

Religious Moderation in Public Spaces: An Epistemological Study of Islamic Understanding in Indonesia

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Abstract

In general, the dynamics of Islamic understanding in the Indonesian public sphere are characterized by two major tendencies: the contextualist and the exclusive-textualist orientations. The contextualist approach interprets Islamic teachings dialogically in relation to local culture and social realities, while the exclusive-textualist orientation understands Islam literally based on the foundational meaning of Qur'anic texts. The contestation between these two tendencies reveals that Islam encompasses both private (individual) and public (social) dimensions. However, the absence of clear epistemological boundaries often leads to the imposition of private values upon the public sphere or the politicization of religion in social life. Departing from this problem, this study aims to formulate the epistemology of Indonesian Islamic moderation in the public sphere. The research employs a qualitative approach grounded in Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and deliberative public space. Data were analyzed through literature review, academic documents, and contemporary religious discourses, emphasizing the relationship between religion, public rationality, and interpretive authority. The findings indicate that Indonesian Islam requires a reconstructed epistemology of moderation capable of proportionally bridging the private and public dimensions. This epistemology situates Islamic values within a communicative and dialogical rational framework, ensuring that religious expression in the public sphere remains inclusive, argumentative, and transformative. Religious moderation is therefore understood as an epistemic foundation that promotes social harmony and constructive contributions to national life.

Keywords: *Epistemology, Islamic Moderation, Public Sphere, Communicative Action, Deliberation.*

Abstrak

Secara umum, dinamika pemahaman Islam di ruang publik Indonesia diwarnai oleh dua kecenderungan utama, yakni corak kontekstualis dan eksklusif-tekstualis. Corak kontekstualis menafsirkan ajaran Islam secara dialogis dengan budaya lokal dan realitas



sosial, sedangkan corak eksklusif-tekstualis memahami Islam secara literal berdasarkan makna dasar teks al-Qur'an. Pergulatan keduanya menunjukkan bahwa Islam memiliki dimensi privat (individual) dan publik (sosial). Namun, ketiadaan batas epistemologis yang jelas sering menimbulkan pemaksaan nilai privat ke ruang publik atau politisasi agama dalam kehidupan sosial. Berangkat dari problem tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan merumuskan epistemologi moderasi Islam Indonesia di ruang publik. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan kerangka teori tindakan komunikatif dan deliberasi ruang publik Jürgen Habermas. Data dianalisis melalui kajian literatur, dokumen akademik, dan diskursus keagamaan kontemporer, dengan menekankan relasi agama, rasionalitas publik, dan otoritas penafsiran. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Islam Indonesia memerlukan konstruksi epistemologi moderasi yang mampu menjembatani dimensi privat dan publik secara proporsional. Epistemologi ini menempatkan nilai-nilai Islam dalam kerangka rasionalitas komunikatif dan dialogis, sehingga ekspresi keagamaan di ruang publik bersifat inklusif, argumentatif, dan transformatif. Moderasi beragama dipahami sebagai fondasi epistemik yang mendorong harmoni sosial dan kontribusi konstruktif bagi kehidupan kebangsaan.

Keywords: *Epistemologi, Moderasi Islam, Ruang Publik, Tindakan Komunikatif, Deliberasi.*

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a brand of a rule designed by God as a guide for mankind in carrying out life activities in the world. Because it is dedicated to humans, God as the designer of the rules is actively involved in having a dialogue with his ideas with the phenomena of human life. The statement above shows that religion is basically a study or the result of the creation of the creator (God) who makes his creation (human) as the object of study. As a rule, absolutely religion must be understood, known, and felt by humans as its target.

As a consequence of the theo-anthropocentric study, various religious significances were born from socio-religious thinkers. EB Tylor calls religion a form of belief in spiritual beings. Radcliffe Brown, an anthropologist, calls religion as an expression of dependence on forces outside of oneself, or familiarly referred to as moral or spiritual forces. This statement was confirmed and clarified by a contemporary American sociologist named Yinger by calling religion a system of belief and worship used by various nations in overcoming social problems.¹ This concept is emphasized and classified by Emile Durkheim, that religion is a social fact which consists of two dimensions, namely the profane and sacred dimensions.² The profanity of religion boils down to the element of concreteness which includes the order of world life. For example, earning a living, seeking knowledge, managing family life and communicating with neighbors. The sacredness of religion by Durkheim is referred to as totemism, namely the practice of religious rituals oriented to the search for something abstract. This duality element

¹ Prof Dr Raghieb As-Sirjani, *Sumbangan Peradaban Islam Pada Dunia* (Pustaka Al Kautsar, n.d.)123.

² José Juan Osés Bermejo, "Durkheim, Religion, and the Postcolonial Critique of Sociology's Eurocentrism," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 24, no. 3 (2024): 193–223, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X231186756>.

is what Durkheim calls the basis of religion. This means that human diversity is born from spiritual sensitivity that grows through the spirit of searching through rituals. Thus, it can be said that humans embrace religion not because of the compulsion of life but an awareness of the importance of life and the vibration of the soul for something sacred. The awareness in question is not individual awareness but social awareness, because it interacts with social life.

In addition to the sociologist above, Max Weber with his sociology of religion also sees religion as a rule born from the social struggles of society regarding events in the world. According to him, religion was originally born from subjective experience, and individual ideas about the nature of religion. Through this religious nature, humans who initially did not know religion became aware of the religion that radiated or was represented in the values of religiosity. In addition, the birth of religion by Weber is also suspected of having the power of religious leaders or what is called *charisma* which influences people to believe and carry out religious orders.³

Based on the above concept, it is clear that there is a moderate dialogue space to understand and disseminate and implement religious values in life. This space is what makes religion spread throughout the world, including in Indonesia or Indonesia. Because of the many religions that come and spread and become the beliefs of the people of Indonesia/Indonesia. This paper is only focused on the spread of Islam in various colors and tastes. The spread of Islam in Indonesia shows that there is a door of independence and moderation, both of which negotiate or have dialogue between the propagator or carrier of Islamic teachings and the people of Indonesia who in historical records have capitalist beliefs.

Along with the pace of the times and the development of information technology, many patterns and colors of Islamic understanding have comeed the religious life of Indonesian people. There is a pattern that tends to the right, based on very fundamental and rigid religious foundations, and is followed by coercion, discriminating against one of the different teachings, and even using physical violence. In addition, there are those who are patterned to the left by understanding religion freely and liberally by idolizing orientalist figures. Uniquely, in the midst of these two styles, they are carrying out their actions and even affecting people's lives, there are still religious beliefs that seem to maintain the moderate value of the early Islamic spirit. This understanding is familiarly called Nusantara Islam.

Through a long study and study, this paper finds a space for dialogue in Islam in Indonesia, which according to the author's assumption does not yet have a representative and

³ Iren Tanggo, "Kepemimpinan Karismatik Kagaya Ubuyashiki dalam Serial Anime Kimetsu no Yaiba Berdasarkan Perspektif Max Weber" (scholar, Institut Agama Kristen Negeri (IAKN) Toraja, 2024), https://doi.org/10/iren_lp.pdf.

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practical formula for religious moderation to be translated and implemented in today's society. It is said so, because with the emergence of Islam Indonesia still leaves questions and even rejections. Thus, the question to be answered is what is the epistemology of Indonesian Islamic moderation in the public sphere? To help answer this question, Jurgen Habermas' discourse theory will be used which emphasizes the pattern of communicative action in the public sphere. In order to avoid an epistemological break, the discussion that follows will begin by briefly presenting the patterns and concepts of the spread of early Islam to date in Indonesia, then followed by the struggle of early Islam with transnational Islam, until the birth of Nusantara Islam. At the end of the study, the concept of moderation will be offered as an effort to add and fill the empty space that does not exist in other Islamic moderation concepts.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a critical study design. This approach was chosen to allow for an in-depth understanding of the practices and theories behind the understanding of religious moderation in Indonesia as well as the different perspectives on Islam in the public sphere.⁴ To collect data in this study, several steps were taken, including: 1) Literature Study: Researchers will review various literature related to the epistemology of religious moderation, including classical Islamic texts, academic articles, and Indonesian government policies on religious moderation. 2) In-depth Interviews: Researchers will conduct interviews with religious figures, academics, policy makers, and the general public to gain their perspectives on religious moderation in the public sphere. 3) Participatory Observation: Researchers will observe social interactions in various public spaces (e.g. mosques, cultural centers, religious discussion forums) to understand the practice of religious moderation applied in everyday life.⁵

This study will use constructivist epistemology to analyze how knowledge about religious moderation is formed and understood in the Indonesian socio-cultural context. This epistemology assumes that knowledge is not objective, but rather is shaped by social and cultural interactions, and therefore, understanding of religious moderation will vary across groups and individuals. Data analysis in this study was carried out using two models, namely thematic analysis and discursive analysis models. First, thematic analysis, data obtained through interviews and observations will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The main themes related to religious moderation, such as tolerance, diversity, and social justice, will be identified and

⁴ Melyana R. Pugu dkk., *Metodologi Penelitian; Konsep, Strategi, dan Aplikasi* (PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2024).

⁵ Marinu Waruwu, "Metode Penelitian Dan Pengembangan (R&D): Konsep, Jenis, Tahapan Dan Kelebihan," *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan* 9, no. 2 (2024): 1220–30, <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v9i2.2141>.

analyzed in depth. While the discursive analysis, the researcher will analyze the discourse related to religious moderation in the political and social context of Indonesia, including the rhetoric used by the government and religious groups.⁶

This study will use the theory of religious moderation as the main theoretical framework, which refers to efforts to maintain a balance between extremism and radicalization in religion. This study will also integrate Jurgen Habermas's Communicative Action to analyze how religious moderation functions in a pluralistic Indonesian society by looking at the objectives of this study: First, to find out the interaction patterns that aim to see the actions of society as individual and social beings. That is, how private life is met with other private lives on the social stage. Second, communicating messages that aim to know the values of religion and nation that are represented in religious and national rituals. Third, public space that aims to know the priority goals and existence of society as citizens and religious people.⁷

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Moderation Movement of Nahdlatul Ulama Islam vs. Transnational

As the progressors and the guard of the existence of the social moderation diversity of Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama as Islamic organizations play an important role to spread the message of Islam Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah principle with *tasamuh, tawazun, tawasut, 'adl*.

NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) is 97 years old and in 2026, NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) dedicated to religion, nation and state has comeed a century (100 years). Statistical data released by the ISNU East Java survey revealed that NU residents in 2013 had reached 83 million people in Indonesia, and 26 million people in East Java. The data is culturally portrayed by the NU community using *Qunut, Tablil, Maulud* (Prophet's birthday), *istigotsab*, and *tabarruk* to Ulama and sholihin.⁸

Based on the data above, it is clear that the *Nahdliyyin* have done a lot and contributed to Indonesian nation and state, even in historical perspective, NU has contributed to the sustainability and defense of the Islamic practice of Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah. As a majority of Islamic organization, NU has implicitly proven its success in mobilizing and organizing the community. This success can be quantitatively proven in the number of NU management and membership from congress to congress.⁹

⁶ Sonia Isna Suratin dkk., "Epistemologi : Imre Lakatos (Program Riset) Dan Penerapan Metodologinya Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Mauriduna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2024): 2, <https://doi.org/10.37274/mauriduna.v5i2.1265>.

⁷ Zakiyah Zakiyah dkk., "Diskursus Publik Dan Relevansi Dengan Legitimasi Kekuasaan Dari Teori Habermas," *Public Sphere: Jurnal Sosial Politik, Pemerintahan Dan Hukum* 3, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.59818/jps.v3i2.807>.

⁸ Rony Zulfirman dkk., "KONTRIBUSI MUHAMMADIYAH DAN NAHDLATUL ULAMA DALAM PERKEMBANGAN PENDIDIKAN ISLAM DI INDONESIA," *JURNAL TIPS JURNAL RISET, PENDIDIKAN DAN ILMU SOSIAL* 2, no. 2 (2024): 2.

⁹ A. Fatikhul Amin Abdullah dkk., "Kontribusi Nahdlatul Ulama Terhadap Eksistensi Pendidikan Di Indonesia 1929-1973," *NAHNU: Journal of Nahdlatul Ulama and Contemporary Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1.

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The first NU congress in 1926 was attended by 96 *kyai*, the second congress was attended by 146 *kyai* and 242 congress participants. The 1928 congress was attended by 260 *kyai* and 35 branches were formed, the following year NU had 63 branches and the next congress was able to bring 1450 participants and observers. In 1933, NU residents had reached 40,000 people, a year later the Dutch government stated that 400 *kyai* had joined NU so that by 1935 NU had 67,000 members spread over 76 branches. In 1938, NU had 99 branches with 100,000 members. During the Japanese occupation, in 1942 NU had 120 branches.¹⁰

The existence of Nahdlatul Ulama as a religious organization became stronger and more focused after the 1984 congress in Situbondo which gave birth to *Khittab Nahdliyyah* which was oriented towards strengthening the organization and its goals. According to KH Ahmad Siddiq, NU organizational pattern formulated by *khittab* comprises two meanings, namely the organization as a media cooperation to achieve common goals and a shared setting process that contains mechanisms and working procedures.¹¹

Today, faced to the Nahdlatul Ulama moderation some movements that can paralyze the organization, and negate the spirit of struggle of the Nahdliyyin. These movements have socio-religious and socio-economic characteristics. First, in the socio-religious realm, NU is faced with imported Islamic groups. The group in question is an Islamic group founded by outsiders from Indonesia who is familiarly called Transnational Islam. The imported Islamic group that has recently become increasingly fertile in Indonesia is the Wahhabis who have changed their names to Salafis.¹²

One of the characteristics of *Wahhabi-Salafi* thought that is easiest to remember is the pattern of thought that is exclusively rigid textual. They understand Islam is only limited to what is written and contained in the text editor alone without any dialectic with the existing social reality. When an activity or case is not explained in the Qur'an and Hadith, the *Wahhabi* call it *bid'ah* and even include the act of *syirik*.

Wahhabi explicitly do not want the statements of the ulama who often have dialectics with the dynamics of social reality. Meanwhile, according to *Aswaja an Nahdliyyah*, with reference to the opinion of Imam al-Shafi'i in the book of al Risalah that in understanding religion there are three foundations, namely divine bayan an explanation from the Qur'an, if not found then use

¹⁰ Abdullah dkk., "Kontribusi Nahdlatul Ulama Terhadap Eksistensi Pendidikan Di Indonesia 1929-1973."

¹¹ Khamdan Safiudin dan Ita Miftakhul Jannah, "Eksistensi Organisasi Nahdlatul Ulama Dalam Partisipasi Politik Dan Pemerintahan Di Indonesia," *NAHNU: Journal of Nahdlatul Ulama and Contemporary Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1.

¹² Muhammad Ullin Nuha dan Hidayatul Maslakha, "Menelusuri Paradigma Politik Kebangsaan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Dalam Konteks Bernegara," *NAHNU: Journal of Nahdlatul Ulama and Contemporary Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1.

nabawi bayan namely an explanation from hadith and sunnah, if it is also not found, then use *bayan al aqli*, namely an explanation of the work of reason in the form of *ijma' ulama*, and *qiyas*.¹³

This textual thinking pattern causes the *Wahhabi* to often regard other groups including Nahdlatul Ulama as perpetrators of heresy, and shirk and even being sentenced to infidels. What I have said above is not merely an accusation, but is based on data showing that Wahhabis disbelieve in Muslims who are self-reliant, steadfast, and istigosah on pious people and prophets. This statement can be seen in the fatwa of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab as perpetuated by Shaykh Ahmad Al Buthami from Qothar, in a book entitled Al Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdil Wahhab, which says that:

There are three signs of a disbeliever: first, one who knows monotheism and follows it, secondly, knows shirk and leaves it, but hate those who adhere to monotheism (the Wahhabis). Third, love those who persist in shirk, namely those who allow tawassul and istigosah with pious people and prophets, then that person is also a disbeliever.

The statement above is clear that Muslims who have monotheism and apply it in life are called infidels, and Muslims who hate and criticize Wahhabis are also infidels and Muslims who are still practicing amaliyah rely on the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad (pilgrimage to the Prophet's grave), bow to the righteous, (pilgrimage to the tomb of Auliya', including Walisongo) by Wahhabis are called *kafir*.

As an effort to save moderate Islam in the bodies of *nahdliyyin* and Indonesian society, PBNU under the leadership of KH. Said Aqil Siradj, voiced *Islam Nusantara* as one of the great narratives of the 33rd Nu Congress in Jombang, East Java on 1-6 August 2015. As conveyed by KH. Said, that the Islam of Indonesia is not a new school but the face of Islam as Islam is wali sanga. Thus, Islam in Indonesia does not yet have its own concept of moderation, but only re-moderation of early Islam as practiced by *Wali Sanga* and *Nahdlatul Ulama*.¹⁴ This fact is the main motivation to reformulate the concept of Islamic moderation which can be easily understood and practiced by Indonesian Muslim community. Before presenting the Islamic moderation menu, it will begin by presenting Jurgen Habermas's theory of discourse as study material or ingredients to create an Islamic moderation menu.¹⁵

¹³ Rosidin Rosidin dan Ikil Athroz Arfan, "Ulama Pesantren Dan Upaya Penanggulangan Radikalisme Di Indonesia," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 10, no. 2 (2024): 2, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v10i2.2510>.

¹⁴ Zainil Ghulam dkk., "Da'wah 'Islam Nusantara' on NU Online and the Surrounding Argue," *Dakwatuna: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi Islam* 10, no. 1 (2024): 1, <https://doi.org/10.54471/dakwatuna.v10i1.2766>.

¹⁵ Achmad Nur, "ETIKA AGAMA NUSANTARA: STUDI KRITIS TERHADAP POLA INTERAKSI MASYARAKAT DESA KEBANGSAAN SITUBONDO," *Empirisma: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 29, no. 1 (2020): 15–28, <https://doi.org/10.30762/empirisma.v29i1.412>.

Patterns of Community Involvement in the Public Sphere: an Ethics of Habermas Discourse

As a generation of Critical Madzhab, Habermas made a new breakthrough in developing and building critical theory of his predecessors through dialogue by emphasizing the communicative paradigm. Habermas's communication paradigm is illustrated in discourse theory, which contains communicative actions and patterns of celebrating community freedom in the public sphere.

The discourse theory created by Habermas is not a new attempt to assess modern society, but rather mediates human life as a whole together towards a single goal. Accentuation of this theory is not a goal of society, but as a way or procedure to achieve goals. This theory emphasizes the praxis of communication and the radicalization of political communication procedures to reach a basic consensus that strengthens the integrity of society and the state. Thus, discourse theory is oriented towards communication procedures which are designed as a form of catalyst for several public arguments in the public sphere. The Habermas communication procedure involves several patterns of action, namely communicative action and strategic action.¹⁶

Communicative action is a rational communication pattern oriented towards consensus achievement. The mechanism of this communication is to reach agreement intersubjectively. That is, consensus is obtained based on human interaction with other humans by prioritizing the principle of negotiation, not domination. Strategic action is action oriented to success as a form of influencing action. This action makes language not as a medium of understanding but as a means of imposing will. This action gives birth to violence because agreement is reached through the path of domination.

From those actions, Habermas more appreciates communicative actions that are directed at consensus rather than strategic action to generate social coordination mechanisms. As a form of rational endeavor, communicative action has several claims of validity.¹⁷ As the basis of communication, the claim consists of firstly a truth claim, namely an argument that is objective in nature. It means that it can be proven empirically. This claim in Habermas' language is referred to as expressive human appearance. Second, the claim of honesty is an argument that is subjective according to what is felt and thought. Habermas calls it an evaluative expressive form. Habermas calls Third, the claim of accuracy is a claim that is intersubjective. It means that it is based on a mutual agreement. It is a normative action.

¹⁶ Yuliandre Darwis S.Sos dkk., *Teori Kritis Dalam Studi Komunikasi* (Prenada Media, 2024).

¹⁷ Aditya Ramadhan dkk., "ANALISIS TEORI TINDAKAN KOMUNIKATIF JURGEN HABERMAS TERHADAP KOMUNITAS PEDULI CILIWUNG DI KOTA BOGOR," *Jurnal Kajian Komputasi Inovatif* 15, no. 7 (2024): 7, <https://oaj.jurnalhst.com/index.php/jkki/article/view/270>.

After claiming validity is created in communicative action, discourse theory also considers a deliberation in the public sphere. These considerations are regulated by Habermas in a discourse procedure that includes several stages and agreements.¹⁸

- a. All subjects who are able to speak and act may participate in the discourse.
- b. Everyone has the right to dispute any opinion.
- c. Participants are welcome to express their attitudes, interests and needs.
- d. no speaker may be prevented from exercising his rights as specified in points a, b, c. some of these procedures can be streamlined into one statement that discourse must be inclusive, egalitarian, and free from domination.

Through the procedure above, it is clear that communication which was originally an individual must be recognized in the public sphere. This is where Habermas began to talk about the public sphere. According to him, public space is a forum or arena for mediation between the community and the state, the people and the government.¹⁹ It is in this space that the public can criticize the State, and the government can also make rational corrections and reprimands to the people. Thus, this public space is independent without any dominating power or power. The main character or principle in the public sphere still refers to rational and communicative actions. discourse procedure.²⁰

In this context, Habermas apparently also talks about the role of religion in the public sphere. According to him, we are now in a post-secular society, where believers have the same communication rights as secular citizens. As a reference material in positioning religion in the public sphere, Habermas makes normative boundaries for religious groups, secular groups, the state and the majority of religions.²¹

First, it demands the translation of the contribution of religious groups from a particular religious language into a language that is acceptable to the public. In this context, Habermas mentions the importance of the epistemic attitude of religious citizens to enable public deliberation. That is, instead of discussing the content of exclusive religious doctrine, but taking the inclusive rational content of the realm of faith that is in touch with the issue of universal justice. *Second*, the same demands are made on secular citizens to be able to empathize and

¹⁸ Melki Nino, "Demokrasi Deliberatif Juergen Habermas Dan Relevansinya Bagi Demokrasi Pancasila," *Akademika: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa IFTK Ledalero* 23, no. 2 (2024): 2.

¹⁹ Ifna Dini Rizkiyah, "Interaksi Manusia Sebagai Makhluk Sosial Dalam Ruang Publik Menurut Jürgen Habermas: Studi Kasus Pameran Metamorfosis 6," *Abstrak: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Seni, Media Dan Desain* 2, no. 4 (2025): 07, <https://doi.org/10.62383/abstrak.v2i4.674>.

²⁰ Akmal Firmansyah dan Samsuri, "KAJIAN FILOSOFI DALAM PENDIDIKAN KEWARGANEGARAAN MENURUT PEMIKIRAN JÜRGEN HABERMAS," *Harmony: Jurnal Pembelajaran IPS Dan PKN* 10, no. 2 (2025): 12, <https://doi.org/10.15294/harmony.v10i2.27636>.

²¹ Edi Purwanto dan Frans H. M. Silalahi, "Simbiotik Negara dan Agama: Menelaah Relasi Hukum Sekuler dan Moralitas Keagamaan di Indonesia," *BONAFIDE: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 6, no. 1 (2025): 21, <https://doi.org/10.46558/bonafide.v6i1.396>.

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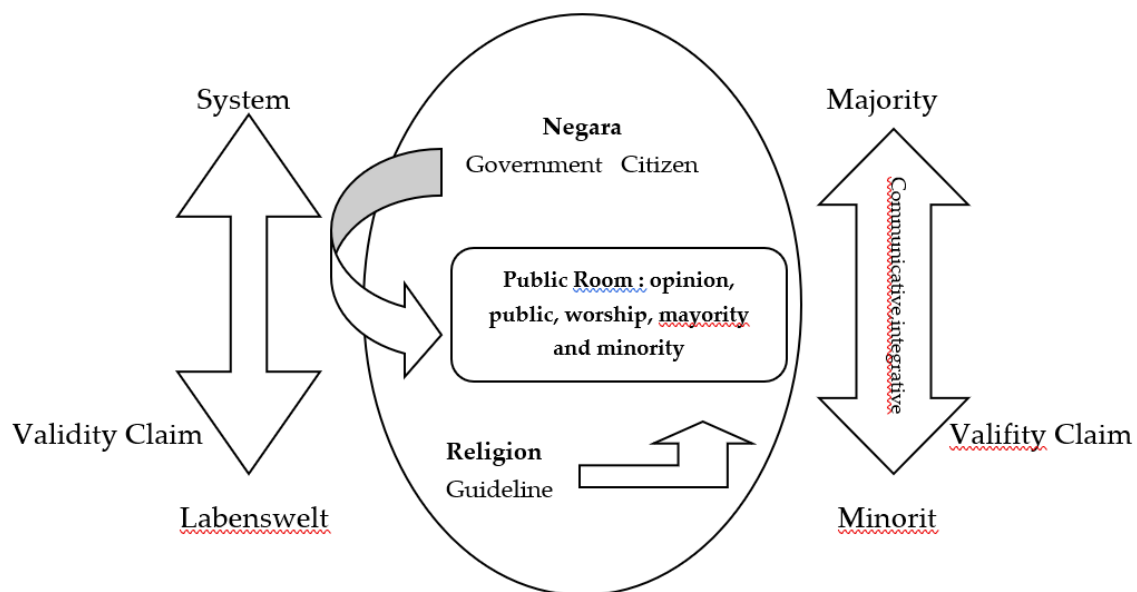
appreciate differences in the public sphere. *Third*, the attitude of the State in deliberation must be a balanced balance. This means that the State may not side with any group, and may not limit the freedom of citizens and religious people in communicating with the public in public spaces. *Fourth*, the majority group in a democracy must not ignore or silence the potential truth of the arguments that come from the minority.²²

From the four normative boundaries above, Habermas implicitly wants to function all social elements consisting of religious people, citizens, government, religious leaders, social leaders and all elements involved in public dialogue. In other words, humans have the right to be free in public, but that freedom must be carried out with the ethics of discourse. Any religious community has the right or freedom to express themselves in the public sphere without neglecting the principles and procedures or norms of communication.²³ On the other hand, as citizens, they have the right to carry out their obligations without destroying religious values

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Based on the theoretical framework above, it can be simplified that Habermas's theory of discourse leads to the power of communicative rational communication by involving relations between religious communities and citizens. That is, as religious people they can carry out their religious message without leaving and even interfering with their obligations as citizens.

When applied in a pluralistic Indonesian religious context consisting of several religions, the theory is very relevant. The author tries to recompile the theory of Habermas's discourse into the reality of Indonesian religiosity in the form of a communication scheme.



²² M. Sa'ad Alfanny dkk., "Islam Kebangsaan Inklusif Formulasi Gagasan Islam Rahmat Lil 'Alamin Dan Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," *Panangkaran: Jurnal Penelitian Agama Dan Masyarakat* 9, no. 2 (2025): 09, <https://doi.org/10.14421/panangkaran.v9i2.4256>.

²³ Fadil Mas'ud dkk., "Etika Dalam Media Sosial Antara Kebebasan Ekspresi Dan Tanggung Jawab Digital," *Jimmi: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Multidisiplin* 2, no. 2 (2025): 17, <https://doi.org/10.71153/jimmi.v2i2.289>.

The scheme above describes the reality of Indonesia, which consists of a state system and a religious system that is diverse or very plural. In the context of the State, it is indicated by the existence of ethnic, racial and cultural plurality. In religion, it is indicated by the existence of various religions (Islam, Christianity / Protestant / Catholic, Buddhism, Hinduism, sects of belief). As citizens and religious people, of course, they have different activities or Habermas calls it the world of life (*labenswelt*). These activities are given freedom or guarantees when coming public spaces. The guarantee in question is recognized, accepted, and responded to in accordance with existing rules or norms.

As citizens, Indonesian people have an obligation to carry out their functions and duties, namely obeying state rules, controlling and maintaining state stability. It is in this position that the people become a force that cannot be defeated and weakened in advancing a country.²⁴ It is said so because, in the public sphere, differences in race, ethnicity, culture are not disputed and freedom of speech is given for one goal, namely the State of Indonesia. As religious people, Indonesian people have an obligation to carry out their religious orders in accordance with their beliefs and beliefs.

Due to the diversity of religions, internal mapping is applied between individual and social areas. The mapping in question is related to the application of beliefs in the form of the implementation of religious teachings or ritual worship. Actions that lead to the area of religious privacy are not expected to be debated or even disputed because each religion has different secrets and metaphysical values. When these differences are enforced by being debated, there will be differences that lead to religious conflicts, especially since the debate is ideologically politicized. What is emphasized in this formulation is that religious people talk about the safety of the lives of the people and citizens by having a dialogue on humanitarian issues in order to achieve the priority goal, namely human benefit.²⁵

In accordance with the religious reality in Indonesia, there are majority religions and minority religions. This means that it is measured by the number of adherents, and Islam as the majority religion of Indonesian nation. Even though Islam is the majority religion, the values of integrative communicative actions must be carried out without discrimination against minority religions. The majority religion has the right to have an opinion and spread its religious message, and the minority religion also has the right to spread its message of morality in the

²⁴ Asysyifa Arinilhaq Modjo dkk., "IMPLEMENTASI KEWAJIBAN WARGA NEGARA DALAM KEHIDUPAN BERBANGSA DAN BERNEGARA," *SIGARUDA JOURNAL: Jurnal Ilmiah Bidang Sosial, Ekonomi, Budaya, Teknologi Dan Pendidikan* 1, no. 2 (2025): 09.

²⁵ Rissa Oktaviyani dkk., "DIALOG KEAGAMAAN DENGAN REALITA KEMANUSIAAN Analisis prespektif Dr. Zully Qodir," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Al Hadi* 4, no. 2 (2025): 46, <https://doi.org/10.31602/jmpd.v4i2.15344>.

public sphere²⁶. Nevertheless, discourse theory has a foundation or rules of the game in the act of rational communication. The rules in question are validity claims consisting of objective truth claims, subjective honesty claims, and intersubjective normative accuracy claims. These three claims are able to mediate public dialogue, and give birth to key messages for the public.²⁷

The distinctive character in the above formulation is that citizens have the right to convey state messages and also have the right to convey religious messages in a communicative way. Religious people also have the right to carry out religious messages without negating their obligations as citizens. In addition, religious people are allowed to bring religious messages into the state system with a note that they do not damage or change the order and foundation of a country. It is in this condition and public space that Indonesian citizens meet to become one Indonesian nation, and religious communities meet to form a religious force that sided with the public, the state, and humanity.

CONCLUSION

In principle, the form of public religion in the findings of this paper is referred to as moderate Islam with an aspirational face, showing the face of Islam that is peaceful, rational, communicative and negotiable, and relates to the State, religion and other forms of life, and has a clear foundation in conveying religious messages before the public. There are three basic concepts that are important to understand to realize the epistemology of moderation. First, the spirit of tolerance for people with different opinions, different cultures, and religious beliefs. This spirit encourages us to become progressive Muslims by carrying out the spirit of *ijtihad*, and recognizing social, religious and cultural diversity as a product of *ijtihad* in other words "*Give God what is God's will, and give to the emperor what is the emperor's will*".

Second, the tradition of criticism, and freedom of criticism, this principle implies that in understanding and responding to everything, a critical attitude towards others is needed so as not to be trapped by the ideological interests of the group. To create a critical attitude, it is necessary to have a tradition of thinking in capturing and understanding reality.

Third, critical of power. In this context, criticism of power does not mean that we reject the State, but rather make an enlightening contribution in the form of thoughts and direct involvement in carrying out the duties of citizens.

²⁶ Loso Judijanto dkk., *Komunikasi Lintas Agama* (PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2026), 67.

²⁷ Anwar Ibrahim Triyoga dkk., "Bahasa Dan Kebenaran Dalam Diskursus Digital: Perspektif Validity Claim Habermas," *CaLLs (Journal of Culture, Arts, Literature, and Linguistics)* 11, no. 0 (2025): 267, <https://doi.org/10.30872/calls.v11i0.22724>.

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