

Yusuf al-Qardhawi's View on Religious Extremism

Pandangan Yusuf al-Qardhawi tentang Ekstremisme Agama

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Abstract: Indonesia is a country with complex religious diversity issues. This is evidenced by the persistence of inter-religious conflicts caused by religious extremism. From within Muslims, this problem has become a discussion of scholars. Therefore, this study analyses Yusuf Al-Qaradawi's concept of religious extremism to map the scattered extremist groups and avoid mistakes in assessing a group. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi stated that extremism is an excessive attitude toward religion that can destroy religious communities because it causes error. In this study, the researcher used a philosophical approach, and the method used was a descriptive-analytical method to analyze Yusuf Al-Qaradawi's thoughts regarding the problem of extremism in his work "*Al-Shahwah Al-Islāmiyyah Baina Al-Juhud wa Al-Tatharruf*". The results of this study found that according to Al-Qaradawi, extremism has several factors and characteristics. In this case, Al-Qaradawi also put forward the concept of "*Wasathiyyah*" in Islam to overcome the extremism problem, which proves the essence of Islamic teachings that bring peace and respect differences between people.

Keywords: *Islam, Religious Extremism, Wasathiyyah, Yusuf al-Qardhawi.*

Abstrak: Indonesia merupakan negara yang memiliki masalah keberagaman agama yang kompleks. Terbukti dengan masih adanya konflik antaragama yang disebabkan oleh sikap ekstremisme dalam beragama. Dari internal umat Islam, permasalahan ini

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menjadi perbincangan para ulama. Penelitian ini menganalisis konsep ekstrimisme agama Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi untuk memetakan kelompok ekstrimis yang tersebar dan menghindari kesalahan dalam menilai sebuah kelompok. Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi mengemukakan ekstremisme merupakan sikap berlebih-lebihan dalam beragama yang dapat membinasakan umat beragama sebab menyebabkan kesesatan. Dalam kajian ini, peneliti menggunakan pendekatan filsafat dan adapun metode yang digunakan adalah metode analisis-deskriptif untuk menganalisis pemikiran Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi mengenai permasalahan ekstremisme dalam karyanya "*Al-Shahwah Al-Islāmiyyah Baina Al-Juhud wa Al-Tatharruf*". Hasil penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa ekstremisme, menurut pandangan Al-Qaradhawi, memiliki beberapa faktor dan karakteristik. Dalam hal ini Al-Qaradhawi juga mengemukakan konsep "*Wasathiyyah*" dalam Islam sebagai upaya dalam mengatasi permasalahan ekstremisme yang membuktikan hakikat ajaran agama Islam yang membawa kedamaian dan menghormati perbedaan antar umat.

Kata Kunci: Islam, Ekstremisme Agama, Wasathiyyah, Yusuf al-Qardhawi.

Introduction

Islam is a *rahmatan lil 'alamīn* religion that is merciful and brings peace. This religion guides humans to realise tranquillity, peace and prosperity. Islam did not come to make things difficult for people, but rather to make things easier for them, not to restrain but to liberate. Islam is a guide to life that teaches balance in all matters of faith, worship, morals, and *muāmalah* or interaction between fellow human beings.¹ Therefore, Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of God, always warned his people to avoid extremes in practising religion. Prophet Muhammad even once rebuked his Companions who were excessive in worship to the point of leaving their worldly responsibilities.² In one of the hadith, it is mentioned that he said, "Avoid extremes in religion, for indeed extremes (*al-Ghuluw*) in religion have destroyed those before you."³

Extremism occurs due to several external and internal factors; according to Shafi'i Anwar, the superficial understanding of religion from Muslims themselves and the religious interpretation is based on literal and textual

¹ Syakhrani, Abdul Wahab, and Muhammad Rivaldi Yudistira, "Dasar Keislaman Sebagai Agama Rahmatan Lilalamin," *Mushaf Journal: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran Dan Hadis* 2, no. 3 (2022): 265.

² `Abu al-Husain Muslim bin al-Hajjaj al-Qusyairi Al-Naisabûri, *Shahîh Al-Muslim* (Riyad: Dâr al-Thayyibah, 1427), no. 2487, 485.

³ Abu Abdurrahman Al-Nasa'i, *Al-Sunan Al-Shughrā* (Alepo: Maktabah Matbu'at al-Islamiy, 1986), 5/268, 103.

understanding.⁴ An example is the use of Q.S. Al-Hajj verses 39-40 by jihadist extremists who use this verse as permission to fight the enemy.

This affects the understanding of religious values in a way that should be totality.⁵ So, it is not literal, rigid, and resists social change. Extremism is indicated in the bigotry of an opinion without respecting the opinions of others, a harsh and rude attitude in acting, and prejudice against others.⁶ Until then, the opinion that only their group is the right group, interpreting other groups as groups that need to be destroyed, assuming that the actions they take are a form of jihad, as a form of defence of the group and beliefs they profess. If it is associated with extremism, this is certainly not in line with the teachings of Islam.

The implications of religious extremism vary. Some can be intolerant, source of conflict, destroy the primary Extremism makes the teachings of Islam look complicated for adherents to follow. If extremism is associated with religion, then the definition becomes one of the views, attitudes, and mainstream behavior of religious groups. The word mainstream here means being outside the standard views, attitudes and behaviors or commonly carried out by religious communities.⁷ Especially in the attitude of religious tolerance between other religions and co-religionists in the community. However, it can occur in various religions and beliefs, not limited to any particular religion.⁸

Reviewing extremism is necessary based on explaining the above phenomena. The problem of religious extremism is a severe problem raised by several scholars. One of the prominent Muslim scholars who raised this issue as a severe problem was Yusuf al-Qaradhawi. He expressed his thoughts on this issue in one of his works, *Al-Shahwah al-Islamiyah Bain al-Juhud wa al-Tatharruf*.⁹ Here, the researcher analyzes the severe problem of extremism in Islam

⁴ Mohamad Khoiril Anwar, "Makna Ghuluw dalam Perspektif Hasbi As-Shiddieqy, Hamka dan M. Quraish Shihab," *Jurnal Sophist: Jurnal Sosial Politik Kajian Islam dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2021): 19–40.

⁵ Muhammad Harfin Zuhdi, "Maqashidi Moderation as a Model for Counter-Narratives of Religious Extremism," *Journal of Islamic Law and Economics* 19, no. 2 (2020): 444.

⁶ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Islam Ekstrem: Analisis dan Pemecahannya*, Judul Asli: *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyah Bain Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, ed. Alwi A.M and Muhamad Bagir (Bandung, 1989), 59.

⁷ Adam Latuconsina, Muhammad Kashai Ramdhani Pelupessy, and Ainun Diana Lating, "Pengaruh Skema Religius dan Empati Terhadap Perilaku Toleransi Masyarakat Ambon di Maluku," *Dialog* 46, no. 1 (2023): 14–25, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v46i1.689>.

⁸ Abdul Jalil, "Aksi Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama: Telaah terhadap Fundamentalisme, Radikalisme, dan Ekstremisme," *Andragogi: Jurnal Diklat Teknis Pendidikan dan Keagamaan* 9, no. 2 (2021): 220–34.

⁹ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Islam Jalan Tengah: Menjauhi Sikap Berlebihan dalam Beragama*, diterjemahkan dari *Al-Sahwah Al-Islamiyah Bain Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, Terj. Alwi A.M. (Bandung: PT Mizan Pustaka, 2017), 63.

according to the views of Yusuf al-Qaradhawi. The researcher uses the descriptive-analysis method to analyze Yusuf al-Qaradhawi's views on this issue, assume the research focuses on the study of extremism in Islam, and answer and solve the problems studied.¹⁰

Result and Discussion

Definition of Religious Extremism

Extremism has several definitions. In this section, the researcher aims to distinguish several definitions, etymology, and terminology to avoid the misconception of religious extremism. Extremism is often associated with the terms radicalism and terrorism, even though each has a different definition. The word terrorism is an act of violence aimed at acts of terror on the intended party based on extreme beliefs or beliefs. In short, terrorism is extremism manifested in action.¹¹ Radicalism is more related to the model of attitudes and ways of expressing one's diversity. One example is extremism based on nationalism, bringing forth acts of violence committed through acts of terror.¹²

In the beginning, radicalism is rooted in a concept in philosophy that questions everything to the root. Then, the idea of radicalism was adopted by a revolutionary movement. Radical movements represent groups that yearn for a political system based on religious beliefs, ideologies, and interpretations.¹³ Based on some of the explanations above, it can be concluded that extremism is not only manifested in acts or acts of violence, but extremism is also an ideology.

It would be beneficial to start the discussion on this topic with a definitive explanation, both in terms of etymology and terminology. In English, the word 'extreme' has several meanings. Some of these according to the Oxford Dictionary, the word "extreme" in adjectives means "*Not ordinary or usual; serious or severe*". On the other hand, nouns mean "*to act or be forced to act in a way that is far from normal or reasonable*" and "kind of behaviour can be

¹⁰ Toni Pransiska, "Meneropong Wajah Studi Islam dalam Kacamata Filsafat: Sebuah Pendekatan Alternatif," *Jurnal Raden Fatah* 23, no. 1 (2017): 165–66.

¹¹ Amin Mudzakkir, *Menghalau Ekstremisme* (Jakarta: Wahid Foundation, 2018), 47.

¹² Husni Mubarak, *Pelebagaan Kosep Ekstremisme Kekerasan dalam Kebijakan Pencegahan Terorisme di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Wahid Foundation, 2020), 5–7.

¹³ Mubarak, 6–8.

dangerous".¹⁴ Based on some of these senses, the word extreme can be summed up as an act or compulsion to act in a way that is far from normal or reasonable.

In Arabic, "extreme" has several terms. The first is *ghuluw*, which means exaggeration in affairs. The word *ghuluw*, when associated with religion, has a harsh meaning of going beyond limits.¹⁵ In the *Lisan Al-Arab* Dictionary, the word *Ghuluw* means "*al-irtifā' wa mujawazāt al-qadri fī kulli syain*" meaning exaggeration in a matter.¹⁶ *Ghuluw* is also defined as a model or type of religion that causes a person to deviate from their religion.¹⁷ The second is *tasyaddud*, which means hard in affairs.¹⁸ Mohamad Khoiril Anwar also interpreted the term *tasyaddud* as harsh and firm.¹⁹ In Munjid's Dictionary, the word *tasyaddud* means *tashallaba ī umūrihi* or to be strict in matters.²⁰ The third is *tatharruf*, which means *sāra tharāfan* and *jāwaza haddal i'tidāl* or pulling over and going beyond the limit.²¹ The fourth is *tanatthu'*, which means an uncompromising attitude.²² However, Al-Qaradhawi preferred to use *al-tatharruf* to define religious extremism, namely *At-Tatharruf Al-Diniy*, which means exaggeration in religion. The word *Al-Tatharruf* is taken from Arabic, meaning to dwell on the edge, far from the middle. At first, the word was used for things of a material nature, such as being far pulled over when standing, sitting, or walking. Then, *tatharruf* is used to abstract things such as pulling over or transgressing boundaries in religion, thought, or behaviour. This context leads to destruction and approaches harm. It is very far from being safe and prosperous.²³ One of the verses used by Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi to explain cases of exaggeration in religion is found in QS Al-Maidah: 77. This verse shows the existence of transgression or excessive attitude in religion that occurred in

¹⁴ A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Ninth Edit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.), 545.

¹⁵ S. Askar, *Al-Azhar* (Jakarta Selatan: Senayan Publishing, 2009), 581.

¹⁶ Ibnu Mandhur, *Lisān Al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dar Shadir, 1979), 368.

¹⁷ Sihabuddin Afroni, "The Meaning of Ghuluw in Islam: The Seeds of Religious Extremism," *Insights: Scientific Journal of Religion and Socio-Culture* 1, no. 1 (2016): 70–85, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v1i1.579>.

¹⁸ Askar, *Al-Azhar*, 367.

¹⁹ Anwar, "Makna Ghuluw dalam Perspektif Hasbi As-Shiddieqy, Hamka dan M. Quraish Shihab," 19–40.

²⁰ Louwis Ma'luf Al-Yassu'i, *Al-Munjid Fi Al-Lughah Wa Al-Alam* (Beirut: Dar al-Masyriq, 2002), 558.

²¹ Al-Yassu'i, 464.

²² Anwar, "Makna Ghuluw dalam Perspektif Hasbi As-Shiddieqy, Hamka Dan M. Quraish Shihab," 19–40.

²³ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf* (Beirut: Muassasah Ar Risalah, 1996), 24.

previous people and the prohibition of overreaching and excessive in religion.²⁴ This source is also reinforced by verses in the Qur'an that mention excessive context in religion in the context of *ghuluw* approximately 26 times.²⁵ This evidence strengthens the existence of exaggeration in religion and also clarifies the definition of exaggeration in religion.

The terminology of extremism has various views. According to Sihabuddin Afroni, extremism refers to extreme or excessive attitudes or actions in maintaining or spreading an ideology or belief, especially in political, religious, or social contexts.²⁶ Extremism is also characterized by the rejection of different views and the tendency to use violence or other extreme measures to achieve specific goals. Harfin Zuhdi views that religious extremism is a term used to describe extremist religious groups that direct their hostility and resistance to moderate Islamic movements.²⁷ This extremist movement is usually aimed at trying to seize power from the legitimate government by using the narrative of religious issues as the ideological issue of the movement. Abdul Jalil defines extremism as an understanding or belief that is very strong in something beyond the limits of reasonableness and can violate the law.²⁸ According to him, extremism is a political or religious doctrine that makes actions to realize its goals in various ways, such as anarchist movements and fanatics against something. Alex P. Schmid describes extremism as activities that include one character's beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, and strategies that transcend the limits of normality.²⁹ This exceeded the limit of commonplace, which refers to ideological and actual extremes.

Extremism is an excessive act of action. This is due to fanaticism towards a view of life and feeling the most right so that, with great difficulty, they want to realize a life order based on the values of their opinions. In this regard, Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi gave a more specific explanation that extremism or religious

²⁴ Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, 25.

²⁵ Rizka Nanda Haswin Pratiwi, "Ekstremisme Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Studi Komparatif Tafsir Al-Kasyaf Karya Az-Zamakhshari dan Mafatih Al-Ghaib Karya Fakhruddin Ar-Razi)" (Institut Ilmu Al Quran (IIQ) Jakarta, 2020), 56–57.

²⁶ Mohammad Pandu, "Akar dan Jejak Ekstremisme Islam di Indonesia," *islami.co*, 2020, <https://islami.co/akar-dan-jejak-ekstremisme-islam-di-indonesia/>.

²⁷ Muhammad Harfin Zuhdi, "Maqashidi Moderation As A Model Of Counter-Narrative Religious Extremism," *Istinbath* 19, no. 2 (2020): 442–69.

²⁸ Jalil, "Aksi Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama: Telaah terhadap Fundamentalisme, Radikalisme, dan Ekstremisme," 220–34.

²⁹ Alex P. Schmid, "Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?," *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague* 5, no. 5 (2014): 8.

extremism is an understanding that includes thoughts, actions, attitudes, and positions that are entirely contrary to the concepts, principles, and teachings of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah.³⁰ Extremism is essentially a misconception both in terms of *aqeedah*, morals, and *fiqh* taught by the Prophet Muhammad. This extremism is based on assumptions that are not argumentative or weak but wild and provide subjective understandings that provide false dreams that are contrary to reality and religious teachings.³¹

In a broader context, all religious teachings and philosophical schools can be exposed to extremism caused by excessive fanaticism and teaching held by specific individuals and groups. In the context of religious extremism, in its development, religious extremism is supported by the spread of ideology organized to achieve specific goals, both political and other goals. This extreme ideology is generally based on radical interpretations of religious teachings. This includes radical doctrine, propaganda, and efforts to recruit and mobilize followers.

According to Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, this conflict is caused by arrogance, so their thoughts and actions transgress the limits and violate the teachings of Islam. They do not understand that the *maqāshid shariah* has been validly established by the Quran and the Sunnah, so they find it difficult to accept an understanding that, according to them, is not following what they understand hard and blame other groups.³²

Religious extremism can trigger a clash between religions or even among the adherents of the same religion, especially in extreme attitudes, as a response to the decreed problem.³³ It can also be a source of conflict, terrorism or other acts of violence around the world.³⁴ It significantly influences the social environment and the psychiatric and educational aspects.³⁵ If this attitude is

³⁰ Ahmad Munawar Ismail and Siti Madihah Madihah, "Reaksi Masyarakat Islam di Malaysia Terhadap Ekstremisme," *Islamiyyat* 42, no. 1 (2020): 5, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17576/islamiyyat-2020-4201-12>.

³¹ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islāmiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 27.

³² Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, 33–34.

³³ Yusof Norhafezah et al., "Religious Extremism in the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS): An Analysis of The Star Newspaper," *Journal of Communication, Malaysian Journal of Communication* 33, no. 20 (2017): 119–41, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2017-3304-08>.

³⁴ Asnawan, "Relasi Konflik dan Agama Studi Tentang Model Penyelesaian Konflik Keagamaan," *Falasifa* 9, no. 1 (2018): 25.

³⁵ Afroni, "Makna Ghuluw dalam Islam: Benih Ekstremisme Beragama," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 1, no. 1 (2016): 70–85.

associated with Islam, which should teach peace, it is certainly the opposite.³⁶ Therefore, it is essential to understand that religious extremism does not reflect all adherents. On the other hand, most religious believers follow their teachings with peace and tolerance.

Characteristics of Religious Extremism

Religious extremism is not mainstream in any religion. It does not arise from original religious teachings. Some indications are that understanding religion literally and debating minor issues to the exclusion of the subject can refer to behaviour or approaches that focus on details or minor aspects of a text or statement.³⁷ Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi classifies extremism in Islam in several characteristics, namely:

1) Rejection of the diversity.

A narrow understanding of Islamic teachings and an inability to accept the diversity of society can characterize extremism.³⁸ The understanding that tends to reject the diversity of the ummah is due to the lack of a comprehensive understanding of Islam that is integral to what the Prophet taught, namely Islam, which is believed to be a creed, sharia, science, charity, worship, *muamalah*, morals, truth, strength, da'wah, religion, state, and civilization and ummah.³⁹

Intolerant of the existence of other religious people, to force them to adhere to what they believe in other religious groups.⁴⁰ Religious tolerance can be interpreted as mutual respect. This intolerant understanding comes from the narrowness of literacy, single interpretation, and the number of understandings. They do not tolerate changes that do not conform to what they understand and beliefs and understandings that do not suit them.

2) Textual understanding

Calls for the context of unclear religious teachings and in following religious teachings. It is characterized by the actions and attitudes of a person or religious group who cling to the understanding or literality of religious texts

³⁶ Afroni, 85.

³⁷ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 36.

³⁸ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, 30.

³⁹ Ahmad Dumyathi Bashori, "Konsep Moderat Yusuf Qardhawi: Tolok Ukur Moderasi dan Pemahaman terhadap Nash," *Dialog* 36, no. 1 (2013): 8–9.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Raihan Kautsar and Suryo Ediyono, "Pengaruh Fanatisme Agama Terhadap Perilaku Masyarakat Muslim Di Indonesia" (Surakarta, 2023), 4.

without paying attention to the nature or wisdom in that context.⁴¹ This unbalanced understanding of literacy will lead the person to the verdict of infidel and *fasiq*. This infidel verdict and *fasiq* are not taught by religion because the gate of religion is the confession of faith and those who deny the confession.⁴² Its implications are varied, such as violence, rigid understanding, and even takfir.

The *nash* (al-Qur'an and Sunnah) cannot be understood textually in Islam. Sometimes, Quranic interpretation and understanding of the history behind the text are necessary. Understanding *Nash* textually refers to understanding a text or theory's content in a manuscript or written work.⁴³ Understanding *Nash* textually can be interpreted as trying to understand the literal meaning of the words in the text without correct or thorough interpretation with the support of another understanding. Religious extremist groups often use certain Qur'anic verses and Tafseer (interpretation) to legitimize their actions.⁴⁴ They may use the verses selectively and interpret them according to their agenda. It should be noted that the majority of Islamic scholars reject this extreme interpretation and point out that it is erroneous, as it does not take into account the historical context, the ethics of war, and the teachings of Islam as a whole.

Being rigid in determining what is considered *haram* in a religious context can happen when a person or group sets prohibitions or limits that are not based on clear principles of religious law but, in this context, are very strict because they are based on interpretation in a narrow understanding. From this statement, it can be analyzed that when the determination of *haram* is applied excessively, it can have a negative impact, such as causing irrelevant injustice or restraint in life individually and in society. Some permissible or neutral actions in religion can be considered excessively *haram*. There are disproportionate restrictions on religious freedom or individual rights.⁴⁵ An example is the attitude or action of prosecuting someone who does not behave following the

⁴¹ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 33.

⁴² Bashori, "Konsep Moderat Yusuf Qardhawi: Tolok Ukur Moderasi dan Pemahaman terhadap Nash," 8–9.

⁴³ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 37.

⁴⁴ Junaidi Abdillah, "Radikalisme Agama: Dekonstruksi Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Kekerasan dalam Al-Qur'an," *Kalam* 8, no. 2 (2014): 281–300.

⁴⁵ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 27.

teachings of an extremist group without referring to the context and interpretation of clear teachings.

A misconception of some notions of Sharia can lead to confusion in understanding the main problems in religion.⁴⁶ This can happen when there is an incorrect interpretation or deviation of sharia concepts in religion.⁴⁷ It can be analyzed from these statements that a mistaken understanding of the Sharia can lead to religious beliefs and practices that do not follow the principles they should. Misinterpretation and misinterpretation in the context of sharia can lead to narrow understandings, injustice, fanaticism, and also extreme actions that are contrary to the actual teachings of religion. Confusion in understanding the main problems in religion due to a wrong understanding of Sharia can also affect social relations between religious communities. A lack of understanding of the concepts of Sharia can hinder a tolerant understanding of religious beliefs.

3) Unjust violence.

Unjust acts of violence refer to the use of force or violence inconsistent with the principles of law and justice. Violent attitudes and acts used in the enforcement of Islamic law without a clear basis stem from religious understanding.⁴⁸ This unjust harshness is the absence of commitment to morality and the absence of favour reward (*tabisyir*) methods in preaching, as well as wise graduality and no attention to the tribe or minority groups in a country. Unjust acts of violence are against the teachings of any religion, and Islam is no exception. Indeed, people who easily commit acts of violence in the name of religion are people who are weak in religious understanding and too hasty in deducing a verse's intent.

There are several verses in the Qur'an that are often used by certain individuals to justify violence in the name of religion. For example, in al-Baqarah (2): 101, at-Taubah (9): 5, and al-Anfal (6): These verses, according to them, contain teachings that support violence and murder. In al-Baqarah (2): 101, it states: "*And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from wherever they drive you out, and slander is more heinous than murder.*" In fact, killing

⁴⁶ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, 35.

⁴⁷ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, 35.

⁴⁸ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, 174.

in this verse is meant for self-defence, not to justify attacks on individuals or groups that are not involved in the conflict.⁴⁹

The "sword verse" in QS At-Tawbah (9):5 is misinterpreted as a legitimization of attacking non-Muslims. *"And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."* The interpretation of this verse shows that it was revealed in the context of special warfare in the early days of Islam.⁵⁰ Misinterpretation of jihad from defensive to offensive. The extremist argues that this verse endorses extremists to kill unbelievers unconditionally. Al-Qusyairi interpreted this verse as the second way after the Prophet's effort in da'wah softly and to protect Muslims. The prohibition of physical war before hijrah is found in QS Fushilat: 34, AL-Maidah: 13, An-Nahl: 82 and 125, Al-Furqan: 63, Al-Ghasyiyah: 22, Qaf: 45, and Al-Jatsiyah: 14.⁵¹ Additionally, the verse in QS 9:6 explains the peaceful relation with the unbeliever.⁵² *"But if they repent and fulfil their devotional obligations and pay the zakat [tax for alms], then let them go their way, for God is forgiving and kind"*.

Some extremists in Salafi-jihadis groups mislead the meaning of jihad. Jihad is a collective duty during the Prophet. It is not understood as a physical struggle to kill and war. Since the late 20th century, jihad in this verse has been a legitimization of several groups to mark the terrorist, resistance, and liberation movement, such as *Jama'ah Islamiyah*, Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and ISIL, for a holy war.⁵³ Suicide bombing is often used as jihad for extremist groups in Indonesia. For instance, the Bali bomb in 2002. In their opinion, fighting the unbeliever is a war between right and falsehood, which will open the gate of holy war.⁵⁴ Etymologically, the word jihad (*jahada*) means "to strive", not a holy war or any

⁴⁹ Jalil, "Aksi Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama: Telaah terhadap Fundamentalisme, Radikalisme, dan Ekstremisme," 220–34.

⁵⁰ Abdillah, "Radikalisme Agama: Dekonstruksi Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Kekerasan dalam Al-Qur'an," 281–300.

⁵¹ M. Minanur Rohman, "De-Radicalization of Interpretation the Concept of Jihad in Tafsir Al-Qusyairi," *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Aqlur'an Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 2 (2020): 34.

⁵² Alifah, "Terrorism: Between Islamic Radicalism and Misinterpretation of Jihad Doctrine," *JISCA* 2, no. 2 (2013): 67.

⁵³ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 45.

⁵⁴ Mila Widiastuti, "Shifting the Meaning of Jihad in the Radical Islamic Movement: Study of Suicide Bomb from Islamic Law Perspective," *Milrev* 1, no. 1 (2002): 74.

military connotation.⁵⁵ The verse is often misused to support jihad is Al-Anfal (8): 39. ⁵⁶ "And fight them until there is no slander and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah. And if they cease - then indeed, Allah is Seeing of what they do." However, correct understanding shows that this verse relates to a particular state of war that existed in ancient times, not an attack for no apparent reason.⁵⁷

The Qur'an and Sunnah texts must be read within the political and social context in which they were revealed.⁵⁸ Engaging the opinions of scholars who deeply understand the Qur'an and refer to widely accepted interpretations or following the mainstream Islamic groups is essential to understanding these verses in the correct context. The understanding of extremists does not reflect the teachings of Islam as a whole.

4) Rejection of renewal.

Some views reject the renewal of Islamic thought. Creating a rigid impression of religion. So, religion is considered irrelevant to the times.⁵⁹ In fiqh, there are fiqh of priority, fiqh of dispute, fiqh of unity, fiqh of civilization, fiqh of change, fiqh of reality, fiqh of da'wah, fiqh of minorities, fiqh of balance and so on.⁶⁰ These fiqh must be mixed to answer the problems that arise in every age. Islam will always follow the times and become *rahmatan lil 'alamin* anytime.

Other religious extremism attitudes and behaviours make it difficult to enforce religious laws. Complicate the easy things in matters of religion. The Prophet reminded his people through his hadith, "*Yassiru wa laa tu'assiru*", which means make it easy, do not make it difficult. This class of extremists constantly complicates their lives; they understand that it must be carried out in life, and they do not look at other interpretations so that they burden themselves both in matters of worship and *muamalah*.

5) Fanaticism towards specific thoughts and methodologies.

⁵⁵ Schmucl Bar, "The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism," in *The Theory & Practice of Islamic Terrorism*, ed. Negrin Perry, M. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 69.

⁵⁶ Kholilurrohmah, *Islam Versus Extremism* (Tangerang: Nurul Hikmah Press, 2019), 6–8.

⁵⁷ Jalil, "Aksi Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama: Telaah terhadap Fundamentalisme, Radikalisme, dan Ekstremisme," 220–34.

⁵⁸ Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, 72.

⁵⁹ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 34.

⁶⁰ Bashori, "Konsep Moderat Yusuf Qardhawi: Tolok Ukur Moderasi dan Pemahaman terhadap Nash," 6–9.

Fanaticism in religion is characterized by extreme beliefs and intolerance of other views or beliefs. Fanatics tend to hold firm to their beliefs and refuse to accept different views or beliefs. They may also blame or attack others who disagree with their beliefs.⁶¹ It tends to impose religious beliefs and values on others, even by intolerant or violent means. This can lead to conflict and tension between different religious groups. Fanaticism creates extreme measures—religious fanaticism. According to Muhammad Ibrahim Eid, it can cause alienation, hatred, and hatred between one religion and another, and between individuals and other individuals, because of the nature of feeling what he believes is right and only trusting the interpretation of the figure he believes from his group.⁶²

Fanaticism in religion can also hinder dialogue and cooperation between followers of different religions and inclusive social and political development.⁶³ From this, it can be analyzed that religious fanaticism can also lead to discrimination and intolerance towards minority religious groups.

The characteristics of religious extremism outlined above indicate a departure from mainstream religious teachings and a propensity for rigid, literal interpretations that disregard the broader, contextual, and historical understandings of religious texts. These extremists often reject diversity, employ unjust violence, and resist renewal or reinterpretation of religious thought, leading to intolerance and conflict. A significant solution involves promoting comprehensive religious education that emphasizes the historical and contextual analysis of religious texts, fostering interfaith dialogue to build mutual respect and understanding, and encouraging interpretations that align with the core values of compassion and justice inherent in most religions. Additionally, religious leaders and scholars must actively counter extremist narratives by providing clear, accessible, and well-reasoned interpretations of religious texts that support peaceful coexistence and social harmony. This multifaceted approach aims to mitigate the appeal of extremism by addressing its root causes and promoting a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of religious teachings.

⁶¹ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 39.

⁶² Kautsar and Ediyono, "Pengaruh Fanatisme Agama Terhadap Perilaku Masyarakat Muslim di Indonesia," 4.

⁶³ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 39.

Wasathiyah Islam as a Counter of Religious Extremism

In overcoming the problems arising from extremism in Islam, Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi expressed his views on understanding *Wasathiyah* in Islam. This terminology is taken from Al-Baqarah verse 143, "And so We have made you *ummatah wasathan*". *Ummatah wasathan* in this verse, according to Ibn Kathir, is a just and best *ummah*.⁶⁴ *Wasathiyah* is Islamic terminology from Islamic epistemology. Its position is in the middle between two opposite things.⁶⁵ Moderation is the equivalent of *wasathiyah* term, which means choosing an attitude and behaviour between extreme and liberal thought.⁶⁶

Al-Qaradhawi's views that *Wasathiyah* Islam is an approach that promotes balance, tolerance, and mediation in religious practice.⁶⁷ Al-Qaradhawi also posited *Wasathiyah* Islam as an attempt to find a middle ground between radicalism/extremism and liberalism.⁶⁸ *Wasathiyah* Islam is the right way to understand and practice religious teachings, which avoids radicalism and fanaticism without forgetting critical religious values.⁶⁹ Khaled Abou el-Fadhl also distinguished between extremism and moderation in Islam. According to him, Islam must be purged from any extremist thought with the idea of moderation.⁷⁰

According to Al-Qaradhawi, *Wasathiyah* Islam is inclusive and respects differences.⁷¹ He invited Muslims to establish dialogue with followers of other religions and maintain inter-religious harmony. Al-Qaradhawi, also called moderate (*tawasuth*) with similar words, namely *tawazun*, *i'tidal*, *ta'adul*, and *istiqomah*, meaning a moderate Muslim is a Muslim who gives every value or aspect that is opposite to the proportion that is not more than the proper

⁶⁴ Ibn Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Adzhim* (Beirut: Dar Thayibah, 1999), 217.

⁶⁵ Mohamed Deny Irawan, "Islam Wasathiyah: Refleksi Antara Islam Modern dan Upaya Moderasi Islam," *Tajdid* 16, no. 2 (2017).

⁶⁶ Muhammad Irfan Helmy, "The Understanding of Islamic Moderation (Wasathiyah Al-Islam) and the Hadiths on Inter-Religious Relations in the Javanese Pesantren," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021).

⁶⁷ Bashori, "Konsep Moderat Yusuf Qardhawi: Tolok Ukur Moderasi dan Pemahaman terhadap Nash," 3–15.

⁶⁸ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 215.

⁶⁹ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, 34.

⁷⁰ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Selamatkan Islam dari Muslim Puritan* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2005).

⁷¹ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Baina Al-Juhud Wa Al-Tatharruf*, 215.

portion.⁷² These keywords become Islam's character and identity in Azyumardi Azra's view.⁷³

Al-Qaradhawi views religious moderation as the right way to understand and practice religious teachings, avoiding radicalism and fanaticism without forgetting essential religious values. The above view is based on mutual respect for differences and is part of *Sunnatullah*, so this will be a solution to preventing extremism.⁷⁴ Al-Qaradhawi thought *Wasathiyyah* Islam was not a weak attitude or reduced to the specificity of religious teachings.⁷⁵ Instead, he argues that *Wasathiyyah* Islam is an awareness of different historical, social, and cultural contexts that can influence religious interpretation and practice. A moderate understanding of religion can maintain universal religious values while accommodating the needs and complexities of modern times.⁷⁶ Based on the above statements and explanations that can be analyzed from the viewpoint of Yusuf al-Qaradhawi, *Wasathiyyah* Islam does not remove the limitations of religious teaching. However, it recognizes the possibility of religious interpretation without violating religion's core principles. He views religious moderation as a way to maintain harmony between religious teachings and the context of human life. So that religion can be a source of goodness and peace among religious people. Similar to Azra, he thought that *Wasathiyyah* Islam could bring harmony and prevent Muslims from *takfiri* action and intolerance.⁷⁷

In relation to the concept of *wasathiyyah*, Ibn Taymiyyah, explains that the concept of moderation (*wasathiyyah*) is often misunderstood and misapplied, leading to accusations of radicalism or extremism among groups. For Ibn Taymiyyah, through his work *al-Aqidah al-Wasathiyyah*, moderation in *aqidah*, worship and *muamalah* is the middle way that follows the example of the Prophet and the Companions. Excess in religion, whether in the form of *ghuluw* (extremism) or *tafrit* (reducing the meaning of the teachings), is a deviation from the true teachings of Islam. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah emphasised the importance of *wasathiyyah* as the most correct method of

⁷² Bashori, "Konsep Moderat Yusuf Qardhawi: Tolok Ukur Moderasi dan Pemahaman terhadap Nash," 3–15.

⁷³ Andika Putra, "Pemikiran Islam Wasathiyah Azyumardi Azra Sebagai Jalan Moderasi Beragama," *Jurnal Riset Agama* 3, no. 1 (2021).

⁷⁴ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Min Ajli Shahwah Rasyadah Tujaddidu Al-Din Wa Tanhaddu Bi Al-Dunya* (Kairo: Dar As-Syuruq, 2001), 88.

⁷⁵ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, 88.

⁷⁶ Nabila Khalida An Nadhrah, "Moderasi Beragama Menurut Yusuf Qaradhawi Quraish Shihab Dan Salman Al-Farisi," *Living Islam* 6, no. 1 (2023): 123–40.

⁷⁷ Putra, "Pemikiran Islam Wasathiyah Azyumardi Azra Sebagai Jalan Moderasi Beragama."

practising Islam, to avoid exaggeration or underestimation in understanding and practising religion.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, Abdurrahman Wahid used *Wasathiyah* Islam to bridge moderation and pluralism and build harmony in Indonesian society.⁷⁹ The pluralistic condition of Indonesia often faces several problems with intolerant actions of extremist movements. However, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) rejected the idea of pluralism in 2005, along with the *Fatwa* to prohibit liberalism and secularism. According to MUI, pluralism is incompatible with Islamic teaching and disturbing the faith.⁸⁰

Based on the analysis above, several points can be taken to understand *Wasathiyah* Islam: inclusiveness and mutual respect for differences. This inclusiveness can be a deterrent solution in the face of extremism because it is an attitude that can understand the point of view of others, both an individual and a group, so it will give birth to mutual respect for differences. Both dialogues. In preventing extremism, the dialogue is intended to provide points of view and exchange understanding so that mutual understanding, inter-religious harmony, and maintaining unity will arise. The most fundamental problem with extremism is that exclusivism limits association with other groups and makes it difficult to accept other people's points of view. It will cause a sense of feeling most right; unwittingly, this attitude undermines unity. However, using the *Wasathiyah* Islam concept means being moderate between extremism and liberalism because it is often rejected and misjudged as a typical Western and unclear concept.⁸¹

Conclusion

Extremism is a controversial issue in the political, social, and religious spheres. Extremist doctrine in religion is a severe problem for any religion. However, Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, one of the leading Muslim scholars and activists of the Islamic movement, gave his views on religious extremism, especially in Islamic issues. According to Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, extremism is an attitude of overstepping boundaries or exaggeration in religion that leads to destruction and things that are very far from a state of security and prosperity.

⁷⁸ Ibn Taimiyyah, *Al-Aqidah Al-Wasathiyah*, ed. Abdul Aziz Al-Halafi (Riyadh: Dar Al-Minhaj, 1999), 3.

⁷⁹Raha Bistara, "The Islam Wasathiyah of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid in the Islamic Political Arena," *Journal of Islamic Civilization* 4, no. 2 (2022).

⁸⁰M. Hilaly Basya, "The Concept of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: Study of the MUI's Fatwa and the Debate Among Muslim Scholars," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 1, no. 1 (2011).

⁸¹ Muhammad Ainun Najib and Achman Khoirul Fata, "Islam Wasathiyah Dan Kontestasi Wacana Moderatisme Islam Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Theologia* 31, no. 1 (2020).

He classified some factors and characteristics to indicate religious extremism. Thus, it can be concluded that the understanding of extremism in Islam, according to Yusuf al-Qaradhawi, is that extremism has no place in the actual teachings of Islam because it is contrary to the core teachings of Islam. Al-Qaradhawi stressed the importance of a balanced and tolerant understanding of Islamic teachings and strongly rejected extremist acts that harm Muslims as well as society as a whole.

To counter religious extremism, al-Qaradhawi had the anti-thesis with the concept of wasathiyyah in Islam. According to him, Wasathiyyah Islam is a way to maintain religious teachings and the context of human life, which is brought into religion so that religion can be a source of goodness and peace for religious people. It avoids radicalism and fanaticism without forgetting essential religious values.

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