). The road map for the implementation of Moderasi Beragama during this period was carried out in stages, and the conceptual framework of Moderasi Beragama was increasingly evaluated and refined. From the government side, as already explained, the Moderasi Beragama framework is represented by at least two publications: the book of

Moderasi Beragama and the road map. The conceptual framework delineating moderation and the parameters of extremism, the content of Moderasi Beragama messages, and the indicators of Moderasi Beragama have been highlighted in these publications.

According to the book of Moderasi Beragama, Moderasi Beragama is defined as “perspective, attitude, and behavior that always take a middle position, act fairly, and not extreme in religion” (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). The very word of ‘moderation’ itself implies the principle of the middle position. In this context, this discussion relates to the previous issue of wasatiyyah. However, this non-extreme middle position should not be understood as the middle in a rigid sense, but as explained in the discussion related to wasatiyyah, the middle here is nothing but justice and balance itself. Hence, in the road map, Moderasi Beragama was defined as follows (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020): Religious perspectives, attitudes, and practices in everyday life manifest the essence of religious teachings, which protect human dignity and build public benefits based on the principles of justice, balance, and obeying the constitution as a national agreement.

The Moderasi Beragama policy, adopted for the past five years, remains in ongoing development. Publications relating to religious moderation issued by the government from the outset are regarded as a living document, (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020) that is continuously being developed in line with the challenges of the times. It should also be noted that Moderasi Beragama, in the first position, should be understood as a “cultural strategy” (*strategi kebudayaan*) to create harmony at the level of the religious

sphere in the midst of the increasing fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The road map of Moderasi Beragama has set three limits related to the views, attitudes, and practices of religion that are categorized as extreme and not moderate, namely (1) undermining the noble values of humanity, (2) violating collective agreements in the life of society and the state, and (3) violating legal provisions that guide society and the state (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020). The book of Moderasi Beragama and the road map of Moderasi Beragama have also established the so-called indicators of religious moderation, namely: 1) national commitment; 2) tolerance; 3) non-violence; and 4) accommodating to local culture (Kementerian Agama RI 2019; Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama 2020). It is worth noting that the Moderasi Beragama, although according to some researchers (Bagir & Sormin, 2022), remains biased towards Islam and is intended from the very beginning for all religious adherents in Indonesia. As such, it has the following seven universal religious messages: (1) maintaining the protection of life, (2) upholding noble ethics, (3) respecting human dignity, (4) strengthening moderate values, (5) building peace, (6) respecting pluralism, (7) adhering to national commitments (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020).

In general, the stages of strengthening religious moderation within the Ministry of Religious Affairs scope are Religious Affairs in 2021 to 2024 are as follows (Tim Pokja Moderasi Bergama 2020):

Year	Road Map
2021	Strengthening the perspective of religious moderation within the institutions.
2022	Implementation of religious services and programs with a perspective of religious moderation.
2023	Strengthening the role of society in strengthening religious moderation.
2024	Affirmation and appreciation of the state and nation with the perspective of religious moderation.

Each road map has a main agenda consisting of achievement and implementation strategies formulated in the road map. The agenda of Strengthening the Perspective of Religious Moderation in Institutions, for example, is pursued through several strategies as follows: (a) Development of directorate-level framework; (b) Preparation of implementation instruments for strengthening religious moderation; (c) Budget fulfillment; (d) Task and function-based religious moderation strengthening program; and (e) Capacity building of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020).

Furthermore, implementing religious moderation comprehensively requires the cooperation of various parties from various elements of citizens. This is then formulated as the “Ecosystem of Religious Moderation (*Ekosistem Moderasi Beragama*),” which consists of multiple factors that influence and are interrelated. Through this ecosystem network, it is expected that religious moderation will be

realized organically. Based on the formulation of the Working Group (*Pokja*) of MB, six important factors in the religious moderation ecosystem are complementary in nature. These six are society (*masyarakat*), education (*pendidikan*), religion (*agama*), media (*media*), politics (*politik*), and state (*negara*) (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020).

Somerecentachievementsoftheagendaofstrengthening religious moderation have been realized. Among the most representative of these achievements are the establishment of The House of Religious Moderation (RMB, *Rumah Moderasi Beragama*) in various Indonesian State Islamic Higher Education (PTKIN, *Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam*) throughout Indonesia and the agenda of religious moderation training is in several institutional lines of government. The establishment of RMB has been initiated since the release of the Circular Letter of the Director General of Islamic Education (Number B-3663.1/Dj.I/BA.02/10/2019, October 29, 2019, concerning House of Religious Moderation), which requires all Rectors of PTKIN to establish and organize RMB. Islamic State University (UIN) of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung became the first campus to have it, and by 2020, at least 29 RMB were established in various PTKINs. Later on, RMB was also instructed to be based in non-Islamic universities.

As emphasized in the research conducted by PPIM (*Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat*) UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, although PTKIN has been known as one of the pillars of moderate Islam in Indonesia and PTKIN alums are absorbed in a moderate framework of thinking in the ideology of development and modernization which in the 1980s was the dominant ideology, in recent years,

this seems to be refuted by the findings of several studies on violent extremism in higher education that also occurs in Islamic higher educational institutions (Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat [PPIM] 2021). In light of these facts, the discourse of religious moderation in the context of PTKI finds its significance.

Based on the Circular Letter of the Director General of Islamic Education, “Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 897 of 2021 concerning Technical Guidelines for Religious Moderation Houses”, RMB is a working group to strengthen religious moderation in the PTKI milieu. It can be extended within educational institutions, such as faculties, for specific objectives. RMB has an office on the PTKI campus, and its management is regulated by a decree of the Rector/Head of PTKI. RMB functions as the leading sector in implementing religious moderation in PTKI itself (Kementerian Agama RI, 2021). RMB is also expected to conduct studies on the following strategic issues: conflict and violence against religious backgrounds; intolerance and exclusivism; low digital literacy, media literacy, and instant culture; increasing indoctrination of radicalism to university students systematically and massively; and identity politics (Kementerian Agama RI, 2021).

One should also note that the establishment of RMB in PTKIN is an integral part of implementing religious moderation in Islamic education in general. This task was carried out under the Directorate General of Islamic Education (PENDIS, *Direktorat Pendidikan Islam*) throughout 2018-2019 and has carried out several strategic programs in the development of religious moderation. The working group of PENDIS has also

provided assistance in reviewing the curriculum in educational institutions, especially those under the coordination of MORA. Since 2019, the working group has prepared a number of efforts to strengthen the dissemination of religious moderation by using social media. This effort targets a wider circle, especially from the millennial generation, the largest group in the scope of PENDIS (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

In the context of *madrasah* (Islamic educational institution), for instance, among the program objectives and activities planned by PENDIS in the 2020-2024 strategic plan are as follows: (1) Strengthening the education system with moderate perspective; (2) Strengthening the content of religious moderation in religious subjects; (3) Increasing the percentage of madrasah students who receive religious education with religious moderation; (4) Increasing the number of religious extracurricular activities in madrasah with religious moderation; (5) Strengthening the content of religious moderation in religious subjects; (6) Increasing the percentage of madrasah teachers who are trained in religious moderation; (7) Increasing the percentage of madrasah supervisors who are trained in religious moderation, and various other agendas and programs (Dokumen Rencana Strategis Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Tahun 2020-2024).

Hence, in the context of disseminating and strengthening the policy of MB, among the major programs related to strengthening religious moderation is the Education for National Instructor of Religious Moderation/*Pendidikan Instruktur Nasional Moderasi Beragama* (PIN-MB) for PTKIN lecturers and students throughout Indonesia held for the first time at the end of 2019 (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

When this article was written, the national training entered its fifth batch. It should also be noted that this agenda is an inseparable part of the agenda to strengthen religious moderation (*Penguatan Moderasi Beragama/PMB*) launched by the Minister of Religion through the Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 92 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation for Civil Servants of the Ministry of Religion. This agenda includes (1) a Workshop of ministry/institution leaders, (2) Implementation of PMB master training, (3) Training of PMB trainers, (4) PMB mobilizer training, (5) PMB pioneer orientation training, and (6) PMB socialization (Kementerian Agama RI, 2022).

Among the recent developments in the policy of MB is the publication of Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2023 on Strengthening Religious Moderation. In this regulation, PMB is explained as follows (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2023):

“Strengthening Religious Moderation can be defined as a perspective, attitude, and practice of religion in common life by embodying the essence of religious teachings and beliefs, which protects human dignity and builds public benefits, based on the principles of religious moderation. The dignity of humanity and building the public good, based on the principles of fairness, balance, and obeying Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as a national agreement.”

This regulation is intended as a guideline for Central Government, Regional Governments, and religious communities in the context of strengthening religious moderation. This regulation regulates, among other things,

the establishment of the Joint Secretariat (Sekber, *Sekretaris Bersama*) for Religious Moderation, which is projected as a joint forum to strengthen cross-ministerial/institutional coordination in the implementation of PMB (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2023). In this case, Joko Widodo, the President of the Republic of Indonesia, appointed Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, the current minister of religion, as the chief executive of the joint secretariat for PMB whose tasks are: (a) coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of strengthening Religious Moderation in ministries/institutions, provincial Regional Governments, and district/city Regional Governments; (b) reporting the achievements and evaluation of the implementation of strengthening Religious Moderation to the President; and (c) publicizing the achievements of the implementation of strengthening Religious Moderation (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2023). This legislation indicates that the dissemination of religious moderation is being promoted throughout all levels of government, from the ministerial tier to its subsidiary entities. This is inherently associated with the fact that religious moderation has become a fundamental component of the RPJMN, as previously elucidated.

E. Toward Religious Moderation as a “National Habitus”: Some Remarks

Despite the massive campaign of religious moderation in Indonesia as we see today, evaluation and continuous development should always be conducted. Among the areas that should also receive scholarly attention are the results achieved by the MB policy itself, especially after four years

since it was launched in the RPJMN. At the same time, it is necessary to conduct a special study based on the perspective of the social sciences to review the policy. Initially, it was designed as a policy based on discourse, dialogue, and cultural understanding. Thus, in discussing the policy of religious moderation, a social perspective is a must. The big projection of the promulgation of this policy – in Bordieuan sense – is to create a shared “habitus” that reflects a religious adherent who internalizes the values of moderation, which become the social capital to externalize an action based on harmony among different religious followers. In other words, the sociological perspective in analyzing the policy and its effect remains a promising field to be examined further.

So far, the national campaign for religious moderation has been successful, mainly at the level of state institutions. Thus far, the index of Religious Harmony (KUB, *Kerukunan Umat Beragama*) also shows the achievement of the religious moderation policy. Based on research conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the KUB index in the last three years has tended to increase with each high predicate: 2021 (72.9%), 2022 (73.09%), 2023 (76.02%) (<https://balitbangdiklat.kemenag.go.id>). At least, this is in accordance with the target of strengthening religious harmony, which is one of the most important agendas in the road map for religious moderation in 2024 (Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama, 2020).

In addition, a brief observation will also look at how the issue has become common property. A phenomenon worth noting, for example, is the proliferation of academics and thinkers in Indonesia who participate in the contest of religious moderation discourse. For example, Muhammad

Quraish Shihab, a well-known Indonesian Muslim Intellectual, wrote the book titled *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama (2019)* in 2019. The issue of religious moderation is also widely studied in the Indonesian academic landscape, including studies that criticize it, such as the book of *Politik Moderasi Beragama*, edited by Zainal Abidin Bagir and Jimmy Sormin (2022). This indicator shows how religious moderation has been disseminated in various lines of society and grown up in terms of structural or cultural matters, although the former seems to be dominant.

However, it must be understood that the ultimate goal of this policy should actually be directed toward the formation of a religious habitus at the national level, as has already been explained after being implemented for the last half-decade, the concept of “religious moderation” is still being developed as the “cultural strategy” for creating harmony in terms of religious life. Despite its complexity, one of the explanations regarding habitus formulated by Pierre Bourdieu is a “system of durable, transposable disposition, and structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of the practices and representations” (Bourdieu, 1972). Furthermore, Bourdieu explains that habitus becomes structures that are formed and, at the same time, are intended to function as forming structures (which form), which are objectively organized and orderly without having to be the result of compliance with rules and can be adapted to goals without presupposing conscious direction of goals and deliberate control of the efforts needed to achieve them. They are collectively in tune without necessarily being the result of a conductor’s arrangement (Bourdieu, 1972).

For sociologists involved with comparative modernization studies, such as Nobeit Elias, the so-called “national habitus” has long been a concern of theirs. For some modern societies, an individual’s need for government institutions, for example, may be equal to, or even greater than, that of his or her own neighbors. In this case, “state formation” becomes an important element behind habitus formation in society, especially in the context of nation-states. In another mention, Elias proposed a term called survival units, which is a bond that determines the survival of society. He defines survival units as “human collectivities consisting of a combination of three main aspects: (1) control over violence; (2) control of the natural environment through economic means and production; 3) and control of means of purpose, especially knowledge and symbols (Kuzmics et al., 2020). For Helmut Kuzmics, these survival units are what is currently known as “the state.” In this frame, the concept of “religious moderation” can be explained as part of a country’s “national character,” which ultimately affects habitus formation in living religious life itself.

F. Conclusion

This brief review leads to some critical points. The religious moderation policy is one of the strategic policies released by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) in the last half-decade to create harmony in religious life. This policy is motivated by the development of similar issues related to wasatiyyah conducted previously on the one hand and the phenomena of strengthening extremism in the name of religion on the other hand. The conservative turn thesis and

previous data related to the increasing extremist violence provided by START and the like are part of the background for this. In the past four years, MORA has undertaken various strategic agendas listed in the roadmap developed for 2020-2024. It appears that the policy of religious moderation has been disseminated primarily in various lines of government institutions. The pursuit and further development of the internalization of religious moderation at the grassroots level as a “national habitus” remains necessary.

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