

MODERATE ISLAM TO REDUCE CONFLICT AND MEDIATE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST: A CASE OF NAHDLATUL ULAMA AND MUHAMMADIYAH

KASMURI SELAMAT

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI (UIN) SULTAN SHARIF KASIM, RIAU, INDONESIA

[HTTPS://ORCID.ORG/0000-0001-6344-4280](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6344-4280)

EMAIL: [KASMURI@UIN-SUSKA.AC.ID](mailto:kasmuri@uin-suska.ac.id)

Abstract: Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah are two moderate Islamic organizations in Indonesia which operate in the area of preaching *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, and enlightenment *tajdid*, sourced from the Al-Quran and Sunnah. Besides being known as a religious organization, NU and Muhammadiyah are also known as organizations that play an active role in the humanitarian field. The study is based on the premise that religious discourse as a resolution can come in various forms and strategies, even by involving actors from across disciplines and countries. Hence, the purpose of this study was to determine the role of NU and Muhammadiyah organizations in reducing conflict and realizing peace in the Middle East. This research used a qualitative descriptive case study method with NU and Muhammadiyah as research subjects. Miles and Huberman model was used for data analysis which required data collection, data presentation, data condensation, and drawing conclusions. In this study, it was found that in helping to create world peace, NU and Muhammadiyah had done a number of things. In the international arena, NU played a major role in global peace efforts. This role can be seen when NU actively initiated, organized, and led various meetings and conferences and interfaith dialogues. NU also formed the International Conference of Islamic Scholars or the Ulama Conference, and World Muslim Scholars. The role of Muhammadiyah, too, included resolving conflicts in Central Africa, Palestine, and the Rohingya Muslim Conflict. In resolving the Middle East conflict, Muhammadiyah was actively involved in sending aid, for example in the Palestinian conflict, Muhammadiyah formed Muhammadiyah AID.

Keywords: Quran, Hadith, religious discourse, Middle East, global peace

1. INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is a region prone to political and security conflicts, which are not only of internal state nature but also conflicts between countries, both among Arab and non-Arab countries. These conflicts were addressed with minimal conflict resolution, which not only affected the image of this region as a conflict area, but also affected political stability, economy, and international security (Agustinova, 2013). The Middle East conflict is also of a prolonged nature as there seems to be no end to it, putting the regional stability at stake. The reason is that interests of various countries, both in the Middle East region and outside, is the international spotlight.

The Middle East has always been a link for two continents, Asia and Europe, and has also become an important region for the world economy because of the presence of natural resources important for world growth. After the end of the cold war, there were at least 4 important events that occurred in the region which also had a global impact, including the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the signing of the Israeli–Palestinian Declaration of Principles in 1993, the Al-Qaeda attack on the United States in 2001, and occupations carried out by Anglo-Americans in April 2003. Armed conflict, social upheaval and the impact of the world economy are three influences on the development of the Middle East region (Halliday, 2005).

Entering the second decade of the 21st century, the Middle East region is marked by the movement of the people to challenge their various national leaderships. This event is known as the revival of the Arab world or the Arab Spring (English: The Arab Spring; Arabic: *ath-Thawrât al-'Arabiyyah* literally the Arab Revolt or the awakening of the Arab world). What happened was a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests taking place in the Arab world. Protesters in the Arab world chanted the slogan *Ash-sha'b yurid isqat an-nizam* (The people want to overthrow this regime).

As a center for the development of world religions, the Middle East has a very complex repertoire of religious thought. Within certain limits, the history of religious politics development in the Middle East is colored by conflict symptoms from a constructive level to a destructive level. The religious ideologies that show symptoms of conflict in the 20th century are the major schools of Islam, that are Sunni and Syiah as well as Yahudi tribes. The conflicts that surround the Middle East region are mostly religious by nature. War between sects was a common

sight in the desert region. Efforts to position religion and its arguments as conflict resolution should be intensified by various groups. If religion is always exploited and co-opted as a basis for conflict, it is also very possible for religion to be used in the context of peace-making. Religious discourse as a resolution can come in various forms and strategies, also involving actors from across disciplines and countries.

However, so far, the tendency to see religion and religious groups in the dimensions of the source of conflict is too large. Laode, (2004) expressed: “*The facts suggest a dual legacy of organized religion, a tremendous potential for violence as well as extraordinary resources for reconciliation*”. This means, there has actually been an awareness of the many positive spaces that religion plays in creating reconciliation and harmonization. The deadlock in the conflict mediation and reconciliation process, especially in Middle Eastern countries, is due to the absence of interfaith dialogue spaces involving religious leaders. Even though be in place, it will not take place massively and sustainably. From an empirical assessment in several areas of the Middle East-Afghanistan, Sudan, etc., we saw that a dialogue process is possible as long as each sect prioritizes collective aspirations (justice, humanity, and welfare) (Johnston, 2009).

These possibilities were captured as positive signals by NU and Muhammadiyah by persuading Nusantara Islam norms in Indonesia’s foreign policy. The Indonesian government realizes that NU and Muhammadiyah and their religious character are the best diplomatic assets to shape the image of the Republic of Indonesia in international circles. This awareness continues by consolidating and persuading the norms of Islam Nusantara in the regional scope. In December 2018, for example, the Agency for the Study and Development of Policy (BPPK), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with PBNU held an international seminar highlighting the role of Islam Nusantara and Indonesian Diplomacy at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya (Aminah, 2018). This agenda confirms the norms of Islam Nusantara as the main platform for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in formulating Indonesia’s foreign policy.

There is no doubt that NU and its worldwide ideas have played a role in the international arena. Among the big ideas offered by NU are the concepts of moderate Islam and Islam Nusantara. Both contain pithy discourses about *tawassuth*, *tasammuh*, *tawazzun*, *i’tidal*, and *tasyawur*. It was this discourse that became NU’s weapon in diplomacy and reconciliation with Middle Eastern countries particularly. At the global level, these principles also guide an active role

in line with human values. NU appeared on the global scene by campaigning for *Islam rahmatan lil alamin*. The meaning of mercy for the whole world is not only for Muslims, but for all humans, even all creatures on earth (Purwanto, 2019). What NU is trying to do with its pithy discourse is not only limited to introducing the Islamic Nusantara (Indonesia) model, but also a form of soft-diplomacy which is part of Indonesia's foreign politic policy, as well as practicing the principle of "free-active" Indonesian diplomacy.

KH. Hasyim Muzadi believed that a more peaceful and fair world cannot be achieved without a close partnership between the *ulama* and *umara* (Maghfuri, 2019). Therefore, PBNU together with government components work hand in hand to disseminate the peaceful Islamic narrative as a moral responsibility to realize world peace. Responsibility here can be understood as the operation of norms as a support of action. It should be noted that norms do not appear in a vacuum, of course there are factors behind them. NU and the norms of Islam Nusantara found momentum at a time when the world was beginning to be invaded by the fever of terrorism and extremism. From here, NU and the government persuaded the moderate Islamic narrative as the antithesis of conservative and radical Islamic models.

Besides NU, there is another moderate Islamic organization in Indonesia known as Muhammadiyah, which is a social organization in the form of an association that operates in the area of *da'wah amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, and *tajdid* which is enlightenment, sourced from the Al-Quran and Sunnah. Besides being known as a religious organization, Muhammadiyah is also known as an organization that plays an active role in the humanitarian field (Azhar, 2017). The existence of the General Misery Helper Hospital (PKU) is a tangible form of humanitarian activity that focuses on health and humanitarian services, especially assisting in disaster and humanitarian issues.

In 2010, when the Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah Congress, a Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC) was formed as an institution owned by Muhammadiyah to carry out universal humanitarian activities and engage specifically in the field of disaster for disaster risk reduction (Baidhaw, 2015). The involvement of Muhammadiyah through MDMC, is not only involved in domestic humanitarian activities but is also actively involved in humanitarian activities outside national borders, one of which is the Middle East which is an area of prolonged conflict. MDMC is an organization that has been internationally recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) where

MDMC already has an Emergency Medical Team (EMT) standard that meets WHO standards. This makes it possible for MDMC to carry out disaster response and activities internationally (Nuryana & Fauzi, 2020). EMT is a group of healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses, paramedics, etc.) who care for patients affected by an emergency or disaster. They come from the government, NGO, the military and international organizations such as the International Red Cross/Red Crescent movement.

Muhammadiyah collaborates with the Indonesian government and Indonesian humanitarian agencies to provide humanitarian assistance. This is done to distribute existing humanitarian aid optimally. Muhammadiyah also provides health assistance, improves educational facilities, builds peace markets, and provides assistance to Middle Eastern citizens. Muhammadiyah also urged the United Nations to address the problem of the protracted Middle East conflict.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative case study approach. A case study is a research that focuses intensively on one particular object which is studied as a case. The case study method allows the researcher to remain holistic and significant. It is also a descriptive method of examining the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought or a class of events in the present. The purpose of this descriptive case based research was to make a systematic, actual and accurate descriptive, picture or painting about the facts, characteristics and relationships between the phenomena being investigated. The data collection techniques in this study were interviews, library research, and documentation. The research subjects in this study were moderate Islamic organizations NU and Muhammadiyah. The Miles and Huberman model was used for data analysis involving research procedures starting from data collection, data presentation, data condensation, and drawing conclusions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

About Muhammadiyah

Muhammadiyah is an Islamic movement that was founded by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan in 1330H or to coincide with 1912M (Tarsupon, 2021). This

movement was born in Kauman Yogyakarta, a village next to the Yogyakarta Kraton. As the name implies, Kauman is a village that contains many people or religious experts. Thus Muhammadiyah was born in the midst of a society that adheres to Islam. However, Islam that runs in Muslim society in general, including the kauman people in it, is Islam which in Kyai Dahlan's view has not only been acculturated with Javanese culture, but more, is Islam which has been confined by Javanese cultural hegemony. The presence of Muhammadiyah is a form of resistance to the Islamic practice that is considered wrong. At least two things that can explain the life of Muslims at that time, first, Islam is understood as a ritual religion that will provide salvation for hereafter. The Islamic teachings practiced by people do not touch the developing social problems. Even though there are many religious experts, there are also many Islamic boarding schools, but the development of Islamic scholarship only revolves around issues of science itself, most of which are linguistics (*nahwu, shorof*), fiqh worship and faith issues that do not touch the actual problems of the community (Damami, 2000). Second, is the reality of lag of Muslims in the social, politic and economic fields which makes Muslims as marginalized people who do not participate in determining the direction of community change (Damami, 2000).

During the initial stages of its establishment, Muhammadiyah was really able to carry out these changes. The ideas brought by Muhammadiyah were able to refresh the lives of the people against ignorance and poverty, against oppression and injustice. Muhammadiyah at the forefront of the ummah, guided and empowered the ummah towards a more enlightened life. Even in that context, Muhammadiyah currently had thousands of business charities in many sectors of social life that continue to serve to build Indonesian society. H. Musthofa Kamal Pasha and H. Ahmad Adaby Darban, SU believed that Muhammadiyah had 3 identities, the Islamic Movement, the Islamic Da'wah Movement and the Tajdid Movement (Latief & Nashir, 2020). Various business charities that exist are tajdid artifacts donated by Muhammadiyah, because in the early days of Muhammadiyah's establishment, Muslims almost did not build business charities as Muhammadiyah did.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)

NU was established on January 31, 1926, as a representative of traditionalist ulama, with the ideology of *Ahlu Sunnah waljamaah*. The figures who played a role in its development included K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, K.H. Wahab Hasbullah

and the ulama at that time when reform activities had begun to expand. The ulamas were not so organized but they already had a very strong relationship with each other. There were party celebrations such as *haul*, the anniversary of the death of a kiyai, periodically gathering of kiyai and the community or their former pesantren students who are now widespread throughout the archipelago (Purwanto, 2019). The establishment of NU cannot be separated from efforts to maintain the teachings of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah* (aswaja). This teaching is sourced from the Qur'an, Sunnah, *Ijma'* (the decisions of the previous scholars), and *Qiyas* (cases that exist in the stories of the Qur'an and Hadith) as quoted by Marijan from K.H. Mustofa Bisri, which has 3 substances: (1) in the fields of Islamic law he adheres to one of the teachings of the four madhhabs (Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i, and Hanbali), which in practice the kiyai of NU strongly adhere to the Syafi'i school of thought. (2) In the matter of monotheism (One God), he adheres to the teachings of Imam Abu Hasan Al-Asy'ari and Imam Abu Mansur Al-Maturidhi. (3) in the field of Sufism, he adheres to the basic teachings of Imam Abu Qosim Al Junaidi (Laode, 2004).

The process of consolidating the Sunni schools of thought is evolutionary. Sunni thought in the field of theology is eclectic, that is, choosing one correct opinion. Hasan Al-Basri (d. 110 H/728), a prominent Sunni figure in the Qada and Qadar issues concerning human matters, chose the Qodariyah opinion, while in the case of the perpetrators of major sins he chose the Murji'ah opinion which stated that the perpetrator had become a kufr, only his faith is still (*fasiq*). This thought developed by Hasan Al-Basri was actually later reduced to the thoughts of *Ahlu sunnah waljama'ah* (Fealy & Bush, 2014).

With the ideological direction of *Ahlu Sunnah waljamaah*, it was established with basic reasons, including: First, the power of the Dutch colonialists to undermine the potential of Islam has given birth to a sense of responsibility for the ulama to maintain the purity and nobility of Islamic teachings. Second, the sense of responsibility of the ulama as leaders of the people to fight for independence and free from the shackles of the invaders. Third, the sense of responsibility of the ulama to maintain the peace and peace of the Indonesian nation (Sholikah, Syukur, & Junaedi, 2021). NU is an organization that emphasizes the nature of ulama in the sense that its organizational management consists of scholars or kiyai. While the ulama and kiyai themselves generally work in the permanent agricultural sector, even if they do trade their mobility is less intensive like most traders outside Java. Since last century the kiyai have been an important part of the traditional life of

rural farmers.

NU must design an optimal work program and build a clear vision and mission to realize the right social order. Jam'iyah Nahdlatul Ulama' or NU organization is a community organization (ORMAS) as a means of struggle for the Alim Ulama' to carry out Islamic teachings that are leaning towards one of the four schools of thought (Hamami, 2021). So, Nahdlatul Ulama established itself as the overseer of tradition by maintaining the teachings of the Syafi'i schools that are embraced by most Muslims throughout the archipelago. In addition, NU pays special attention to economic activities, areas related to the lives of Kyai who are sometimes land owners, communities and traders (Feillard, 1999).

So based on its history, Nahdlatul Ulama did stand as a form of reaction from the outside (purification movement). The establishment of this organization cannot be separated from the role of the Kyai and their pesantren community, which are the main proponents of traditionalist Islamic groups. Nahdlatul Ulama is a religious organization, the Islamic organization of this organization was pioneered by kiyai who understand *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah*, as a forum for efforts to unite themselves and unite steps in the task of maintaining, preserving, developing and practicing Islamic teachings by referring to one of the madhhab imams (Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i and Hanbali) as well as serving the nation, state and Muslims.

Religion: The Power of Conflict or Peace?

Religion has long been marginalized in the study and practice of modern international relations. In the historical perspective of European diplomacy, the Westphalia treaty of 1648 is referred to as beginning of the momentum. On the other hand, the practice of real politics or power politics or match politics based on interests dominates. This can be observed, for example, from the fact that realism (and not idealism) in international politics is the dominant perspective of international relations. However, throughout history, religion has shaped significant political identities and played an important role in global politics (Fitzgerald, 2015).

The 21st century also makes us aware of the issue of religion again in the study of international relations. The end of the civil war, the publication of Huntington's *clash of civilization* articles, and the tragedy of September 11, 2001, were cited by many as factors that contributed to it. This means that, along with global developments, religion is increasingly believed to have a role in

international relations. Even today, religion is seen as a source of identity that is increasingly competing with citizenship in gaining community loyalty.

Religion is a transnational phenomenon that is like two sides of a coin which has the potential to create harmony and conflict (Kegley & Witkopf, 1997). *Ghirah* (sentiment) of religion so easily resonates into a force that spreads to all corners of the earth with an immeasurable amount. The influence of religion in international relations as stated in Jonathan Fox's work, *The Multiple Impacts of Religion on International Relations: Perceptions and Reality* (Fox, 2006), includes four things, sources of legitimacy for states and their opponents, religious world view, local religious conflicts are international issues, transnational religious phenomena and issues. Therefore, the influence of religion in international politics is inevitable. However, if we use the perspective of instrumentalism in looking at the role of religion in conflict as represented by thinkers such as Dieter Senghaas for example, in fact, religion is rarely the original variable that causes conflict (Werkner, 2010). What happens a lot is the fact that religion is exploited for political, economic, and social purposes so that it triggers conflict. In line with this is the view that religion often plays an important role in war, but in fact it is rarely the cause (Atran & Ginges, 2012).

Meanwhile, Shireen T. Hunter in the article *Religion and International Affairs: From Neglect to Over-Emphasis* mentions that religion affects international relations in the same way as other value systems and ideologies, by influencing the behavior of states and non-state actors. In other words, religion plays the same role as other ideologies to legitimize policy decisions and garner popular support for those policies (Hunter, 2010). According to each political system, the influence of religion can be traced to the activities of religious groups, which are aimed at influencing the behavior of the state in a democratic system, as well as to the tendencies of key political leaders. Religion has influenced the behavior of international actors but is not decisive.

In relation to religion and international security as described above, attention to various religious groups and their activities becomes important. Many analyzes and even policies then dichotomize between radical and moderate groups. In the last two decades, we have seen greater attention, especially after the 9/11 tragedy, various terrorist groups were mentioned a lot, for example in Colin S. Gray's book *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History* (Gray, 2013).

In context, unfortunately, it is rare for moderate groups to be mentioned.

There seems to be a tendency to see religion and religious groups solely in the dimensions of the source of conflict. Whereas as stated by Appleby “*the facts suggest a dual legacy of organized religion, a tremendous potential for violence as well as extraordinary resources for reconciliation*” (Appleby, 2003). This means that there has actually been a growing awareness of the many positive spaces that religion plays in the context of harmony and peace. The role of religion as an inspiration for peace can also be read for example in Nathan Huber’s essay (Nathan, n.d.).

Another example of the role of this moderate group is in the book *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile* edited by Pavlos Hatzopoulos and Fabio Petito (Hatzopoulos & Petito, 2003). The book contains the article *Islam and the West: Muslim Voices of Dialogue* by John L. Esposito and John O. Vol which also discusses the roles of Anwar Ibrahim from Malaysia and Abdurrahman Wahid from Indonesia. Another book that deals with moderate groups is *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, edited by Jan Melissen (Melissen, 2005). The book contains a chapter on *Dialogue-based Public Diplomacy: a New Foreign Policy Paradigm?* by Shaun Riordan.

In terms of Indonesian Muslims, at least two major religious organizations are often identified with moderate groups, NU and Muhammadiyah. Their existence as the largest group in Indonesia causes their political attitudes and behavior to be considered in the international realm. They often carry out second-track diplomacy to help deal with several international security problems.

The Role of Muhammadiyah in Reducing Middle East Conflict

Muhammadiyah believes that Islam is the foundation and center of inspiration that is integrated in the veins of the movement. Islam is a message brought by various prophets ending with the Prophet, Muhammad SAW. Islam contains teachings in the form of commands and prohibitions as well as instructions for the safety of life. Islam is a religion that contains the values of progress to realize the life of an enlightened people. Progress in the view of Islam is the all-important goodness, which gives birth to the superiority of physical and spiritual life.

Muhammadiyah Central Executive (PP) is one of the Islamic organizations in the country which was founded by KH Ahmad Dahlan. This organization always combines two main strengths in running its organization, namely activism and intellectualism. Not only taking part domestically, Muhammadiyah also

continues to improve so that it can contribute more actively and bigger at the global level. The organization also continues to seek to expand the two powers to the global arena. *Rahmatan lil 'alamin* is a peace owned by Muhammadiyah. It cannot be denied, at this time Muhammadiyah has been able to show its dignity in the international Islamic world.

Muhammadiyah's internationalization efforts have not actually taken place in the past decade or two, but have actually started since the time of Kiai Ahmad Dahlan. General Chairperson of the Muhammadiyah Central Executive Haedar Nashir said that the roots of Muhammadiyah's internationalization were personally sparked when Kiai Ahmad Dahlan came into contact with Abduh's thoughts. In helping to create world peace, Muhammadiyah has done various things, including resolving conflicts in Central Africa, Palestine, the Rohingya Muslim Conflict, etc. In resolving the Middle East conflict, Muhammadiyah was actively involved in sending aid, for example in the Palestinian conflict, through a program, Muhammadiyah AID, continues to distribute aid to Palestine which is more focused on education. Muhammadiyah also provides scholarships to students studying at the Gaza Islamic University. In addition, Muhammadiyah also provides assistance during the Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha parcel programs, and helps those injured by Israeli gunfire.

Not stopping there, Muhammadiyah also designed an aid program for Palestine which consisted of three stages. In the first stage in the form of an emergency response, in this phase the first phase of assistance focuses on humanitarian assistance. Muhammadiyah will provide medical assistance, ambulances, and all kinds of humanitarian needs in the health sector. In the second stage, the development phase, which focuses on the development of the education sector. This is done by providing scholarships to Palestinian youths who continue their education, including those who want to continue their education in Indonesia. Next is the last phase, in this phase Muhammadiyah's long-term assistance for Palestine is provided in the form of a peace building program. In simple terms, the program can be concluded as a discourse regarding peace and political support for Palestine.

*The Role of Nahdhatul Ulama in Reducing Middle East Conflict
Principles of NU's Humanitarian Diplomacy*

The two main sources of Islamic law, namely the Qur'an and Hadith, clearly stimulate Muslims to engage in humanitarian action (Krafess, 2005). Even related

to concrete assistance such as zakat, infaq, and alms, everything becomes a ritual as well as an obligation. This is what makes Islam attached to the idea of humanity. As a *jam'iyah diniyah al-ijtima'iyyah* (religious and social organization), NU (Fealy & Bush, 2014). was founded on religious motives and principles and ideals, namely *izzul Islam wal muslimin* (nobleness of Islam and the Muslims) towards *rahmaan lil 'alamin* (to be a blessing for all of nature) (Parhan et al., 2020). The implication is that all attitudes, behavior and characteristics of the struggle are always adjusted and measured by legal norms and Islamic teachings. The Islamic teachings carried are the teachings of Ahlus Sunnah waljamaah (Sunni) with several basic principles such as *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, *ta'adul (i'tidal)*, *tawasuth* and *tasyawur* (deliberation) according to the basis of the Qur'an (Nadatién, 2017).

Tawasuth (moderate) is a religious attitude that is not trapped in extreme things. Al-Qur'an surah al-Baqarah verse 143 which is used as the basis states, "And thus we have made all of you (Muslims) a middle class (just and chosen) so that you become witnesses (measures of judgment) on (attitudes and actions) of mankind in general and so that Allah (SWT) may be a witness (measurement of judgment) over your (attitudes and actions) all of you." The choice of *tawasuth* attitude is based on NU's ability to find substantive values of Islam, by practicing Islamic teachings that are contextual to the needs of the people.

Tasamuh (tolerance) is essentially a religious and social attitude that accepts life as something diverse. This means respecting differences and respecting people who have different life principles. *Tawazun* (balanced or proportional) is a balance of religious and social attitudes that are willing to take into account various points of view, and then take a balanced and proportional position (Arifin, 2021). Surah al Hadid verse 25, the meaning is "Surely we have sent our messengers with clear evidence of the truth and we have sent down with them the book and balances (weights of justice) so that humans can carry out justice." If you have done *tasamuh* and *tawazun*, then people will be encouraged to do *tasyawur* (deliberation), which is to carry out dialogue in every problem solving. *I'tidal* is fair or upright regarding cognitive truth which can be interpreted as consistency in upholding religious truth in the right methodological way. Surah al-Maidah verse 9 that mean, "O you who believe, let all of you be those who stand up for (the truth) because Allah is a just witness (measurement of truth). And let not your hatred of a people make you unjust. Do justice because justice is closer to piety. And fear Allah, for Allah is All-Seer of what you do." (Terjemahan, 2015).

What do these principles mean in a human context? Some of these principles according to As'ad Said Ali are essentially operational values that embody the great mission of Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (Sayekti, 2021). Furthermore, according to him, with this principle, the Islamic movement is not limited to its own group. On the other hand, the perfection of Islam can be seen because it can embrace all problems that are outside the limits of its existence. The paradigm of Islamic struggle for the nation, for society, and for the benefit of all of these is the greatest modality that can be used to solve problems.

The implication for plural social relations is that the attitude developed is tolerance to different groups, and views that inter-group relations must be based on mutual respect and appreciation. The social behavior of NU citizens is to uphold Islamic norms by prioritizing common interests, upholding brotherhood, work values and achievements as well as knowledge. In the political realm, upholding democratic values, being constitutional and enforcing the law. In the field of culture, being proportional-normative in the sense of responding to culture with the size of legal values and religious teachings and not dealing with culture a priori (Thoyyib & Endang, 2007).

An understanding of the essence or substance of religion, as well as mastery of the horizons of thought of various schools of thought in Islam gave NU a broad perspective and behavior. According to Rois 'Aam KH. Sahal Mahfudz, NU has the character of elasticity and flexibility. Fiqh as knowledge of Islamic law must be seen as *ijtihad* (human thoughts and interpretations of texts). Construction of religious teachings through fiqh also allows it to change if the existing fiqh texts, for example, are irrelevant or do not lead to justice. In a wider realm, including in international relations, for example, these principles serve as inspiration for the realization of moderate Islam and peace, which is certainly in line with humanitarian principles. The universal ideals of Islam itself in NU's view can essentially be summarized in *maqhasidus sharia*, namely *hifdzud-din* (maintaining religion), *hifdzul-aql* (maintaining freedom of thought), *hifdzul-mal* (maintaining property), *hifdzun nafs* (maintaining the right to life), and *hifdzun nasb*. (maintain the right to develop offspring) (Maslul, 2020).

The implication is that every season is actually required to have a high sensitivity to humanity. One of the words of the prophet that is often quoted in relation to this human value is *unshur akhaka dzaliman au madzlukan* (help your brother either when he commits injustice or when he is wronged). This is also a theological basis that is not only devoted to other Muslims (in line with the

principle of impartiality, namely carrying out humanitarian actions without discrimination against any identity). The verse of the Qur'an that is often associated with this is Surah al Hujurat 13 that God made humans from male and female, and made humans into nations and tribes to know each other. Classical works of the yellow book in the NU tradition or several books such as *Islamic Spirituality Perspective Islamic Boarding School* (Aziz, 2021). Sufism as Social Criticism: Putting Islam as Inspiration Not Aspiration (Pohl, 2006), at least can strengthen that principles that are in line with humanity are inherent in the NU tradition. In Hasyim Muzadi's view, these principles also become a distinctive social character as well as NU's capital in dealing with the wider community (Pratama, 2021).

This modality in turn plays a very important role in building *ukhuwwah islamiyah* (brotherhood among Muslims) and *ukhuwwah wathoniyyah* (brotherhood among the nation's children) so that they can work hand in hand to maintain harmony between religious communities, as well as *ukhuwwah insaniyah/basyariah* (brotherhood of fellow human beings). At this point it is clear how the value of humanity occupies a very central position as an inseparable part of the religious attitude of a Muslim. At the global level, this modality also makes NU the nation's ambassador in introducing to various parts of the world the teachings of Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamiin*.

The Role of NU in Diplomacy

In NU's experience, at the national level, we see that these are some of the principles that encourage the presence of attitudes and behaviors that respect pluralism, non-violence, and respect for minorities. This was seen, for example, in the spectacular decisions of the NU Alim Ulama National Conference (1983) and the 27th NU Congress in Situbondo. At that time (1984), NU bravely accepted Pancasila as the only principle, ahead of any other community organization in Indonesia. In fact, KH Achmad Shiddiq as Rais Aam of the NU Executive Board at that time stated that the Pancasila state was the final form of the efforts of Muslims to establish a state (Riza, 2011). At various stages of the nation's development, NU's attitude has also been consistent in synergizing religion and nationalism, and not contradicting them. In the context of Indonesia's plurality, this attitude is very meaningful considering the huge potential of its followers.

At the global level, particularly in the Middle East, these principles also guide

an active role in line with human values. NU has emerged on the global scene by campaigning for Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. The meaning of mercy for the whole world is according not only to Muslims, but also to non-Muslims or even non-believers.

As a socio-religious organization, in reality NU cannot be separated from political issues, both nationally and internationally. In this case, it will be discussed specifically about NU's diplomatic role. As one of the largest organizations, the diplomatic role is not a strange thing. Because in theory and practice, when the first line of diplomatic missions, namely the state as the main role, fails, often a non-state actor will step in to help the state (Mapendere, 2002). NU is certainly helping the government carry out diplomatic missions. In fact, the diplomatic missions that run are often not an extension of the government, but purely as the interests of Muslims in particular and mankind in general. In accordance with the purpose of the establishment of NU, for the realization of a just society for the benefit, welfare of the people and for the creation of mercy for the universe (Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama, n.d.). This can be seen from the beginning of NU's birth as an organization. In fact, one of the backgrounds for the formation of this organization was a diplomatic mission called the Hijaz Committee. Diplomatic missions carried out long before the birth of Indonesia (Hamami, 2021).

The Hijaz Committee is a mission to send a delegation of NU clerics to face the new rulers of the Hijaz (Saudi Arabia). The delegation was tasked with conveying thoughts and suggestions from NU clerics to oppose and stop the actions of the Wahhabis. The Wahhabis at that time were incessantly oppressing the *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah* and destroying the historical sites of Muslims. (Zamharir et al., 2020) In addition to the diplomacy of the Hijaz Committee, NU also actively contributed both during the pre-independence and post-independence periods in order to achieve state stability. Regarding domestic affairs, NU has been actively involved in providing input to the government, such as when the Indonesian government faced the events of the San Francisco agreement and the liberation of West Irian. In the international, NU also plays a major role in global peace efforts. This role can be seen when NU actively initiates, organizes, and leads various meetings and conferences such as the Asian-African Islamic Conference, the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), and initiates the implementation of the International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS) and the International Summit of the Moderates Islamic Leader (ISOMIL) (Pratama, 2021).

In the reform era, NU's efforts with the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs were to actively hold a series of interfaith dialogues in the 2004-2006 period. Institutionally, NU has also formed the International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS) or the World Conference of Muslim Scholars. Several successful conferences were held, among others, the first on 23-25 February 2004, the second on 20-23 June 2006, and the third 29 July-1 August 2008. ICIS can be called as *Rahmatan Lil 'alamin's* efforts to Globalize Islam (Muhammad, Rijal, & Yumitro, 2018). Through his international tours, this campaign was also spread to Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Palestine-Israel, Pakistan, Vatican, European Union, UK, Germany, Australia, America, and the United Nations.

The strategies used include explaining about Islam *Rahmatan Lil 'alamin* so as to reduce misunderstandings and Islamophobia (America), shuttle diplomacy taking turns and successively meeting and encouraging the warring parties to return to the path of dialogue and negotiation (Palestine-Israel), meeting with conflicting parties and encourage dialogue to reduce the Sunni-Shia sectarian conflict (Syria, Lebanon, Iran) by promoting *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Syarifudin & Kholis, 2021), rallying support for George W. Bush's anti-attack to Iraq (Vatican, European Union), urging international bodies to facilitate and mediate dialogue between civilizations, sending young workers from Islamic boarding schools (to England) to take part in education management training and further studies as well as to introduce other cultures, express sympathy and visit the families of the victims of the first Bali Bombing and explain NU's anti-terrorism stance (Australia) and promote cooperation in education.

In addition, there was appreciation received from NU's efforts to help free 12 South Koreans by Afghanistan Taliban fighters (29/8/2007). Trust and appreciation are also obtained from efforts to bridge the Pattani conflict in Thailand. The approach to the parties including the ulema through several meetings and discussions finally yielded results. The role of large mass organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah in supporting peace efforts is considered to be a supporting factor for the success of Indonesia's diplomacy (Baiq, n.d.).

4. CONCLUSION

Both NU and Muhammadiyah are Islamic religious organizations, who are making efforts to act as forums for practicing Islamic teaching and resolving regional conflicts with the help of these teachings. The NU is the Islamic

organization pioneered by kiyai who understand Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah, as a forum for efforts to unite themselves and unite steps in the task of maintaining, preserving, developing and practicing Islamic teachings by referring to one of the madhhab imams (Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i and Hambali) as well as serving the nation, state and Muslims. Muhammadiyah was born in the midst of a society that adheres to Islam. The presence of Muhammadiyah is a form of resistance to the Islamic practice that is considered wrong. The ideas brought by Muhammadiyah are able to refresh the lives of the people against ignorance and poverty, against oppression and injustice. Muhammadiyah is at the forefront of the ummah, guiding and empowering the ummah towards a more enlightened life. Muhammadiyah has 3 identities, that are the Islamic Movement, the Islamic Da'wah Movement and the Tajdid Movement.

In helping to create world peace, Muhammadiyah has done several of things, including resolving conflicts in Central Africa, Palestine, the Rohingya Muslim Conflict, etc. In resolving the Middle East conflict, Muhammadiyah was actively involved in sending aid, for example in the Palestinian conflict, Muhammadiyah formed Muhammadiyah AID. Through this program, Muhammadiyah continued to distribute aid to Palestine which is more focused on education. Muhammadiyah also provides scholarships to students studying at the Gaza Islamic University. In the international arena, NU also played a major role in global peace efforts. This role can be seen when NU actively initiated, organized, or led various meetings and conferences, and interfaith dialogues in the 2004-2006 period. NU also formed the International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS) or the Ulama Conference. and World Muslim Scholars. ICIS can be called as *Rahmatan Lil 'alamin's* efforts to Globalize Islam. Through his international tours, this campaign has also spread to Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Palestine-Israel, Pakistan, Vatican, European Union, UK, Germany, Australia, America, and the United Nations.

REFERENCES

- Agustinova, D. E. (2013). Latar Belakang dan Masa Depan Libya Pasca Arab Spring. *SOCIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.21831/socia.v10i2.5348>
- Aminah, A. N. (2018). *Kemenlu: Islam Nusantara Aset Diplomasi Indonesia*. Republika. <https://khazanah.republika.co.id/berita/pjj4oh384/kemenlu-islam-nusantara-aset-diplomasi-indonesia>

- Appleby, R. S. (2003). The ambivalence of the sacred: Religion, violence, and reconciliation. *Pro Ecclesia*, 12(1), 116-118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106385120301200112>
- Arifin, S. (2021). The Implementation of At-Tawazun Counseling New Normal Era. *KONSELING RELIGI Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Islam*, 19(1), 14-29. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/kr.v12i1.8646>
- Atran, S., & Ginges, J. (2012). Religious and sacred imperatives in human conflict. *Science*, 336(6083), 855-857. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1216902>
- Azhar, M. (2017). The new Muhammadiyah values for the postmodern Muslim world. *International Journal of Development Research*, 7(3), 12206-12211. <https://www.journalijdr.com/new-muhammadiyah-values-postmodern-muslim-world>
- Aziz, A. A. (2021). Analysis Of Literature Review On Spiritual Concepts According To The Perspectives Of The Al-Quran, Hadith And Islamic Scholars. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)*, 12(9), 3152-3159. <https://doi.org/10.17762/turcomat.v12i9.4790>
- Baidhaw, Z. (2015). The role of faith-based organization in coping with disaster management and mitigation: Muhammadiyah's Experience. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 9(2), 167-194. <https://dx.doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2015.9.2.167-194>
- Baiq, W. (n.d.). *Thailand Selatan, Sukses Diplomasi Indonesia*. Jawa Pos.
- Damami, M. (2000). *Akar Gerakan Muhammadiyah*. Fajar Pustaka Baru.
- Fealy, G., & Bush, R. (2014). The political decline of traditional ulama in Indonesia: the state, umma and Nahdlatul Ulama. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 42(5), 536-560. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04205004>
- Feillard, A. (1999). *NU Vis a Vis Negara; Pencarian Isi, Bentuk Dan Makna*. LKiS Pelangi Aksara.
- Fitzgerald, T. (2015). Critical religion and critical research on religion: Religion and politics as modern fictions. *Critical Research on Religion*, 3(3), 303-319. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050303215613123>
- Fox, J. (2006). The multiple impacts of religion on international relations: Perceptions and reality. *Politique étrangère*, (4), 1059-1071. https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_PE_064_1059--the-multiple-impacts-of-religion-on.htm
- Gray, C. S. (2013). *War, peace and international relations: an introduction to strategic history*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203180952>

- Halliday, F. (2005). *The Middle East in international relations: power, politics and ideology*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790829>
- Hamami, T. (2021). Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama Education: Two main pillars of national education in Indonesia. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 18(2), 307-330. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2021.182-06>
- Hatzopoulos, P., & Petite, F. (2003). *Religion in international relations: the return from exile*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403982360>
- Hunter, S. (2010). *Iran's foreign policy in the post-Soviet era: resisting the new international order*. ABC-CLIO. <https://www.abc-clio.com/products/a2618c>
- Johnston, D. (2009). *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Bridging the Religious Divide*. Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy. <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/faith-based-diplomacy-bridging-the-religious-divide>
- Kegley, C. W., & Witkopf, E. R. (1997). *Global Politics: Trend and Transformation* (6th ed.). St martin Pressl.
- Krafess, J. (2005). The influence of the Muslim religion in humanitarian aid. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 87(858), 327-342. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383100181378>
- Laode, I. (2004). *NU Muda*. Erlangga.
- Latief, H., & Nashir, H. (2020). Local dynamics and global engagements of the Islamic modernist movement in contemporary Indonesia: The case of Muhammadiyah (2000-2020). *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(2), 290-309. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420910514>
- Maghfuri, A. (2019). Countering Conservative-Radical Understanding By Mainstreaming Moderat Islam and the Role of Educational Institution in Indonesia. *Sunan Kalijaga International Journal on Islamic Educational Research*, 3(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.14421/skijier.2019.2019.31.01>
- Mapendere, J. (2002). *Defining Track One and a Half Diplomacy: Its Complementarity and the Analysis of Factors that Facilitate Its Success*. Royal Roads University. <https://www.nlc-bnc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk3/ftp04/mq64769.pdf>
- Maslul, S. (2020). Hifdzuddin and the guarantee of freedom of indigenous belief on indonesian identity card/ktp. *Jurnal Al-Dustur*, 3(2), 136-146. <https://doi.org/10.30863/jad.v3i2.905>
- Melissen, J. (2005). *The New Public Diplomacy*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931>

- Muhammad, B. A., Rijal, N. K., & Yumitro, G. (2018). The Roles of International Conference of Islamic Scholar (ICIS) in Conflict Resolution of South Thailand. *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, 76, 71-77. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JLPG/article/view/44080>
- Nadatién, I. (2017). The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Shared Values in Optimizing Lecturers Organizational Pride in University ff Nahdlatul Ulama. *Dama International Journal of Researchers (DIJR)*, 2(4), 10-17. <http://repository.unusa.ac.id/id/eprint/1728>
- Nathan, H. (n.d.). *Religion and International Peacemaking*.
- Nuryana, Z., & Fauzi, N. A. F. (2020). The Fiqh of disaster: The mitigation of covid-19 in the perspective of Islamic education-neuroscience. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 51, 101848. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2020.101848>
- Parhan, M., Islamy, M. R. F., Budiyantri, N., Nugraha, R. H., & Hyangsewu, P. (2020). Responding to Islamophobia by Internalizing the Value of Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin through Using the Media. *Islam Realitas: Journal of Islamic and Social Studies*, 6(2), 137-149. http://dx.doi.org/10.30983/islam_realitas.v6i2.3695
- Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama. (n.d.). *Anggaran Dasar dan Anggaran Rumah Tangga*.
- Pohl, F. (2006). Islamic education and civil society: Reflections on the pesantren tradition in contemporary Indonesia. *Comparative Education Review*, 50(3), 389-409. <https://doi.org/10.1086/503882>
- Pratama, E. G. (2021). Religion and Public Diplomacy: The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Indonesia-Afghanistan Peace Agenda. *Jurnal Penelitian*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v18i1.3470>
- Purwanto, M. R. (2019). Inclusivity of Lecturers with Nahdlatul Ulama Background in Political and Religious Views in Indonesia. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 9(10), 94-103. https://ijicc.net/images/vol9iss10/91015_Purwanto_2019_E_R.pdf
- Riza, A. K. (2011). Contemporary fatawa of Nahdlatul Ulama: between observing the madhhab and adapting the context. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 5(1), 35-65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15642/IIIS.2011.5.1.35-65>
- Sayekti, R. (2021). Applying the concept of rahmatan lil alamin in publication: A transdisciplinary perspective on scientific publication literacy and practices in Indonesian universities. *College & Research Libraries News*, 82(11), 513. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.n.82.11.513>

- Sholikah, S., Syukur, F., & Junaedi, M. (2021). Islamic Higher Education Branding in The Coastal Area Perspective of Hermawan Kartajaya's PDB Triangle Theory. *Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam*, 16(1), 79-96. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v16i1.8229>
- Syarifudin, M., & Kholis, N. (2021). Towards Rahmatan lil'Alamin Economy (Analysis of Ukhuwah Islamiyah and Ashabiah for Economic Development in Medina). *IQTISHODUNA: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam*, 10(1), 59-76. <https://doi.org/10.36835/iqtishoduna.v10i1.955>
- Tarsupon, T. (2021). Learning Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah by Using Blended Learning in the New Normal at MTs Muhammadiyah Lubuk Jambi. *Ruhama: Islamic Education Journal*, 4(2), 145-158. <https://doi.org/10.31869/ruhama.v4i2.2845>
- Terjemahan, A.-Q. (2015). *Departemen Agama RI*. CV Darus Sunnah.
- Thoyyib, & Endang, T. (2007). *Islam Ahlussunnah Waljamaah: Sejarah, Pemikiran dan Dinamika Nahdlatul Ulama*. Pustaka Maarif NU.
- Werkner, I.-J. (2010). Religion and its importance in international politics: a case study of 2008 Russian-Georgian war. *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 4(3), 237-248. <http://cria-online.org/religion-and-its-importance-in-international-politics-a-case-study-of-2008-russian-georgian-war>
- Zamharir, H., Dja'far, T. M., Lubis, S., & Sadiyahunnimah, S. (2020). Elite Deliberation As Deliberative Democracy: Experience of Walisongo and Nahdlatul Ulama in Nusantara/Indonesia. *Journal of Social Political Sciences*, 1(4), 285-297. <http://e-journal.unas.ac.id/index.php/jsps/article/view/31>