

Islam Berkemajuan and Islam Nusantara: The Face of Moderate Islam in Indonesia

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Abstract— This article focusses on the jargon of two mass organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) as mainstream Muslim representatives in Indonesia, it is "*Islam Berkemajuan*" (Progressive Islam) and "*Islam Nusantara*" how the da'wah strategy and efforts of Muhammadiyah and NU as the largest Islamic social movement even in the world is in presenting the values *wasathiyah* (moderate) in Indonesia, what is the characteristic, as well as how both respond in dealing with issues of nationality and fullness of dynamics. This research was written using theological and sociological approach, with literature study method and in-depth interview with related parties. The results showed that Muhammadiyah and NU with their respective religious understanding have been quite successful in presenting the face of Islamic moderatism in Indonesia, that the true face of Islam is a moderate Islam, a friendly Islam, and Islam that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. In some ways indeed both are often the opposite. However, the flexibility of attitude and extent of the leaders' views of these two mass organizations can make people think smarter and clearer, and avoid violent acts that are very contradictory to the values of *wasathiyah*.

Keywords—*Islam Berkemajuan, Islam Nusantara, Moderatism Muhammadiyah, NU*

I. INTRODUCTION

Two of the largest religious mass organizations in Indonesia in August 2015 held national events at almost the same time. For Muhammadiyah, the conference held in Makassar, South Sulawesi on 18-22 Shawwal 1436 or 7-12 August 2015 was the 47th conference and the first conference in the second century of organizational travel. Whereas for NU, the conference held in Jombang on 16-20 Syawal 1436 H or 1-5 August 2015 M is the 33rd Congress at the age of 89 years. Even though it was echoed before the Congress, the two organizations reaffirmed and announced their big vision. In this national event, Muhammadiyah carries a big agenda that is determined to make Indonesian Islam as *Islam Berkemajuan*. Whereas NU affirmed its Islamic identity as *Islam Nusantara* (Isnus/amtara).

The idea of *Islam Berkemajuan* which has become a major agenda and orientation of the Muhammadiyah movement at its age beyond one century is based on the fact that Muslims who are actually born as *khaira ummah*, the best people, have not been able to play a strategic role amid increasingly complex problems faced by Muslims, especially Indonesian Muslims.

The Islamic world which is currently in turmoil, from the endless classical problems between Palestine and Israel, The Arab Spring which has ravaged several Islamic territories, to the increasingly worsening internal problems of Indonesian Muslims such as expanding poverty, widening social inequalities, moral decadence, economic liberalization, leadership crisis, political divisions, radicalism issues and terrorist groups in the name of religion, to the issue of LGBT which are very energy-consuming and of public concern. This chaotic condition of Muslims is very far from a hope that is willing to make this 15th century a century of Islamic revival.

Faced with the problematic challenges of increasingly complex people, Muhammadiyah feels responsible for enhancing its strategic role in order to bring Indonesian Muslims towards a better and more civilized Indonesia. As acknowledged by the 2015-2020 Muhammadiyah Chairperson, Haedar Nashir, objectively, Muslims represented by Islamic organizations have not fully had a strategic agenda that is comprehensively constructed. There has yet to be a strategic collective work, but it is still as it is and spontaneously reactive. For this reason, programs and strategic agendas need to be designed to make people more advanced, independent and have a high inner dynamic. [1] In addition, it needs to be prepared to improve the quality of human resources, political and cultural strategies that are superior and progressive, which are designed to be built in a systematic, organized and comprehensive manner. As a modernist Islamic organization, Muhammadiyah should appear in solving the problems of national and universal humanity.

Meanwhile, before the emergence of the *Islam Nusantara* discourse among the Nahdliyin, in the period of the 1980s, KH Abdurrahman Wahid who was familiarly called Gus Dur had initiated the idea of Indigenous Islam (*Islam Pribumi*). This idea was actually born as a response as well as a counter to the understanding of fundamentalist Muslims who are considered to have a willingness to do the Arabization project in Indonesia and assume that authentic Islam must be Arab or Middle Eastern, especially those practiced by the Salaf al-*Salih* generation. Their Islamic values in Indonesia are no longer pure because they have been tainted by customs and other things that come from outside Islam. Islamic natives want to emphasize that Indonesian Islam which is influenced by various local wisdoms and all its knick-knacks, is also Islam.

The emergence of NU's strong reaction to the Arabization project of the authentic Islamic movement was because, since its birth, NU had declared itself a tradition conservation organization. The jargon '*Al-Muhâfadzatu' alâ al-qadîm al-shâlih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadîd al-ashlah*' (maintaining good traditions and taking new things better) is very popular among the Nahdhiyins. The idea of the Islam Pribumi that Gus Dur rolled out was the translation of this jargon. Indigenous Islamization has several characteristics, namely, first, Islam is not considered as an alternative ideology, but is only seen as a complementary factor in social, cultural and political life. Second, tolerant and respect for tradition, namely the need to consider Indonesia's local context when applying Islamic teachings. Third, progressive, that Islam must be able to actively participate in the dialogue with other people's thought and traditions, including the West. Fourth is liberating, Islam is a teaching that can answer humanitarian problems universally without seeing ethnic or religious differences [2].

Some people consider that the religious model of the two largest mass organizations in Indonesia is the hallmark of Indonesian Islam which displays a friendly, tolerant and moderate Islam, compared to the face of Islam in other parts of the world that sometimes looks fierce and rigid. This moderate, friendly, peaceful, tolerant face of Islam is a prerequisite for the rise of Islam.

II. METHOD

This study was written using a qualitative approach - a social scientific history approach which includes historical, sociological, political, and normative-theological approaches, as well as descriptive analysis, designed to answer various problems that have been formulated. The sociological approach is used in research on social movements to understand the patterns and forms of movements, actors of movements, supporting factors or triggers of movements, as well as mobilization of followers and counteraction against the movement. The political approach is used to observe how leadership patterns, structural relations, and political policies influence individual and group behavior. While the normative-theological approach is used to understand how one's religious understanding is able to influence and move someone to act based on that understanding. [3]

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Moderation or *wasathiyah* (وساطية), often defined as the middle, centered, balanced. In the Islamic context, it refers to the "middle way", a justly balanced way of life, avoiding extremes and experiencing things in moderation. This mediation, by Muhammadiyah, one of which was translated in the concept of *tajdid*. In the understanding of Muhammadiyah, *tajdid* has two meanings, namely, firstly, the meaning of purification means purification of Islamic Aqedah mixed with the understanding of *shirk*, *bid'ah* and *takhayul*. Second, *tajdid* means renewal, dynamic and modernist, especially related to the problem of *muamalah*. Therefore, moderation/ *wasathiyah* in the view of Muhammadiyah has at least the characteristics of three things, namely *first* having faith and worship is interpreted in depth,

balanced and broad, not only emphasizing the outer skin, not degrading others. *Secondly*, in the morality of not only following the sunnah of the Messenger of Allâh attributively or symbolically but having to give birth to the teachings of *hasanah*. *Third*, in *Muamalah*, progressive and dynamic. In addition to the principle of *tawasuth*, Muhammadiyah also has the principle of *tawazun* (balanced) and *ta'adul* (fair), so that Islam can be applied in an actual and functional manner. [4] What Muhammadiyah affirmed was very intersecting with the original intention of Islam which was initiated by Gus Dur, and is now more popularized by the term *Islam Nusantara* version of the Nahdlatul Ulama. In Muhammadiyah, the face of Islamic moderation is embodied in the idea of progressive Islam.

For Muhammadiyah, *Islam Berkemajuan* is actually a *revitalization* of enlightenment ideas initiated by its founder, KH Ahmad Dahlan, more than two centuries ago. The ideas of KH Ahmad Dahlan before and during the founding of Muhammadiyah were considered to be very 'complete' - if not said to be too advanced - in the view of Indonesian people at that time. When the community is confined in a pattern of thinking that women's space is limited to domestic spaces (wells, kitchens and mattresses), KH Ahmad Dahlan and his wife Nyai Walidah spearheaded the formation of women's associations named 'Aisyiyah, attributed to the Prophet's beloved wife's name. When there was a dichotomy between the science of religion and general science, and general science was regarded as infidel, KH Ahmad Dahlan actually introduced some general knowledge into the curricula of schools managed by Muhammadiyah. He did not even hesitate to adopt the Western-style education system, how to dress them, even associate with them well. Despite receiving criticism from many people for this action, KH Ahmad Dahlan never gave up on the progress of the people. Perhaps at present, what KH Ahmad Dahlan is doing is normal and mediocre. But if the parameters of that period are used, what Ahmad Dahlan did is certainly an extraordinary breakthrough that requires determination and courage.

To accomplish the idea of *Islam Berkemajuan*, some of the visions that *Muhammadiyah* wants to realize in the next five years (2015-2020) are *first*, the transformation (rapid change towards progress) of an advanced, professional and modern organization and network system. *Second*, the development of a system of movements and business charities that are primary and independent qualities for the creation of conditions and factors that support the realization of a true Islamic society. And *third*, enhancing and developing the strategic role of Muhammadiyah in the lives of the people, nation, and global dynamics. [5]

Meanwhile, despite reaping the pros and cons within the Nahdliyin ulama, the *Islam Nusantara* idea initiated by NU, as explained by the NU Syuriah *Katib*, KH Affifudin Muhajir, is intended as an understanding, practice and application of Islam in the muamalah fiqih segment as a dialectic between texts, Shari'a and 'urf, culture and reality on the archipelago. [6] Whereas in the view of Muslim scholar Azyumardi Azra, the normative doctrinal *Islam Nusantara* adheres to the same law of faith and harmony with people in any part of the Islamic world as agreed by the authoritative *jumhur*. Even though within certain limits he has his own distinction. One example, *Islam*

Nusantara orthodoxy is different from Saudi Arabian orthodoxy. *Islam Nusantara* orthodoxy has at least three elements, namely first, the kalam (theology) with the 'Asy'ariyah pattern, second, the *Shafi'iyah fiqh*, and Al-Ghazali Sufism. Whereas Arabic Islamic orthodoxy consists of only two elements, namely the first (theological) Salafi Wahabi and the second Hambali fiqh which is the strictest school of fiqh in Islamic jurisprudence. This is what distinguishes between *Islam Nusantara* orthodoxy and Saudi Arabia's Islamic orthodoxy. For *Nusantara* Muslims, Salafi Wahabi Islamic orthodoxy feels too dry and simple, because they have been accustomed to carrying out the traditional heritage to practice rich and nuanced Islam. [6]

Then what is the characteristic of moderatism shown by these two organizations? The moderating characteristics outlined by Muhammadiyah can then be seen in thought products and fatwas/ijtihad produced in *Majlis Tajdid* and *Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, an institution in Muhammadiyah which is tasked with providing legal foundations and fatwas for Muhammadiyah citizens, not only in matters of worship, but also the problem of *mu'amalah*.

In the matter of nationality and statehood, when there is still a small community of Muslims who are in a polemic about the form of the state and democracy, the Muhammadiyah's national insight is very clear that the Republic of Indonesia and Pancasila are final. It is a national consensus that binds all components of the nation. For Muhammadiyah citizens, the state of Pancasila which contains compounds of Islamic values and noble Indonesian-ness is a vehicle for proof (*as-syahadah*) towards progressive Indonesia.[7] In the view of progressive Islam, Muhammadiyah is determined to fight in the Pancasila State towards Indonesia Progress in accordance with its personality; (1) charity and striving for peace and prosperity; (2) multiply friends and increase brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*); (3) Having a broad view of upholding the teachings of Islam; (4) Religious and social characteristics; (5) Paying attention to all laws, laws, regulations and the basis and legal philosophy of the state (6) Carrying out *Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (7) Active in the development of society with the intention of *ishlah* and development according to Islamic teachings; (8) Collaboration with any Islamic group in an effort to broadcast Islam and defend its interests; (9) Assisting the government and cooperating with other groups in developing the country; (10) Being fair and corrective inward and outward wisely.[8]

Nahdhatul Ulama has a similar view of national insight. In the *Alim Ulama* National Conference held on 1-2 November 2014, NU decided several important points in the matter of the administration, including; "The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (USRI) is the result of the noble agreement of nationality among the children of the founding nation of this country. USRI was formed to accommodate all elements of the nation that are very diverse in terms of ethnicity, language, culture and religion. It is the duty of all elements of the nation to maintain and strengthen the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Therefore, every way and effort to emerge the movements that threaten the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia must be resisted. Because it will cause a big crash and

division of the people. "Therefore, NU rejects the concept of *khilafah* as carried by certain organizations. For NU, the *Khilafah* as a system of government is a historical fact that was practiced by *al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun. Al-Khilafah al-Rashidah* is a model that is very suitable for the era; that is, when human life is not yet under the auspices of nation states. At that time, Muslims were very likely to live in a *khilafah* system. When mankind is sheltered under the nation states (nation states), the *khilafah* system for Muslims worldwide loses its relevance, and even revives the idea of *khilafah* in our time today is a utopia. [9]

In the matter of symbols and attributes of the diversity of Muslims, Muhammadiyah and NU also take a moderate stance. In the case of wearing veils, beards, short pants and so on, Muhammadiyah and NU stated that these things were not part of Islamic law. Regarding the veil issue, the discussion was included in the Islamic Religious Questions and Answers Book issued by the *Tarjih* and *Tajdid* Assembly, volume 4 page 238, Chapter Around Women's Problems. In summary, the veil has no legal basis both in the Qur'an and Sunnah. What is ordered by Islamic law for women is to wear the hijab. [10]

Likewise, in the view of NU, some of these things are not categorized as Islamic identity. By expressing various views of Islamic scholars, NU emphasized that in terms of the argument, this was still a matter of scholarship from the past until now. In addition, NU views these three things as having no significance in the lives of the people, because the things considered to be Islamic identities are in fact also practiced by non-Muslims, namely Fidel Castro (communist Cuban leader), Calvin (French Christian figure), Karl Mark (communist ideologue), and others. Both Muhammadiyah and NU emphasized that Muslims should not be trapped into mere symbols or formalities without understanding the substance of religious teachings. [11]

It is this tolerant and moderate face of Islam that is the hallmark of the *Islam Berkemajuan* and *Islam Nusantara*. A very neat combination of Islamic teachings, local wisdom, and modernity makes Islam in Indonesia have a huge chance for the realization of *Islam wasathiyah*. Muslim scholar from Algeria, former professor of Sorbonne University, France, Mohammad Arkoun said, "... how rich in terms of culture, and how original Islam in Indonesia is compared to Arab Islam. Arab Islam since the nineteenth century has suffered a number of violent clashes that are numerous due to the occurrence of political, economic and cultural hegemony by European nations in the Mediterranean region; colonization, then various wars of national independence, have forced Muslims to rely on religion, in developing an ideology of struggle. Indonesia has been protected by its geographical conditions, the extent and diversity of its islands, the weight of the people who become its inhabitants, the coexistence that is based on tolerance of some religious cultures. Contemporary Indonesian Islam can provide good examples of tolerance and peace to a more militant, more active Islam that has forced itself to be present since the 60s in several Arab countries. However, Islam as a religion and as a tradition of thought, everywhere, so in Indonesia too, faces a large number of intellectual and scientific challenges that not only require adequate responses, but also increase towards new

spaces for understanding, interpretation of all the problems caused by what we call modernity" [12].

For socializing the idea of *Islam Berkemajuan* and *Islam Nusantara*, both Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama have applied many methods and strategies of da'wa, ranging from conventional da'wa such as lectures, *majlis ta'lim* and so on, to seminars, both at home and abroad. As was done by the 2015-2020 Muhammadiyah General Chair, Haedar Nashir at Monash University, Australia on February 16, 2018. Likewise, the previous Chairperson of the Muhammadiyah, namely M. Dien Syamsuddin who aggressively campaigned for Wasathiyah Islam in various dialogue forums with world Muslim scholars, likewise the establishment of study centers, art activities, and much more. The young NU activists even vigorously published books that contained what and how *Islam Nusantara* really was, especially to counter slanted views on *Islam Nusantara* which was raised by some Indonesian Muslims.

The response to these two jargons is indeed diverse. There are those who understand and support them, but some are resistant, as some Muslims in West Sumatra have done recently. For those who refuse to assume that naming the label "*Berkemajuan*" and "*Nusantara*" behind Islam is as if making Islam fragmented and reducing the true meaning of Islam that is universal and eternal. However, so far, refusal has not made anarchic actions like those that are common in Middle Eastern countries that are easily ignited if there are differences of opinion even against something that is not too principle. Perhaps this is one of the advantages of Muslim Nusantara that is very embodied with hospitality, and tolerance.

IV. CONCLUSION

Besides being the mainstream Islamic identity of Indonesian Muslims, the *Islam Berkemajuan* and *Islam Nusantara* are actually a response to globalization that appears in many ways. *Islam Berkemajuan* is a response to the negative effects of globalization that give rise to deterioration, division, injustice and moral collapse, so that it raises awareness for Muhammadiyah to rise up and reinforce the identity that Muhammadiyah citizens are part of the world's citizens who must participate universally to their fellow human beings regardless of differences that are primordial and conventional. Whereas *Islam Nusantara* reinforces Indonesian Islamic identity

from the effects of globalization that bring the transnational movement with religious understanding that tends to be rigid. According to the local wisdom of Indonesia, the *Islam Berkemajuan* and *Islam Nusantara* managed to package the face of Islam wasathiyah, Islam which is *rahmatan lil'alam*.

The naming of *Islam Berkemajuan* and *Islam Nusantara* should not completely eliminate the true face of Islam. However, Islam came from the Arab, and then surely the tradition and culture will influence the appearance of Islam which eventually spread to all parts of the world. To completely deny the Arabic element in the appearance of Islam on nusantara will only cause an endless polemic. The dialectics that occur between Islam which is from Arab and the local wisdom should not widen the friction between people. Muhammadiyah residents with the jargon *Islam Berkemajuan* and Nahdhiyin citizens with *Islam Nusantara* must return to the original goal of Islam as people capable of displaying *ummatan wasathan, wasathiyah Islam*, which brings mercy to all the worlds. Amiin.

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