Religious Moderation in the Presiden Joko Widodo Administration: Tools for Religious Harmony or Politics?

Izzul Fatchu Reza
Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, Indonesia
Email: izzul.reza@uiii.ac.id
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Abstract
Religious moderation has always been promoted and socialized by the government to all elements of society, especially by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia since 2016. However, repression continues against a certain religion and group. This article discusses whether religious moderation is successful or not as an effective tool for strengthening interreligious tolerance and confusion in order to create a just and peaceful state in the era of the Joko Widodo administration. The research used content analysis methods from eleven online news media outlets with a historical case study approach. The results showed that the religious moderation under President Joko Widodo is contrary to the spirit of tolerance and anti-violence, which is the main principle of moderation. There is a considerable amount of persecution, violence, and disobedience directed towards individuals or groups that associate with Islamists or apply Islamic rules to themselves or their groups due to the top-down approach of implementation design, lack of human resources, and lack of monitoring of religious moderation indicators. Furthermore, there is a call for religious moderation to be exercised in a more balanced and impartial manner towards certain groups while at the same time being more restrictive towards certain other groups.

Keywords: religious, moderation, Joko Widodo, politics, state repression

Abstrak

Kata Kunci: agama, moderasi, Joko Widodo, politik, represi negara
Introsduction

The standpoint of Joko Widodo's government towards the Muslim community has been highlighted by various parties for its repressive and unfriendly attitude, especially towards the Islamist movement. The dissolution of the Indonesian Tahrir Hezbollah on July 19, 2017, and the Islamic Defense Front on December 30, 2020, were the culmination of such anti-security measures. Muslim scholar Azyumardi Azra said that the dissolution of the two organizations of the Islamic community was one of the most important events in the history of Islam because it demonstrated the harsh attitude of the Joko Widodo government towards the Muslims (Yahya & Erdianto, 2021).

Besides the dissolution of the FPI, the government has adopted a repressive attitude towards Muslims. One example is Muslim supporters of Prabowo Subianto-Sandi Uno, who conducted a series of demonstrations in Tanah Abang, Jakarta. During the event, nine people were killed. So far, no one has been arrested. The police confirmed that the shooter was not one of them (Sidik, 2019). Nevertheless, there were a lot of videos circulating showing apparatus repression against demonstrators by tear gas and brutal beating.

An unforgettable incident is the unjustified killing of six members of the Islamic Defense Front by the police along the Jakarta-Cikampek Tollroad. Regrettably, the defendant was not given any form of punishment (Farisa, 2022).

These events have increasingly escalated the issue between the government and Muslims in Indonesia. Ironically, Jokowi's unfair treatment of Muslims began when he announced that he was not anti-Islam (Kuwado & Meiliiana, 2018), followed by other officials such as Minister of Religious Affairs, Yaqut Cholil and Minister Coordinator of Politics, Law, and Human Rights Mahfud MD, defused the rumor. Jokowi tried to prove that he was not anti-Islam by always praying during a tight schedule. Both the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Domestic Affairs called the government to deal with religious matters (Meliana, 2023).

The government attempted to keep Muslims from being too fanatical by encouraging religious moderation. Religious moderation has become one of the elements of the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan as part of presidential decree number one, Human Resource Development. Religious moderation is also included in the 4th Development Agenda, the Mental Revolution and Cultural Development, under an integrated manner through religious moderation.

Since 2016, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has been promoting and socializing religious moderation in all facets of society. Studies regarding religious moderation in Indonesia are ubiquitous. The majority of scholars in Indonesia discuss topics related to religious moderation education, such as the role of management of religious moderation in the digital age (Faisal, 2020) and the role and implementation of religion education in educational institutions (Faruq & Noviani, 2021; Alim & Munib, 2021; Haryani, 2020; Surjito, 2019; Gunawan, 2023; and Anwar & Mahayati, 2021). Religious moderation education is important for introducing students and the general public.

Some studies have discussed religious moderation regarding Islamic community organizations (Kirin & Sholeh, 2021), how to place religious moderation in public spaces (Naamy & Hariyanto, 2021; Muhammad & Imronudin, 2022), and how religious modulation is carried out in digital space (Hefni, 2020; Wibowo, 2019; Aini & Aulia, 2022).

These studies, unfortunately, still lack discussion regarding how religious moderation can be used as a political tool to control the masses and strengthen power. Therefore, this article will discuss whether religious moderation is successful or not as an effective tool for strengthening interreligious tolerance or creating a just and peaceful state.

The organization of this article is as follows: First, this article will delve into the literature review related to the implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia during Joko Widodo's rule. Second, it will discuss more deeply the concepts of general moderation and religious moderation encouraged by the scholars and the Ministry of Religion. Third, this article will go through moderation across ages and religions. Fourth, the moderation in medieval
England within the theoretical framework of analysis will be more discussed. Finally, the article will analyze how religious moderation is increasingly making the state rude to religions or whether disharmony occurs.

Theroretical framewark
Basic Concepts of Moderation

Haan and Lok (2019) posited that the core of the debate on moderation is the question of what it means to pursue the 'golden mean' (aurea mediocritas), which has played a key role in political thought since ancient times.

According to the Indonesian dictionary, moderation means reducing violence and avoiding extremes. (Pusat Bahasa, 2008).

The concept of religious moderation emerged as a reaction to the 9/11 tragedy in the United States. Since then, Western countries have been calling for religious moderation as a guide to religion, especially for Muslim countries, which is identical to the label of 'extremism and radicalism.' (Alvian & Ardhani, 2023). Since the 9/11 tragedy, the United States has been very careful in its cooperation and dealings with Muslim countries through a series of checks on the ideology of the country and their attitudes towards radical and extremist Islam. If a Muslim country values democracy, equality, and freedom and fights radicalism and violence, then it is called moderate Islam (Muravchik & Szrom, 2008).

Since religious moderation introduced by Western nations, Indonesia has been one of the countries that used it to call for religious assembly, starting from the era of President Megawati to President Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono and President Joko Widodo (Alvian & Ardhani, 2023). However, during Jokowi’s presidency, the concept was strongly encouraged, especially since 2017, by the Minister of Religion in 2014–2019, Judge Lukman Syaifuddin (Hedar, 2023), marked by the Book of Religious Moderation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The book states that moderation is “the way of religion according to moderation, that is, the followers do not apply extreme attitudes and do not exaggerate in the teaching of their religion.”.

Official religious moderation becomes a written policy of the government with its inclusion of religious moderation in the 2020–2024 National Planning. Three years later, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) issued the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Indonesia (Perpres) No. 58 of 2023 on strengthening religious moderation on September 25, 2023 (Setkab, 2023).

According to the regulations, religious moderation is a way of expressing religious views, attitudes, and practices in life, together with a way to equalize the doctrine of religion and beliefs that protect the dignity of humanity and build a common good based on the principles of fairness, balance, and observance of Pancasila and the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945 as a national agreement. Furthermore, the regulation is aimed, among other things, at strengthening religious views, attitudes, and practices in a moderate way to consolidate brotherhood and communion among religious people, strengthen the harmony and unity of religious peoples, and align relations between religious and cultural ways.

Furthermore, the implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia is measured using four indicators: omission of nationality or love of the homeland, anti-violence, tolerance among fellow believers, and adaptation to local culture (Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019: 42-43)

Moderation in England Medieval Age

Moderation is believed to have originated during the Middle Ages, influenced by the teachings of Aristotle and Christian philosophy. These teachings emphasize the importance of balance and equilibrium, not just in the realms of science and economics but also in various other aspects of life. Kaye, 2018, 1250 in Hanawalt & Kiser, 2008). However, the new moderation gained recognition as the prevailing ideology of knowledge during the Tudor-Stuart era in England under the reign of King Henry VIII. This ideology, known as 'the cluster of Aristotelian ethical ideals centered on moderation, the 'golden mean,' and the 'middle way,' became a widely accepted moral
framework used to justify power in the state, church, and society (Scodel, 2002).

Shagan asserted that the intense focus on moderation throughout the early modern period had a significant and paradoxical impact on the evolution of English history. The concept of the 'middle way' established ethical boundaries by defining both moral extremes and immoral boundaries. Arguments advocating moderation sometimes included criticisms of those who were immoderate, excessive, or immoral. Furthermore, based on prevailing perspectives on the human condition, attaining moderation was exceedingly challenging and beyond the capabilities of the majority, if not all, individuals. Consequently, sustaining moderation necessitated assertive interventions by those in positions of authority within society. A crucial aspect of moderation was the intertwining of government, where there was no clear distinction between ethical self-governing and the political control of others (Shagan, 2011).

Political moderation aims to find a middle way between ideological extremes, from the “just milieu” between the old order and new liberty of the Restoration era, via the attempts to bridge the ideological divide between capitalism and socialism, the promise of the welfare state, and the European project as ways to escape the ideological warfare of the short twentieth century, to the current calls for a moderate Islam as a response to both fundamentalist and anti-Islamic extremism (de Haan & Lok, 2019).

Thus, can one propose moderate principles in an immoderate, even violent way? Can one moderately hold radical views? An accompanying question is whether moderation is an individual virtue or attitude or whether it is a characteristic of institutions. Again, the two might conflict: can one be moderate even under extreme conditions, or does moderation presuppose a set of institutions that guarantee a middle way? (de Haan & Lok, 2019)

Moderation, as shown in modern English, will be used as a conceptual framework for analyzing the implementation of religious moderation during Joko Widodo's presidency in his first term and second term of office.

Result Method

The research methods utilized are qualitative, involving content analysis. As the data was past data, the historical approach was applied. Data was collected from news articles in online media. Eleven articles from seven different media sources, including Kompas.com, CNN Indonesia, Detiknews.com, Tempo, Jateng Today, Harianterbit.com, and Suara.com, were selected for analysis. These sources were chosen based on their credibility and trustworthiness. The literature review encompasses the period from 2017 to 2022. The content was then analyzed using a theoretical framework. The theory of the English modern bridle was applied to moderate the analysis of events in Indonesia during the specified research period.

Result and Explanation

The data used as content analysis related to this research is presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Time Published</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kompas.com</td>
<td>8 Mei 2017</td>
<td>“Ini Alasan Pemerintah Bubarkan Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>CNN Indonesia</td>
<td>18 Juli 2017</td>
<td>“HTI Sebut Rezim Jokowi Anti-Islam”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>7 Maret 2018</td>
<td>“Penganiaya Hermansyah Ahli IT ITB Divonis, Ini Kata Pengacaranya”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the data of the eleven media, there are several facts of suppression or oppression from the government against Islamic organizations such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, the Islamic Defenders Front, as well as against individuals related to the Islamic Movement such as the persecution of Universitas Diponegoro's professor, the persecution of ITB Information Technology Experts, and the murder of six Islamic Defenders Front soldiers. The following facts obtained from the analysis of the media used are presented one by one.

Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia fights for the Islamic Caliphate. The Hizbut Tahrir organization is spread throughout the world, and its existence has been banned in several countries. Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia emerged in 1983, and the state did not question its existence. The public was shocked when, on July 19, 2017. The reason the government dissolved HTI was that, first, as a legal oracle, HTI did not play a positive role in taking part in the development process to achieve national goals. Second, the activities carried out by the HTI strongly contradicted the purposes, norms, and characteristics of the Pancasila and the UUD of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945 as regulated in Law No. 17 of 2013 on Ormas. Thirdly, it is believed that HTI's actions have shocked society, endangering not only the integrity of NKRI but also the safety and order of the neighborhood (Erdianto, 2017).

Prime Minister of RI Fadli Zon and said that the Joko Widodo government is a repressive and anti-Islamic regime, criminalizing scholars and Islamic activists, as well as intercepting, dissolving, and blocking the activities of the cult in a number of places. In addition, according to the HTI, the government is also increasingly showing its attitude towards Islamic Ormas by issuing Government Regulations Replacing Law (Perppu) No. 2 of 2017 about Ormas. (Sohuturon, 2017). The day after HTI's view that Joko Widodo's regime was anti-Islamic, HTI was dissolved.

It is true that HTI cites a state based on Islamic Khilafah and that democracy is a product of disbelief. However, what HTI did was never realized and may not be realized given that Indonesia was a legitimate state based on Pancasila and UUD 1945 as its constitution. Any president of the Republic of Indonesia has never dissolved HTI.

Another organization that the government has banned is the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). The revocation of FPI's license contradicts the values of democracy, freedom of speech, association, and respect for various religious groups as part of tolerance. Tolerance is one of the main elements of religious moderation.

On December 30, 2020, the government officially dissolved the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and banned any activities under FPI. The dissolution and termination of activities were outlined in a Joint Decree (SKB) on the Prohibition of the Use of Symbols and Attributes
and the Termination of FPI Activities. The reasons for the dissolution of FPI are as follows. First, Law No. 16/2017 on Mass Organizations (Ormas) is intended to maintain ideology and basic state consensus, namely Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia, and Unity in Diversity. Second, the contents of FPI's articles of association are declared contrary to Article 2 of the Ormas Law. Third, the Decree on FPI's Registered Certificate (SKT) as a mass organization is valid until June 20, 2019, and until now, it has not met the requirements to extend the SKT. Fourth, community organizations must not contradict several articles related to the Ormas Law. Fifth, FPI administrators, and members, as well as those who have joined FPI, based on data, as many as 35 people are involved in criminal acts of terrorism. Of these, 29 have been convicted. In addition, a total of 206 people were involved in various other general criminal offenses, and 100 of them have been sentenced (Farisa & Prabowo, 2020).

If reviewed further administratively, the FPI has already provided administrative support for the renewal of permits. The dissolution of the FPI is a government attempt to debilitate the Islamic movement in the name of religious moderation. The government considers that FPI has carried out vigilante activities against immoral places by conducting raids. In the real field situation, both the Police of the Republic of Indonesia and the Pamong Praja Police Unit carry out the same violence. The government can provide stricter guidance to FPI or to make coaching towards FPI instead of disbanding it.

In addition, on December 7, 2020, a number of police members committed the unlawful killing of six members of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) while escorting Habib Rizieq Shihab. The homicide took place on the Jakarta-Cikampek toll road. This incident added to the long list of violence and repression by government officials against Islamic organizations. Paradoxically, the two police officers who shot six FPI fighters are immune to any retribution (Ihsanuddin, 2022). The FPI was then disbanded thirteen days after the illegal shooting.

Another repressive act the state carries out in the name of religious moderation is the arrest of scholars of Islam. Habib Rizieq Shihab, leader of the Islamic Defense Front, was charged with a weird case of pornographic messages in 2017 that led him to go to Saudi Arabia. Then, when he was about to return, he was complicated by the fact that his visa had been overstayed. Finally, with the help of the Saudi government, he managed to return in 2020. Nevertheless, Habib Rizieq Shihab was re-arrested on December 12, 2020, on charges of violating health protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic in both Petamburan, Jakarta, and Megamendung, Bogor, and he was accused of making false news about the results of swab tests at Ummi Bogor Hospital. On December 12, 2020 (Mutiarasari, 2022), Habib Rizieq's detention was very strange and discriminatory considering the many public figures who violate health protocols by carrying out massive activities, such as the politician Basuki Tjahaya Purnama or Ahok, Raffi Ahmad, and other celebrities who attended Ricardo Gelael’s birthday party of on January 13, 2021 (Oni, 2021).

Ustaz Farid Okbah, Ahmad Zain An-Najah, and Anung Al Hamat were also arrested due to alleged terrorism, involvement with the charity belonging to the terrorist Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), namely the Baitul Maal Abdurrahman Bin Auf Amal Zakat Foundation. (LAZ BM ABA). The agency is said to support funds for terrorist groups (Dirgantara, 2021). To date, there is no solid evidence that can be explained to the public to support the fact that these clerics are funding terrorist activities.

Other repressions against Muslims are also shown by discriminatory treatment. If there is a group that criticizes the policies of the government, then they will be arrested. If some people or groups insult and blaspheme Muslims and their figures, they will not be prosecuted, let alone arrested (Sujoko & Wahyudi, 2021). It is a reflection of the ‘flexible clause’ of Act No. 19 of 2016 on Amendments to the Law No. 11 of 2006 on Electronic Information and Transactions. (UU ITE).

The academicians have not escaped persecution either. For example, Professor
Suteki, who was dismissed from his entire functional position at the Diponegoro Semarang University campus, was only present as an expert witness at the Ormas Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) litigation in the State Business Court (PTUN) Jakarta and Judicial Review in the Constitutional Court. (MK). He was also dismissed as Chairman of Prodi’s Master of Laws and Chair of the Senate of the Undip Law Faculty (Baihaqi, 2021).

Other academics that were also being prosecuted are Hermansyah, a lecturer at the Bandung Institute of Technology who also witnessed expert witnesses in IT experts in the alleged porn chat case of Rizieq Shihab, and Firza Husein, who was harassed and stabbed on a toll road after his car was hit and asked to step away (Anggraeni, 2018).

There are many more repressive actions of the state, such as the shooting of demonstrators from Islamic fortresses in the Petamburan area to sue the results of the 2019 presidential election. The various repressive actions of the state under the leadership of Joko Widodo suggest that religious moderation is not an absolute means of moderation among all religious groups. Religious moderation, in fact, can also be a tool of control and an active political tool for punishing individuals and institutions that act against the state.

As stated by the regulation regarding religious moderation (Presidential Decree No. 58, Year 2023), moderation is implemented by the leaders of the central government and local government. The central government in this context is the Minister of Religion Affairs, who collaborates with all ministers in various aspects of life. In the sphere of local government, religious moderation is led by the governor as well as the major or regent. Thus, because political officials lead religious moderation, religious moderation can be biased to the extent of the implementation of religious tolerance and collaboration that fit those political officials' judgments and values, especially religion and political tendencies.

Religious moderation has a 6-month monitoring period. However, the report has never been published to the public, either at the central or local level. It makes the religious moderation implementation ambiguous, as it can be the slogan only but weak in its implementation.

Religious moderation is also lacking in collaboration with the community due to its top-down design for the implementor. However, the regulations regarding religious moderation allow society to be involved in four different ways, i.e., socialization, advocacy, assistance, and other activities. In its implementation, the Ministry of Religion Affairs did many activities regarding those involvements in religious moderation, but those activities pertaining to top-down events were not mutually exclusive.

Due to the top-down design implementation of religious moderation, the consequence is that religious moderation lacks human resources personnel and tends to be biased toward threatening groups and religions of people, in which some groups are deemed moderate and some groups are not. It makes religious moderation inconsistent with the third indicator of religious moderation, namely, anti-violence. In other words, one could argue that the government is employing religious moderation as a type of religious politics to address religious extremism and radicalism (Abdalla, 2023).

As Shagan noted, moderation is effective as the government's means of control for society to strengthen its power and legitimacy. “Here, then, within a seemingly uncontroversial ethical argument against immoderate grieving, we have a debate over whether the government ought to moderate grief or whether the government’s attempts at moderation, in fact, need to be restrained. Moderation could be made to support very different agendas; as a language of control, it was an enormously useful tool for early modern elites to defend and naturalize their various and sometimes contradictory ideological programs” (Shagan, 2011).

Religious moderation implementation in the upcoming era shall be more egaliterate, collaborative, and thoroughly planned. Religious moderation can be a robust tool to provide tolerance and religious harmony, but only if all parts of the community sit together to discuss and implement the strengthening of religious moderation.
Conclusion

When internal moderation is to justify all judgments, then external moderation of rules and mechanisms of balanced checks and balances is required. In a country that has formed an autocratic or even totalitarian system, external moderation is completely lost, and everything is decided on the basis of the moderation of the highest leader. This issue should not happen in Indonesia, given that Indonesia is a law-based state and that no particular state official, including the President, has unlimited power.

Religious moderation in Indonesia is nuanced with top-down implementation design, a lack of human resource personnel, and a lack of monitoring. Thus, it can be a bias of treatment among groups of religion and belief.

Future governments shall exercise religious moderation in a more fair, balanced, and unburdened manner towards certain groups and be more repressive towards certain other groups. The spirit of moderation, as contained in the word, is justice, the middle way, and the golden mean. Therefore, religious moderation must be a common rule that guides the preservation of the confusion between religious groups. Religious moderation should not be used as a justification for acts of repression against a particular religious group.

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