

Religious Moderation in Indonesia: A Study on Implementation Patterns of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI)

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Abstract

As a symbol of ulema which is the main tent of Muslims in Indonesia, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) is certainly expected to be able to implement the concept of religious moderation. This paper aims to examine the implementation of MUI religious moderation in Indonesia. Then, this study also aims to discuss how the pattern of implementation of MUI religious moderation towards Muslims, deviant religious beliefs, non-Muslims, and the government. This is qualitative research with a participatory action research (PAR) approach. Informants involved as subjects and objects in this study were structural scholars, academic scholars, and community scholars in the provinces of DKI Jakarta, North Sumatra, and Aceh. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of MUI religious moderation in Indonesia has been implemented well. MUI is responsive and accommodating to the needs of the community, especially Muslims, and plays a very important role in creating a safe and peaceful atmosphere in the community. However, some people consider that the application of MUI's religious moderation values to groups that are considered deviant (heretic) and non-Muslims has not run optimally. This can be seen with the issuance of the MUI fatwa on the expectation of the existence of pluralism, liberalism, and religious secularism. MUI is expected to further improve the pattern of its relationship with the two community groups. Meanwhile, towards the government, MUI positions itself as a critical partner of the government (syarikatul hukumah). MUI sometimes supports government programs, but it can also disagree with government programs as outlined through MUI fatwas

that seem contrary to the interests of the government, such as fatwas against vasectomy and fatwas on the use of meningitis vaccines for pilgrims or umrah.

1. Introduction

The discussion related to religious moderation becomes a very important and interesting study, given the socio-religious conditions of the Indonesian people, which are very plural, consisting of many ethnic groups, religions, and schools of religious understanding. The term moderation comes from the word moderate, which means avoiding extreme behavior or disclosure or having a tendency to the middle-way dimension. Moderation or moderate comes from English which can be likened to *wasathiyah* in Arabic. Therefore, every time you say the word moderation, it will have the same meaning as *wasathiyah*. What is meant by the term religious moderation in this study is a religious understanding that arises from a person as a religion that can bring grace to all nature. Islam as a religion that brings teachings can shape character, mindset, and morals that bring peace, because it is placed fairly, not extremely left or right, not excessive, not one-sided, but in the middle proportionally and balanced, thus making him an example, nurturing and guiding others.

Khaled Abou El Fadl said that moderation or *wasathiyah* is purification (puritan), namely people who purify their faith so that they believe that Islam is the true religion. He not only believes in the 5 (five) pillars of Islam, but also puts them into practice, and can accept the wealth of Islamic studies that have existed so far and have the opportunity to modify them to make them better. The substance of the emphasis is on the awareness of a Muslim to appreciate what is outside himself, as well as placing himself as a party who works to fill the reality of life where and when he is living. This kind of accommodative, elastic, and dynamic attitude strengthens the terminology understanding of the word moderation.

According to M. Basir Syam, Islam *wasathiyah* is Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin* which is moderate, balanced, fair, and tolerant as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW in all aspects of life, both in worship, *muamalah*, and especially in *da'wah*, where the Prophet did it with wise, with good advice to beautiful and polite debates. Theoretically, there are at least 10 (ten) characteristics of moderate Muslims, namely; 1) *tawassut* (taking the middle way, 2) *tawāzun* (balance), 3) *i'tidāl* (straight and firm), 4) *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), 5) *musāwāh* (egalitarian), 6) *syūrā* (deliberation), 7) *iṣlāḥ* (peace/reform), 8) 'aulawiyah

(putting priority first), 9) *tatawwur wa ibtikār* (dynamic and innovative), and 10) *tahaḍḍur* (civilized).

Islam is a religion that was born with the character of religious moderation. From the naming aspect alone, Islam has been declared a religion of peace. Islam means peace which is taken from Arabic, namely *salima*, *yaslamu*, *salamatan* which means safe, peaceful, and no defects. This word can be developed in other forms such as *al-silmu* (addressing people who are at peace), *al-salam* (respect or peace), *tasalama* (to make peace with each other, and *salamahu* (inviting someone to peace). The mention of Islam as the name of a religion confirms that Islam is a religion characterized by peace, loves peace, and will at all times sow peace not only against Muslims alone, but also towards non-Muslims, even animals, plants, and nature as a whole.

In the context of the Indonesian state, history records that Islam that entered Indonesia was moderate Islam (*wasathiyah*). The entry and development of Islam in Indonesia have peacefully taken place, its presence and development have been smooth, not causing any problems at all. Precisely the presence of Islam in Indonesia brings coolness and peace, every day people love it more and more, not because it is influenced, but because of their awareness, it turns out that people in the archipelago are captivated by it. Finally, after the kings embraced Islam and applied Islamic teachings in each of their territories, the development of Islam became even more rapid. The peace of the Islamic kingdoms through the teachings of Islam that they profess is proof of the character of Indonesian Islam as a peaceful moderate Islam.

In recent developments, the issue of religious moderation has become something that is often discussed, both in the form of scientific writings and also in scientific forums. The point is by making 2019 the Year of Religious Moderation of the Ministry of Religion. This initiative seems to strengthen the determination of the same year as the International Year of Moderation by the United Nations. The discourse of religious moderation is considered very important to be applied in Indonesia, amid the strengthening of identity politics which is divided into two opposite extreme sides, the side that tends to the left and the right. This condition has implications for the pattern of religious life in society. In the context of Muslims, it seems that society is divided into two groups that have different religious understandings. Some Muslims are more strict in understanding religion and tend to impose their understanding in the Muslim community, even in some cases by using violence (extreme right/fanatic). Others are loose in religion and subject to negative behaviors and thoughts that come from other cultures and civilizations (extreme left/secular).

Observing the above phenomenon, the idea of moderation in religion is considered to be the right solution, so it is hoped that peaceful life will grow in Indonesian society which is very ethnically and religiously plural. The task of

developing a moderate attitude toward religion in society is a shared task. The role of government, community, community leaders, and religious social institutions are expected to contribute. One of the Islamic socio-religious institutions whose role is urgently needed is the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) which was established on 17 Rajab 1395 H or 26 July 1975 AD, in Jakarta.

Among the backgrounds of the birth of MUI is that MUI wants to give a role to the Indonesian people. In this case, the MUI realizes its comprehensive capacity, as a servant of the people (*khadimul ummah*), as the heir to the prophets (*waratsatul anbiya*), and as the successor to the mission of the Islamic message brought by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. With this capacity, Indonesian ulemas who later joined the MUI forum have always colored the history of the Indonesian nation, since the colonial period, the independence movement, proclaiming, and even filling Indonesia's independence. The existence of MUI feels even more important when it is associated with aspects of national plurality. The diversity of the nation's children cannot be denied, especially from the aspect of ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group (SARA). The presence of MUI will play a role in reducing the egoism of Muslims during their association with other people and even become a forum for Muslims to synergize with other people to fill the development in Indonesia.

In addition to the issue of MUI's role in religious moderation in Indonesia, there are quite important issues that need to be studied more comprehensively. The issue is about how the actual attitude of religious moderation in the institution. The pattern of religious moderation of the MUI determines whether the situation in Indonesia is peaceful or not. At one time, the MUI could have implemented a policy that could cause debate and conflict among the public through the fatwas it issued. For example, Fatwa Number: 7/Munas VII/MUI/11/2005 concerning the Prohibition of the Existence of Pluralism, Liberalism, and Religious Secularism, which has drawn pros and cons among the public. There are at least 3 (three) reactions of the people that arise because of the birth of this fatwa, namely; 1). A group wants to dissolve MUI and its Fatwa Commission because it is seen that MUI has done something contrary to the 1945 Constitution and the existence of the Ministry of Religion in Indonesia. 2). The group that argues that if the MUI fatwa is contrary to the Constitution or the Indonesian constitution, such as a fatwa on the prohibition of religious pluralism, secularism, and liberalism which are alleged to deviate from Islamic teachings, is urged to take legal action to the government to take legal action against the case. This was voiced by the chairman of PB Nahdatul Ulama (PBNU), Hasyim Muzadi, and the chairman of the Central Executive Board (PP) Muhammadiyah, Din Syamsuddin. 3) The third group comes from Islamic politicians. This group proposes that the government issue regulations or legal rules regarding the prohibition of deviant sects according to the MUI Fatwa. This is confirmed by Suryadharma Ali (chairman of the PPP), and Tifatul Sembiring (chairman of the PKS Party).

Criticism of MUI fatwas which are considered exclusive and intolerant has become the research of some Islamic scholars. For example, Iswahyudi wrote that as a religious organization formed by the government, MUI should position itself as the guardian of the religious plurality of Muslims. However, he found several MUI fatwas which were considered to be exclusive and have the potential to cause radicalism. These fatwas are like fatwas on Shia, Ahmadiyah, pluralism, liberalism, and secularism.

Part of the MUI fatwa was then used as an argument for an action that led to anarchy from one community group to another. For example, there are cases of demolition of residences, and houses of worship and intimidation of Ahmadiyah followers in various regions. Then, there were cases of attacks by Sunni groups against Shia groups in Sampang, by burning houses of worship and houses of Shiites. Seeing this phenomenon, some researchers assume that it seems that some MUI fatwas are considered less moderate toward religious pluralism in Indonesia. This research will then try to investigate how the actual pattern of implementation of religious moderation has been carried out by MUI. The question is what is the pattern of implementing MUI religious moderation against Muslims and sects that are considered heretical or have deviated? What is the pattern of implementation of this institution's religion towards non-Muslims as well as the government?

Many scholars have written about religious moderation in Indonesia, from various perspectives. Mohamad Fahri and Ahmad Zainuri have researched Religious Moderation in Indonesia. The results show that radicalism in the name of religion can be eradicated through moderate and inclusive Islamic education. Agus Akhmadi wrote Moderation of Religion in Indonesia's Diversity. This paper concludes that the role of the government, community leaders, and religious instructors is needed to socialize and develop religious moderation in the community for the realization of harmony and peace. Md. Abror writes about Religious Moderation in Tolerance: The Study of Islam and Diversity. This paper emphasizes that moderation in religious harmony must be carried out because doing so will create inter-religious harmony or belief.

Edy Sutrisno wrote about the Actualization of Religious Moderation in Educational Institutions. This paper emphasizes that what is needed to apply religious moderation in a multicultural society is to make educational institutions the basis of a religious moderation laboratory and to take a socio-religious approach to religion and the state. Meanwhile, studies on religious moderation associated with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), can be seen from several writings, such as the writings of Zaenal Abidin and AA Suryadi entitled Strategi Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) Desa Dalam Meningkatkan Pemahaman Moderasi Beragama Studi Kasus di Desa Tegal Waru Kecamatan Ciampea Kabupaten Bogor. Then, Umi Rojati et al's article entitled Bingkai Moderasi Beragama Pada Youtube MUI Lampung. As far as the author's

research is concerned, none of the above writings have examined the pattern of implementation of religious moderation in the Indonesian Ulema Council. Thus, this paper is very important to do to fill the void of studies that have not been carried out by Indonesian Islamic scholars.

2. Research Method

This research is a qualitative research with participatory action research (PAR) approach to explore data and explore the role of the ulama in religious moderation activities in Indonesia. The determination of the PAR approach was carried out so that researchers were more flexible in using various methods, techniques, and instruments for collecting field data. This research will be conducted in three provinces, namely North Sumatra, DKI Jakarta, and Aceh, with a focus on research locations in Medan City, Jakarta, Aceh Tamiang, and Langsa City.

The subjects and objects of this research are scholars in three areas which are categorized into 3 aspects, namely; 1) structural scholars such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), 2) academic scholars, namely scholars in Higher Education, for example, those with Doctoral and Professor titles, 3) community scholars, namely scholars who are not bound at all, but only live in the middle community and blend in with the community. In addition to the scholars, the research subjects were also determined by other deradicalization actors, namely; 1) government agencies that have the authority to carry out deradicalization programs or defense and security programs, 2) religious organizations, 3) universities, and 4) other parties according to community needs.

As is the case with qualitative research, it will not determine the number of informants, but all parties as stated above will be unlimited informants at the same time. That is, the informants in this study will continue to roll naturally and freely (snowball) to the saturation level. At this time the data is understood to be sufficient, then the data collection is understood to be sufficient. Data collection techniques are carried out in the form of; a) timeline, b) mapping, c) interviews, d) FGD, e) documentation, and (f) participatory observation. The data analysis carried out in this study was epiphany analysis. According to Anna Sakreti Nawangsari. Epiphany analysis is "Analysis carried out by collecting and reducing information so that significant information and key elements are found. The purpose of this analysis is to reduce, filter, or crystallize large amounts of data as well as to strengthen and provide clarity of understanding regarding planning and implementation as well as supporting and inhibiting factors in deradicalization efforts. In addition, data analysis is also carried out on each process using PAR techniques, according to research needs, namely descriptive, interpretive, deductive, SWOT analysis, problem tree analysis, and triangulation analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

The results showed that the pattern of implementation of MUI religious moderation can be grouped into four groups, namely the implementation of religious moderation against Muslims, against sects considered deviant (heretic) by MUI, against non-Muslims, and the government. The following will explain how the pattern of implementing MUI religious moderation for the four community groups in question.

Implementation of MUI Religious Moderation Against Muslims

Nawir Yuslem said that MUI is the big tent of Muslims. This slogan implies that the religious moderation of MUI in Indonesia is quite strong. The large Muslim tent is a reflection that MUI has prepared itself to be an umbrella for all Indonesian Muslims, an umbrella that provides shade in the heat, avoids getting wet when it rains, becomes a stick on slippery roads, and becomes a weapon in the face of the enemy. In essence, MUI provides calm and peace for all Indonesian Muslims. MUI's accommodative attitude towards the religious interests of all Indonesian Muslims as described above is a pattern of implementing MUI's religious moderation itself. In this case, MUI is devoted to Muslims by not discriminating against ethnicity, gender, sects and religious beliefs, and other polarizations they have. The Islamic entity they have is the only indicator that guarantees that they are included in the big tent. Thus, MUI becomes the only highest non-partisan Islamic religious organization that is accommodating to the interests of all Indonesian Muslims.

Furthermore, Nawir Yuslem, who also serves as Deputy Chairman of the Muhammadiyah North Sumatra Regional Leadership Council, said that the status of MUI in this capacity was seen in its comprehensive management recruitment. Wherever the MUI is located, and at whatever level the MUI level is formed, the MUI will recruit its structure and management which involves the representation of all Muslims and this is the character of the ideal composition of the MUI management in Indonesia. In MUI there are elements of Nahdatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Alwasliyah, al-Ittihadiyah, and others. Through this representation system, MUI will more easily absorb the aspirations they represent, as well as guarantee that there are parties who are responsible for fighting for the aspirations of their communities there. Thus, MUI will provide services and protection for all Indonesian Muslims.

MUI declares itself as the service of the people (*khadim al-ummah*) and the protector/maintainer of the people (*himayat al-ummah*). In this case, MUI is a reflection of the pattern of implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia. For example, the Fatwa Commission as the mainstay of the MUI has never refused to accept questions from the people about life problems and the difficulties they face concerning religious aspects. After being dissected and studied, all these problems were answered so that a fatwa was born that would

serve as a guide for the people. This fatwa is expected to solve their problems and difficulties. This is part of the care and protection of all people.

Religious moderation, as stated by Ardiansyah, has long been a motto that MUI has championed and implemented. This commitment was clearly emphasized at the 2019 MUI National Working Meeting (Rakernas) which took place from 11 to 13 October 2019 at the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (KEK) location, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province.

This big idea has been discussed and concluded in a big event, namely the MUI National Working Meeting. Deputy Chairperson of the MUI, Zainut Tauhid Sa'adi, said that the National Working Meeting was the MUI's highest deliberation forum after the National Deliberation Forum (Munas). The theme of the National Working Meeting held in NTB was to affirm religious moderation (Islam *wasathiyah*) to build Indonesian civilization. Religious Moderation is a reference for MUI in carrying out its duties and responsibilities with the aspiration of realizing Islam *wasathiyah* in the daily life of Muslims, and its values color and becoming part of social, national, and state life.

On a regional scale, Regency/City MUIs have also been serious about implementing this religious moderation. This can be seen in Langsa City, Aceh Province, and Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra Province. Zulkarnain said that among the activities of the Langsa City Ulemas Consultative Council (MPU) is to monitor matters relating to the shallowing of faith and new sects that have not been accepted by the community. Among the streams is the *Kitabul Bayan*. This flow teaches about *wahdatul wujud*. It turned out that the people of Langsa City could not accept the religious understanding of this school, and finally almost invited a horizontal conflict between the people of Langsa City who believed in the *Sunnah Wal-jamaah* and the followers of the *Kitabul Bayan* school who believed in *wahdatul wujud*. In this case, the MPU came down to overcome and resolve these problems by analyzing the understanding of *wahdatul wujud* by the *Kitabul Bayan* school, and providing direction and guidance to them. The leaders and followers of *Kitabul Bayan* were ordered to come to the MPU office every Friday to receive coaching. Finally, after 3 (three) months, they consciously asked to be re-confirmed, and they disbanded from the *Kitabul Bayan* school, while at the same time re-guiding the *Ahlus Sunnah Wal-jamah* understanding which they had originally adhered to. Finally, the leader returned to wander to Malaysia, and his followers remain with the people of Langsa City in a safe and peaceful life until now.

Abdul Halim Lubis, General Chairperson of the MUI in Simalungun Regency, stated MUI's tips for creating a peaceful atmosphere in Simalungun Regency and Siantar City, which are two very plural regencies/cities based on ethnicity and religion. He mentioned that MUI and Ustaz in conveying the contents of their da'wah are always wise (بِالْحِكْمَةِ), not by punishing (بِالْخُكْمِ), for example, by saying that this is haram, that it is sinful, those who have apostatized there, those who were disbelievers and who had lawful blood yesterday, and so on. This punitive attitude must be avoided because it is not following the peace-

loving principles of Islam. Principles like this have been applied, and the result has created peace in this place. In his answer, he also quoted QS. An-Nahl verse 125 as a pattern for the implementation of MUI. The word of God reads;

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ

It means;

"Invite people to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching."

According to Muhammad Nuh Nasution's statement, this area was threatened by provocations by irresponsible parties, but thanks to the solid principles of religious moderation guided by the MUI and Islamic mass organizations, the provocation efforts can still be controlled. This happened in the case of covid-19 when there was a female Muslim patient from the Serbelawan area who tested positive for COVID-19 and eventually died. Then, an issue developed which said that the body was bathed by men and also by people who were not of the same religion as him. This has caused turmoil from family groups, which developed into inter-religious turmoil, as well as inter-religious turmoil with the Government which is relatively vulnerable and has the potential to create riots, because the crowd of people leading to the Mayor's Office has started to move, as well as other agencies. Thanks to the readiness of the MUI and Islamic organizations that are thick with the character of religious moderation, they agreed to form a body billing team that will complete the *fardhu kifayah* of each body of a covid-19 patient that has been determined by the person. Meanwhile, the handling of the bodies of the deceased COVID-19 patients by the Covid-19 team has been determined by the government is still entrusted to complete their duties. Then, the deceased's body may not be taken by the family, and will still be completed by officers with the protocol for handling Covid-19 bodies that have been determined by the government. Alhamdulillah, this problem can be suppressed, similar problems have been resolved, and the safe and peaceful situation in this area is well maintained.

Implementation of MUI Religious Moderation Against Deviant Religious Understanding

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) noted that there are at least 300 religious sects that are classified as deviant or heretical in Indonesia to date. However, these hundreds of heresies usually appear and disappear from time to time. According to Utang Ranuwijaya, chairman of the MUI Research and Study Commission, hundreds of deviant sects in Indonesia have been monitored since 1995. However, these cults generally appear and disappear under the names of different organizations.

MUI has issued a fatwa against several religious sects in Islam that is declared heretical, deviant, and tarnishing Islamic teachings so MUI needs to urge Muslims to be careful with them. Among these schools are *Jama'ah Islam*, *Darul Hadith* or other names with the same meaning, *Ahmadiyah Qodiyah*, *Shi'a*,

Inkarus Sunnah, Darul Arqam, Teachings of H. Ali Mas'ud and H. Ibn Kaster Azhar, Al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah, the Study of Ar-Rahman, the understanding of Sekh Muda Ahmad Arifin of the Recitation of the Sammaniyah Order, and the Fajar Nusantara Movement (Gafatar).

In general, the MUI has been moderate in dealing with and resolving the problem of deviant sects in Indonesia. In tensions in the community, most of whom are *Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* experts who feel stifled by the emergence of this new understanding or deviant sect, MUI usually first invites related parties to participate and work together to overcome this problem. Then, MUI tries to calm the people, and MUI invites them to be able to restrain themselves and not be anarchists, then MUI gives a correct religious understanding to them according to the understanding of *sunnah wal congregation* experts. Concerning the holders of this deviant sect, MUI invites them to discuss and conduct guidance so that they can understand their mistakes in understanding religion and belief. Not infrequently among the followers of this deviant sect, many are able to accept the invitation and appeal of the MUI and return to the understanding of the *sunnah wal-jamaah* experts which is generally embraced by the Indonesian people. With the overcoming of this deviant sect, the atmosphere in the community has returned to calm and control.

MUI has been responsive, and persuasive, to the rise of deviant sects in society. For example, the results of research by Fauziah, et al, in West Nusa Tenggara concluded that deviant ideology appears almost every year, both transnational schools with socio-political characteristics and local schools with socio-economic characteristics that emerge as lay personal constructions through a process of inner contemplation. This deviant understanding was then handled responsively in a tentative manner by several commissions at the MUI and in collaboration with the ranks of the regional government and the Central MUI.

In general, the MUI in the Regency/City as the party that directly deals with the community, rarely gives a fatwa or does not give a fatwa about deviant sects, but tends to delegate it to the Provincial MUI or the Central MUI. When a new sect is found that is understood to be deviant in their area, the Regency/City MUI together with other related parties try their best to calm the atmosphere, the MUI invites them to negotiate and deliberate to resolve the problem through dialogue. In general, the capacity of MUI as a charismatic cleric in the area is still very well heard, so it is not uncommon that mass clashes that almost peak can be resolved by peaceful means.

However, some people still think that MUI is still lacking in implementing the pattern of religious moderation, especially against deviant sects that are declared heretical by MUI. Katimin said that the MUI still feels that it does not implement religious moderation in Indonesia, especially in sects/understandings and religions that are different from it. The object of the less moderate treatment was those who were declared to be heretical and non-Muslim. Through the MUI fatwas, the masses can be anarchists towards the cultists. Indeed, it was not the MUI that carried out violence directed against the

followers of the deviant sect, but by referring to the MUI fatwa, the people carried out violence against them. Ironically, the MUI remained silent and remained convinced of the truth of its fatwa, even though the people had become anarchists.

Katimin analyzed the lack of moderation of the MUI by saying that the main problem of the MUI was itself. There are still many MUI people who are not moderate in mind but become MUI administrators. Starting from the Central MUI to the regions, even the Regency, City, and District MUIs. In Central MUI alone, there are still many people who do not think moderately. This happened because the MUI was contaminated with radical thoughts and movements. According to Katimin, many of them are considered radical MUI administrators who have a capacity that is quite influential in the community. According to their capacity, they are people who hang out a lot in the community, they have a lot of time available for the community, their association is evenly distributed in the community, they tend to preach a lot in the community, with their sympathetic rhetoric and style they are able to influence the people, and the people, in general, are happy to hear their da'wah. Not surprisingly, the title of MUI administrator and their sufficient capacity make the community listen to their advice.

Furthermore, Katimin added that in general, those who are understood as radicals in MUI are not at the top of its leadership, but they are at the middle and lower management levels. Thus, the MUI fatwas may have officially been born through the mind of a moderate religious understanding, but on the other hand, it is possible that on the personal basis of the MUI people who are not moderate in mind, they give lectures, preach, and even dialogue in the community with radical content. which slowly but surely poisoned and killed the moderate fatwa message. The fatwa is stored in an archive, maybe even neatly stored in a cupboard, the public may also be less concerned with media information of various types, but the religious messages conveyed by MUI clerics who are involved in the community are quite powerful in influencing them.

Then, the excesses of the MUI fatwa regarding several religious sects that were considered heretical turned out to have caused a strong reaction from the Islamic community who were not in line with them. In this case, the MUI Fatwa institution is considered to be responsible for the expulsion and acts of violence against Ahmadiyah and Shia residents from their mosques and villages by other Islamic organizations. In one public hearing meeting with Commission VII, the Amir of the Ahmadiyya sect, Abdul Basit, stated that since the fatwa was issued by the MUI, violence against Ahmadiyah has increased. During the reign of President Soeharto, even though Ahmadiyah had been declared deviant. however, the congregation of this group was not subjected to acts of violence by the Muslim majority community. However, the assumption that the MUI contributed to the occurrence of violence continues to develop among the community, rejected by the MUI as emphasized by Ma'ruf Amin, a senior cleric at the Fatwa Commission.

Abdurrahman Wahid also criticized the MUI fatwa which was considered less moderate. Gus Dur also criticized the MUI fatwa which forbade religious pluralism in 2007. According to him, Indonesia is not a country based on one religion alone. After all, MUI is not an institution that has the right to determine what is right or wrong. Even though he has retired from the presidency, he still dares to criticize the narrow-minded MUI. Because knowing the pluralistic life of Indonesia is basic knowledge for every people in remote parts of the country. Therefore, Gus Dur advised MUI to use Indonesia's plural narrative as a measuring tool.

Implementation of MUI Religious Moderation Against Non-Muslims

In general, it can be said that MUI has implemented religious moderation towards non-Muslims. Although the duties and functions of the MUI do not cover non-Muslim communities, at the level of human relations (*hablum min an-nas*), the MUI has helped maintain the conduciveness of society in general. In this case, the MUI guides people about living together in the diversity of beliefs and worship of existing religious adherents, on the other hand being able to carry out community activities and *muamalah* together even with religious differences. In essence, the patron of coexistence exemplified by the Apostle and his friends with the Jews in Medina, is relatively running in Indonesia. Although the Islamic state of Medina has been established with a Muslim majority population, the existence of the Jewish minority as adherents of an old religion that is different from theirs is still protected, they live in harmony and peace in one social life. The point is Islam does not become tyrannical towards others even though he is small.

The MUI management structure, which includes the Commission for Religious Harmony in it, helps smooth the implementation of MUI religious moderation on religious diversity in the community. Not infrequently, the Chair of the Religious Community Forum (FKUB) in one place also serves as an MUI administrator. For example, the Chairperson of the MUI Religious Harmony Commission in Tanjung Balai City, North Sumatra Province, is also the Chairperson of the FKUB (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama) in the same city. Thus, the synergy of understanding, policies, and actions taken by MUI to create a conducive atmosphere in the midst of religious differences can work well.

There is also a tradition of a good partnership between MUI and FKUB in every place. The tradition of always sitting together, including with other parties, even with the government, makes a conducive atmosphere of plurality well-maintained. Whenever there is a problem between religious communities, through the Harmony Commission, MUI is ready to anticipate this. On a more serious problem, the Harmony Commission will no longer partially deal with it but will involve the participation and discussion of the MUI, and the MUI will even take a policy in a plenary meeting.

For example, it can be mentioned that there was an application for permission from non-Muslim residents to establish a church in Langsa City the Ulama Consultative Council (MPU). M. Nasir stated that this was not the MPU's

domain, but the government's task. Therefore, the MPU did not do anything about this, except simply direct the application for this permit to the government. Apparently, after verification efforts from the authorities, the desire to build this church has not met the requirements, both from the aspect of the number of non-Muslim residents, as well as the unpreparedness of the community, so until now this church has not been established. However, the conditional atmosphere was well maintained, because the MPU only worked according to its duties and functions, and implemented a pattern of religious moderation within the framework of *Islam rahmatan lil `alamin*.

Not infrequently, there has been friction between religious communities in the community triggered by the offense as a result of social media content, religious harassment, loudspeakers that are too strong, provocations from certain parties, burning of houses of worship, and so on. All that can happen during an association with religious people. In this case, the MUI has done a lot to create calm and peace. If there is a riot between religious communities, regardless of what the problem is, who is wrong and who is right, the MUI first goes to the field, being at the forefront together with related parties to defuse the problem. The next step is to bring the conflicting parties to the office, it may be the police station, Military Rayon Command (Koramil), or others to discuss what the problem is and how it will be handled, as well as the solution. With efforts to reduce this problem, it is hoped that a settlement through mediation can be resolved.

The most actual case that ever happened in Tanjung Balai City was a case of blasphemy committed by a Chinese citizen (non-Muslim), by protesting against the sound of the call to prayer echoing from the Al-Maksun Mosque in 2016. destroying houses of worship, namely 3 monasteries and 8 temples, 1 place of treatment, and the house of the perpetrator of the religious blasphemy. Responding to this incident, the Tanjung Balai City MUI has tried to create calm and peace. Abdullah Rahim said that by involving the MUI Religious Harmony Commission, he took to the field. The initial step taken was to try to cool the atmosphere, MUI gave direction and understanding to the congregation of the mosque, and Muslims, in general, to restrain themselves, and not be provoked by irresponsible parties, and must also resolve the issue through dialogue. Without this path, whatever is done then both parties will lose. There, MUI played a role in finding the best middle ground, and within a few hours, it managed to cool the atmosphere so that there has been an opportunity to be resolved peacefully.

The MUI of North Sumatra Province was also actively involved in handling the case by issuing Fatwa Number: 001/KF/MUI-SU/I/2017 which was signed by Prof. Dr. H. Abdullah Shah, MA and Dr. H. Ardiansyah, MA, as General Chair and General Secretary. In the fatwa, it was decided that the words conveyed by sister M (perpetrators) on the sound of the call to prayer came from the al-Maksum Mosque on Jl. The work of the City of Tanjung Balai on July 29, 2016, is humiliation, desecration, and blasphemy against Islamic law. Then, MUI

also recommended to the police to immediately follow up the law enforcement process against the perpetrators and appealed to all Muslims in Tanjung Balai City not to be provoked and carry out anarchic actions and to maintain conduciveness, harmony, and tolerance between religious communities.

Finally, as many as 20 people who were suspected of being the perpetrators of the vandalism were detained by the police because based on initial instructions they were considered to be the perpetrators of the vandalism. Likewise, M (the perpetrator), was finally named a suspect in a blasphemy case and sentenced to 1 year and 6 months in prison by the Medan District Court on August 21, 2018.

However, some people consider that the implementation of MUI religious moderation concerning non-Muslims has not been maximized. The MUI is considered to tend to defend Muslims and does not care about the interests of non-Muslims, especially in terms of their relationship with Muslims. This often happens in cases that are understood as blasphemy as stated above. Faisar Ananda Arfa said that we feel that the MUI is still not optimal in implementing the values of religious moderation in Indonesia. MUI has not taken a general view but is partial, he is still too sided with his religion, even his religious understanding, namely the expert on *sunnah wal-jamaah*. In internal Islam, the MUI is still partial, in fact, it is hostile to people who are not of the same religious ideology as it. The MUI is still trapped in the domination of the *mazhab*, its confessions and behavior are sometimes different. Parties who are vulnerable to this MUI capacity are religious sects/understandings that are declared heretical by MUI, even though they (who were misled) claim to be Muslims, on certain occasions, the Government also has trouble with them, especially non-Muslim parties. There was an omission, so that Ahmadiyah, Shi'a, and others were repeatedly attacked, as well as houses of worship of certain religions were damaged and burned. The MUI is already quite responsive to the interests of adherents of the *Sunnah wal-jama'ah*, but not to others. In essence, the MUI must change its exclusive perspective, so that it does not think it's right on its own.

Mohd. Maryadi Adha, in a study entitled *Fatwa MUI Tentang Atribut Keagamaan Dalam Perspektif Komunikasi Dakwah* revealed that in the perspective of *da'wah* communication, the fatwa is stated to still lead to multiple interpretations, especially among communicants, especially regarding key terms in the fatwa which also have an impact on tensions in religious relations in Indonesia, although not too significantly. Based on the researcher's study, in terms of substance, the MUI fatwa puts forward its theological perspective and tends to ignore other perspectives in viewing the phenomenon of religious celebrations, including Christmas. As a result, relying on theological perspective alone can trigger other interpretations which in turn lead to actions whose impact can stretch solidarity and social cohesion.

Implementation of MUI Religious Moderation to the Government

In its relationship with the government, MUI positions itself as a partner of the government (*syarikatul hukumah*) or a friend of the government (*shahibul hukumah*). MUI is an equal partner or government colleague to protect, guide, and guide the community. Thus, regardless of the condition of the community, MUI also cares to always provide the best for them just as the Government also cares.

Although MUI positions itself as an equal partner with the government, it has a unique relationship with the government, which can be called an equal partner who is critical of the government. With this status, MUI positions itself as the party guarding the government so that it stays in the corridor of truth, sometimes even straightening the government, and wants the government to follow its wishes. In line with its status, the MUI is very careful and studies seriously every legal status it will decide, as well as the policy conclusions it draws. For example, before issuing a fatwa on a problem/event, MUI has already dispatched its research team so that the actual incident can be maximally captured. Then, this team will present it in front of the Fatwa Commission, then it will be finalized with the leadership elements. With this, the fatwa will be more guaranteed to be true and can be accounted for.

On the other hand, MUI can be at odds with the government. When MUI understands that the government has made a mistake in making policies, then MUI does not want to follow the government's policy, instead, MUI criticizes the policy, by giving the correct opinion. If the government persists with its wrong policies, then the MUI is ready to be different from the government. In this case, it appears that MUI is not an equal partner with the government, but MUI is at a higher level than the government, because MUI has never been blamed, but can blame the government.

An example of the existence of MUI as described above is the issue of hajj bailouts. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 30 of 2013 concerning Banks Receiving Deposits for Hajj Organizing Fees, it will provide an opportunity for every prospective hajj pilgrim to speed up obtaining a portion of the pilgrimage by taking Hajj bailout funds from the provider bank as a loan. In this case, according to the MUI fatwa held at the Cipasung Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya in November 2012, MUI said it did not agree with the Hajj bailout fund set by the government. MUI then issued a fatwa on the Hajj bailout fund, as a continuation of the DSN-MUI Fatwa No. 29/DSN-MUI/VI/2002, which forbids hajj bailouts with various indicators.

Another example is the government's stance that allowed vasectomy and tubectomy during the reign of President Susilo Bambang Yudoyono (SBY), where the MUI forbade it. To strengthen the functions and duties of the National Family Planning Coordinating Board (BKKBN), as well as during the increasingly fast rate of growth in the birth rate and population of Indonesia, the government allows for vasectomy and tubectomy. The government thinks that one of the obstacles to the vasectomy male family planning program is the MUI fatwa. Then an argument is built or formulated that it is possible to recanalize

this so that the illegitimate legal reason in the form of permanent sterilization is eliminated or refuted. However, this argument is considered not strong enough because of the lack or absence of evidence, so scholars still view vasectomy as an attempt to sterilize. In this case, the MUI then issued a fatwa regarding the prohibition of vasectomy which confirmed the previous fatwa on January 26, 2009.

Furthermore, regarding the meningitis vaccine for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. The government requires everyone who is going for Hajj and Umrah to use it first, but the MUI forbids it with the issuance of the MUI Fatwa Number 05 of 2009 concerning the Use of Meningitis Vaccines for Hajj or Umrah Pilgrims. The MUI Fatwa Commission decided that the use of a meningitis vaccine that uses ingredients from pigs and/or that in the manufacturing process has occurred contact/contact with pork ingredients is haram. The use of special meningitis vaccines for obligatory hajj and/or obligatory umrah is permissible (permissible), if there is an urgent need (li al-hajah). Then, the provision that it is permissible to use the forbidden meningitis vaccine is only temporary, as long as a halal meningitis vaccine has not been found or the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia still requires the use of the vaccine for Hajj and/or Umrah pilgrims.

All this is done by MUI in the context of maintaining the people (*himayatul ummah*). MUI is willing to disagree and even contradict the government, in order to fight for aspects of the maintenance of the people (*himayatul ummah*), both the maintenance of the people concerning faith (*himayatul ummah fi al-aqidah*), as well as those relating to worship (*himayatul ummah fi al-ibadah*). Surely this is to emphasize the existence of MUI as *khadim al-ummah* (servant of the ummah).

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research described above, it can be concluded that the implementation of the concept of religious moderation in Indonesia cannot ignore the role of the MUI as a socio-religious institution for Muslims that has a strategic role in guiding the people. The implementation of religious moderation in the MUI institution itself can be divided into four channels, namely, against Muslims, sects that are fatwaed as deviant or heretical, non-Muslims, and against the government. In general, it can be said that the MUI has made good efforts in implementing the values of religious moderation through these four channels. The implementation of MUI religious moderation in Indonesia has been going well. MUI is responsive and accommodating to community needs, especially Muslims, and plays a very important role in creating a safe and peaceful atmosphere in the community. However, some people still think that the application of MUI's religious moderation values to groups that are considered deviant (deviant) and non-Muslims has not run optimally. MUI is seen as less responsive and accommodating. MUI is expected to re-correct and further improve the pattern of its relationship with the two community groups. Meanwhile, against the government, MUI positions itself as

a partner of the government (*syarikatul Hukumah*) or a friend of the government (*shahibul ukumah*). MUI sometimes supports government programs, but can also disagree with government programs as outlined through MUI fatwas that seem contrary to the interests of the government.

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