

ABU DHABI DOCUMENT OF HUMAN FRATERNITY AND THE INTERCONNECTION OF MODERATION IN ISLAM

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Abstract: Abu Dhabi Document of Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar on the 4th of February 2019 reflects the importance of the moderation of Islam. The document highlights how to create world peace and live together among all the believers and how to connect the path of moderation Islam that Muslims should apply with. This paper aims to describe and analyze the interconnection of the Abu Dhabi Document of Human Fraternity and the concept of moderation of Islam by comparing both. This research is a conceptual review that uses literature research methods sourced from authoritative journals, books, and articles which are relevant to the deepening concept of moderation of Islam. The results showed that the Abu Dhabi Document of Human Fraternity is enhancing the manifestation of moderation of Islam worldwide. Muslim communities can adopt a culture of dialogue as the path, mutual cooperation as the code of conduct, and reciprocal understanding as the method and standard because those are compatible with the concept of moderation in Islam through creating harmony and peaceful life regardless of religions embraced.

INTRODUCTION

Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali in his book *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam* stated the meaning of that moderation, or *wasatiyyah* (Arabic synonyms: *tawassuṭ*, *i'tidāl*, *tawāzun*, *iqtisād*), is closely aligned with justice, and it means opting for a middle position between extremities. Moderation is often used interchangeably with average, core, standard, heart, and non-aligned. The opposite of *wasatiyyah* is *taṭarruf*, which denotes inclination toward the peripheries and is known as extremism, radicalism, and excess. Conceptual analysis of *wasatiyyah* is defined as a recommended posture that occurs to the people of sound nature and intellect, distinguished by its aversion to both extremism and manifest neglect. It is primarily a rational concept with little or no dogmatic connotations, but also religiously virtuous since the Qur'an has recommended it¹. The concept is focused on the beliefs, behavior, and attitude of Muslims. So, it is like the basic guidance and principle on how Muslims become moderate, not ignorant, and not extreme.

On the other hand, the Abu Dhabi Document of Human Fraternity is a document on human fraternity for world peace and living together was issued in the meeting and signed by the His Holiness Pope Francis and the His Eminence Grand Imam of Al-

¹ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: the Qur'anic Principle of Wasatiyyah*, Oxford University Press, 2015, 24-26.

Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyeb, on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi. The document recognizes the valuable contributions of people of all religions and beliefs to humanity and underlines the role of education in promoting tolerance and eliminating discrimination based on religion or belief. It commends all international, regional, national, and local initiatives and efforts by religious leaders to promote inter-religious and intercultural dialogue².

The document is focused on how Muslims interact with non-Muslim believers, how to interrelate in daily life, and how to cooperate with other non-Muslim groups. In this document, the moderation of Islam brings a Muslim to respect the values of peace; mutual understanding, human fraternity, justice, and love. Each person should enjoy the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. The pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, sex, race, and language are willed by God Almighty in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives. Therefore, the fact that people are forced to adhere to a certain religion or culture must be rejected, as too the imposition of a cultural way of life that others do not accept.

In the context of Indonesia, the former minister of religious affairs of Indonesia, Mr. Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, mentioned in his prolog of the book “Moderasi Beragama” (Religious Moderation) published by the ministry of religious affairs of Indonesia about the importance of religious moderation. Moderation has long been a prominent aspect of the history of civilization and the traditions of all the world's religions. After the reformation in 1998, President Abdurrahman Wahid revoked Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967 on Chinese religions, beliefs, and customs. The revocation of these decrees confirmed that Indonesia has six officially recognized religions, namely Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Each religion undoubtedly has a tendency to teach that refers to a common point of meaning, namely that choosing the middle way between two extremes, and not overdoing it, is the most ideal religious attitude. This common value of moderation is also the energy that drove the historic meeting of two great world religious figures, Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayyeb, on February 4, 2019. The meeting produced a human fraternity document, which among its main messages emphasized that our common enemy today is actually fanatic extremism, the desire for mutual destruction, war, intolerance, and hateful attitudes among fellow human beings, all in the name of religion³.

² a document on human fraternity for world peace and living together, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html, accessed on 13th December 2022.

³ Kementerian Agama, Badan Litbang dan Diklat: Moderasi Beragama, 2019, 11.

THEORETICAL STUDY

As a concept, moderation in Islam indeed is the basic principle embraced by any Muslim. And this is stated in Al Quran, (al-Baqarah, 2:143). Moderation in Islam is a direction for Muslims in their social life. But this direction should be interpreted deeply following the teachings of the Quran and the reality of life. Moderation in Islam is a reference-guided book, while the Abu Dhabi document of human fraternity is like the implementation and manifestation of moderation in Islam. It is complementary to the concept of moderation, in particular, it is practical guidance to all Muslims around the world.

Moderation in Islam is a universal concept that must be held by all Muslims. This concept is the cornerstone of Muslims in building relationships vertically and horizontally, namely in ritual worship and also in *mu'amalah* or interaction with fellow humans regardless of religion. Abu Dhabi Document takes an important role in supporting the correct understanding of moderation in Islam. Moderation in Islam is the grand design, while the Abu Dhabi Document for Human Fraternity is the embodiment of moderation in Islam.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this paper is a qualitative approach by comparing the concept of religious moderation in Islam with the Abu Dhabi Document for Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayyeb. In addition, the use of a literature review, especially the book Religious Moderation published by the Research and Development and Education Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is one of the references in writing this paper.

DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH RESULTS

Results and discussion showed that moderation in Islam is a holistic concept and it must be interpreted sophisticatedly and understandable to all its followers. This concept already exists more than 1400 years ago, well written in Quran and Hadith. By comparing the concept of moderation and the Abu Dhabi Document of Human Fraternity, it would be described as follow:

Table 1. The Concept of Moderation in Islam and the Abu Dhabi Document for Human Fraternity

No	The Concept of Moderation in Islam	The Abu Dhabi Document for Human Fraternity
1	Holistic Concept	Special Document
2	Code of Conduct of Muslims	Memorandum of Understanding between Islam and Christian

3	Obligatory of Muslims	Strong Recommendation for the human being
4	Major Concept of Interfaith Interaction	Implementation and Manifestation of the Concept
5	Noble Values	Manual Guidance

Peter R. Demant in his book *Islam vs Islamism*, underlines 5 challenges for Muslims today, namely:

1. Criticism of the interpretation of Quranic and Hadith texts that are still considered textual and not contextual. Moreover, with a rational approach and out of the taboo. Open and enlightening schools of thought are still faced with conservative schools of thought that tend to look at texts literally. So that this discourse still continues to roll between groups of adherents of Islam, even though previously there were scholars of the caliber of Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldun.
2. Difference and leads to division rather than unity and equality. For example, some Islamic countries suffer from internal divisions that are worse than in western countries; differences in internal coherence eventually destroyed Islamic kingdoms or sultanates, including the Ottoman Empire in Turkey. Islam's sociopolitical weaknesses allowed its western heirs to develop more solid political units and a more unified concept of the state. Most Islamic states continue to suffer from extreme internal divisions and fratricidal strife.
3. Muslims view the progress experienced by the West as the result of contributions from Muslim scholars and scientists of the time. Rational understanding and the use of science in various fields brought Islam to its golden age. The challenge is that there are now extreme groups within Islam that forbid religious rationality. There is a contradiction when science and technology are confronted with religious doctrine. Logically, it is clear that the use of science and technology in daily activities is the result of rationality and modernity.
4. The next challenge is the compatibility between Islam and Democracy. Unlike other religions, Islam is communal. It demands not only individual, but also collective commitment. The goal is not only the immediate community, but all of humanity. Islamic moderates say that democracy can go hand in hand with Islam. However, there is a small group of Muslims who strongly reject the concept of democracy on the grounds that there is no reference in the Quran and Hadith. Islam is not man-made, but God-made. Beings belong to their Creator, who has proprietary rights over them. God's sovereignty is incompatible with democracy, an illusory and illegitimate popular sovereignty. In many countries, Islamists are at the forefront of the struggle against authoritarian regimes of minority elites.

5. The Challenge from Western Islam. Can Islamism defeat modern civilization? Not imminent, but not unthinkable. We have seen that while fundamentalists use rational means to attain their reactionary goals, they cannot really develop a new science and technology without arousing theological doubts. Their rejection of rationalism is therefore a deficiency of great consequence. An Osama bin Laden would certainly love to have at his disposal weapons of mass destruction, and in his hands, they would constitute a real risk: he would not hesitate to use them to blackmail the West. But an Islamic superbomb of unknown, secretly researched technology is a farfetched nightmare. On the other hand, the accumulation of systemic problems in the West, in combination with coordinated attacks over multiple fronts and demoralization of modern society, may conceivably overburden the international community. In theory therefore, Islamism could perhaps win under one of the following scenarios: (1) a new nuclear-armed Islamic superpower with an Islamist program forces a dramatic reshuffling of the international power balance; (2) nonterritorial terroristic networks destabilize the global economy and/or international political regimes; or (3) Islamists successfully foster revolution within Western societies.⁴

CONCLUSION

The Abu Dhabi Document for Human Fraternity is an implementation of the concept of “Religious Moderation” in Islam. The Abu Dhabi Document does not contradict the concept of religious moderation but rather complements it. As a document, the Abu Dhabi Document for Human Fraternity is a strong recommendation for interpreting the concept of Islamic moderation. The strength of the narrative in the Abu Document is an added value in harmonizing all religions to live in peace and coexistence in the world.

In the context of society, the Abu Dhabi Document can be a kind of standard operating procedure (SOP) for all religious believers to respect other religions. For Muslims, the Abu Dhabi Document is a manual guide for dealing with plural, multi-cultural and multi-religious life. Moderation is the noble value that underlies a Muslim before thinking or acting. While the Abu Dhabi Document is the application of that value.

SUGGESTION

To strengthen the socialization and implementation of Islamic moderation narratives and counter-narratives against radical and extreme movements in religion, ideas to call for peace, tolerance, and harmonious coexistence need to be echoed at the national and international levels. International day of human fraternity which is annually commemorated can be the right momentum to voice harmony in diversity.

⁴ Peter R. Demant, *Islam vs Islamism: The Dilemma of the Muslim World*, 221-227.

The concept of Islamic moderation must continue to be expanded and translated into concrete movements that touch the real dimensions of human life. The concept must also be harmonized with the concept of religion for other non-Islamic religions so that it has a major impact on the lives of religious people. Intolerance, radicalism, and extremism are common enemies not only for religious people but for humanity as a whole because they threaten human existence. Public awareness campaign about moderation in Islam and human fraternity through the media and social media would have a great impact for young generation.

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