

The Moderation of Religiosity, Moderate Da'wa, and the Resilience of the Nation¹

Dindin Solahudin²

Highlighting *wasatīyya* (moderation), my presumption is that moderation is not an Islamic teaching. To be sure, I repeat, moderation is not Islamic teaching itself. I argue, moderation is not only an aspect of Islamic teachings. At this point, I don't go along with Mohammad Hashim Kamali from the Oxford University USA, who writes in his book *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic Principle of Wasatīyyah*, that moderation is merely an aspect of Islamic teachings. Unlike Kamali, I am convinced that moderation is the character of all aspects of Islamic teachings. My theory suggests that moderation is the very nature of Islam as a way of life.

Yusuf Qaradawi writes,

فالوسطية الإسلامية كامنة في الاعتقاد والعبادات والشعائر والأخلاق والتشريع.

In the same tone, Ibrahim Ajluni from Global Forum for Moderation writes that moderation has been the

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² Prof. Dr. H. Dindin Solahudin, MA, CHRA, Guru Besar bidang Ilmu Dakwah pada Fakultas Dakwah dan Komunikasi UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung

systematics of truth, the approaches of the prophets, and procedures of Salaf generation. Moderation then manifested in Islam and its subsequent traditions (*sunnah*) which necessarily constituted just and ideal prototype of Muslim people in terms of *aqidah*, *ibadah*, *akhlaq*, and overall attitudes (العدول الأخيار في العقيدة والعبادة) (والأخلاق والمواقف).

So far rightly comprehended, Islam is moderate in nature. Thus, moderation is the truth of Islam itself. Imam Nawawi was completely right in saying that الوسط السداد والسداد الصواب. It follows that, if moderation is the nature of true Islam, then extreme practices of Islam are not Islamic at all. As the true character of all aspects of Islamic teachings, *wasatīyyatul Islām* is identified as *i'tidāl* (perpendicularity) dan *istiqāmah* (consistency) upon *aṣ-ṣirāth al-mustaqīm* (the straight path). In short, being moderate Muslim has to mean, logically and practically, being on the straight path of Islam.

Since moderation is the natural attribute of Islam, the commonly used phrase 'Islam *wasatīyyah*' does not make any sense. The phrase 'Islam *wasatīyyah*' could mislead to seeing moderation as simply a group, a line, or even a sect of Islamic community, just like Islam Nusantara, Islam Radikal, Islam Kiri, and so forth. Meanwhile, I believe moderation is the character of Islam, i.e all aspects of Islamic teachings, not the character of a group of Islam.

Moderation does neither mean half quality. Ahmad Umar Hashim said,

فليس المراد إذن بالوسطية أن يكون الإنسان في درجة متوسطة في عبادته أو عمله أو سلوكه، ولا أن يكون متوسط العلم أو العمل أو السعي، بمعنى أن لا يكون متقدماً ومتميزاً في هذه الأمور، بل المراد بالوسطية الأجود والأفضل والأكمل والأعدل.

There is therefore no point for claiming moderate by being at some level between the most pious and the least one, or between the richest and the poorest. Moderation means the best, the fullest, the most ideal, the most complete, the fairest, and the most upright.

In the light of my theory of the moderation of Islam, I would suggest the precise English wording for *moderasi beragama* is not religious moderation but the moderation of religiosity. The moderation of religiosity is a practical reflection and articulation of the moderation of Islam. Each Muslim needs to practice Islam in moderate ways in all aspects of its teachings, including system of belief, worship rites, and moral attitudes within the context of social lives.

The Caliph Umar ibn Abdul Aziz once got a letter from his people consulting him about destiny as a part of belief system in Islam. The Caliph Umar wrote in reply, أما بعد، أوصيك بتقوى الله وبالافتصاد في أمره.

Umar advised his people to be moderate in believing destiny between fatalist belief over destiny of Jabariya and determinist free will of Qadariya.

The Holy Quran warns us many times against extreme practices of religion. Chapter Maida verse seventy-seven says,

قُلْ يَتَّهَلِّ الْكُتُبِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَهْوَاءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوا
من قبل... الآية

and Chapter Nisa verse one seventy-one reveals,

يَتَّهَلِّ الْكُتُبِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ... الآية .

So is the issue of tolerance. Teaching tolerance, Islam urges Muslim people to show sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with their own. This aspect of Islamic teaching has to adhere the governing principle of moderation. Such extreme expresses of tolerance as involving in other religious rites are certainly religious deviation.

Within the homiletic perspective, the moderation of Islam serves as a paradigm which shapes the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of da'wa. The subject matters of homiletics and da'wa activities focus on the dissemination of the moderation of Islam. The scientific methodology and the methods of da'wa are governed by the principles of the moderation of Islam. The projection of homiletics and the objectives of da'wa alike strive to ensure the implementation of Islamic teachings, adherent to spirit of Islam and مقاصد الشرع الخمسة.

This paradigm of da'wa has made possible the flourish of moderate da'wa as early as the birth of da'wa. Constructive da'wa builds resilience of any nation by way of mainstreaming the moderation of Islam. Indeed, Islam with its moderate character should be moderately proselytised. Presenting moderate Islam by extremely radical ways cannot be justified. Extreme da'wa harms

the moderation of Islam and is against the very nature of Islamic teachings.

Moderate da'wa socializes Islam to be practiced in a moderate mode as it is. The moderation of religiosity serves as an important social capital for national resilience. The Prophet Muhammad pbuh once said,

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْعُلُوفَ فِي الدِّينِ، فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ الْعُلُوفَ فِي الدِّينِ

The apostle said as well هلك المتنطعون three times. Thus, in the absence of the moderation of religiosity, a nation might go astray.

Therefore, da'wa measures encourage scholars, religious communities, and policy circles alike to have access to this governing principle of the moderation of religiosity. As a social capital, moderation has been driving the umma to be active participants in building resilience and developing the nation. ***