

Analysis of the Roots of Extremist Thought and Islamic Solutions through the Concepts of Tasamuh and Ukhuwah Wathaniyah

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Abstract

The phenomenon of religious extremism and radicalism currently poses a serious challenge to social stability and national harmony in Indonesia. This ideology often stems from a narrow, rigid, and exclusive understanding of religion, which, if left unchecked, can undermine national integration and trigger horizontal conflicts. This study aims to analyze the roots of extremist thinking, its impact on interfaith harmony, and how these ideologies represent deviations from religious doctrine. In addition, this study seeks to offer strategic solutions through the concept of religious moderation (wasatiyyah) by promoting the value of tasamuh (tolerance). This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach. Data sourced from scientific journals, books, and relevant documents are analyzed using content analysis techniques with a descriptive-critical approach to obtain an in-depth picture of the phenomenon being studied. The results of the study show that the roots of extremism are complex, covering ideological, theological, socio-political, and psychological factors. The most prominent deviation in faith is found in the takfiri view (easily accusing others of heresy), which directly threatens unity. The main solution offered is the strengthening of religious moderation that balances between ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood) and ukhuwah wathaniyah (national brotherhood). The novelty of this research lies in the integration of the value of ukhuwah wathaniyah as a theological foundation in maintaining national harmony amid the tide of radicalism. The policy implication is the importance for the government and educational institutions to mainstream religious moderation curricula and strengthen inclusive religious literacy in order to counter the spread of extremist ideas at the grassroots level.

Fenomena ekstremisme dan radikalisme berlatar agama saat ini menjadi tantangan serius bagi stabilitas sosial dan kerukunan berbangsa di Indonesia. Paham ini sering kali berakar pada pemahaman keagamaan yang sempit, kaku, dan eksklusif, yang jika dibiarkan dapat merusak integrasi nasional dan memicu konflik horizontal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis akar pemikiran ekstremisme, dampaknya terhadap kerukunan antarumat beragama, serta bagaimana paham tersebut merepresentasikan penyimpangan aqidah. Selain itu, penelitian ini berupaya menawarkan solusi strategis melalui konsep moderasi beragama (wasatiyyah) dengan mengedepankan nilai tasamuh (toleransi). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kepustakaan (library research). Data yang bersumber dari jurnal ilmiah, buku, dan dokumen relevan dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis isi (content

analysis) dengan pendekatan deskriptif-kritis untuk mendapatkan gambaran mendalam mengenai fenomena yang dikaji. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa akar ekstremisme bersifat kompleks, mencakup faktor ideologis, teologis, sosial-politik, hingga psikologis. Penyimpangan aqidah yang paling menonjol ditemukan pada pandangan takfiri (mudah mengafirkan pihak lain) yang secara langsung mengancam persatuan. Solusi utama yang ditawarkan adalah penguatan moderasi beragama yang menyeimbangkan antara ukhuwah Islamiyah (persaudaraan Islam) dan ukhuwah wathaniyah (persaudaraan kebangsaan). Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi nilai ukhuwah wathaniyah sebagai fondasi teologis dalam menjaga harmoni nasional di tengah arus radikalisme. Implikasi kebijakannya adalah pentingnya pemerintah dan institusi pendidikan untuk mengarusutamakan kurikulum moderasi beragama serta memperkuat literasi keagamaan yang inklusif guna menangkal penyebaran paham ekstrem di akar rumput.

A. INTRODUCTION

Religious radicalism and extremism are global phenomena that have become crucial issues in various parts of the world, including Indonesia (Setiawan, 2025). As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world and a high level of diversity, Indonesia has become an ideological battleground between moderate interpretations of Islam and transnational movements with extremist agendas. This phenomenon is not only a threat to social stability and national security, but more importantly, it attacks the existential foundations of the nation, namely the values of tolerance and diversity that have long been the glue of social cohesion (Iting et al., 2025). The emergence of groups that impose their will through violence, both verbal and physical, shows that the seeds of intolerance have transformed into a real systemic threat.

The root of this phenomenon lies in what is known as textual reductionism. In this context, religious understanding undergoes an extraordinary narrowing, whereby sacred texts are stripped of their historical and sociological roots. Radical and extremist ideologies tend to adopt an ahistorical mindset by interpreting religious teachings rigidly, literally, and ignoring Maqasid al-Sharia (the noble objectives of Sharia) (Iting et al., 2025). When religious texts are read without considering humanity and the context of the times, what is born is not mercy, but justification for hatred. This rigid understanding does not only stop at the cognitive realm, but transforms into a doctrine of absolute truth claim. Sociologically, this claim creates a sharp demarcation line between the “in-group” that is considered righteous and the “out-group” that is

considered heretical. This polarization leads to a rejection of pluralism, which slowly erodes the spirit of mutual cooperation in Indonesia.

The most dangerous escalation of this mindset is the emergence of takfiri behavior. The phenomenon of easily blaming, condemning, and even excommunicating others who do not agree with us is a manifestation of intellectual and spiritual arrogance. Takfiri actions are not merely a matter of differences in *ijtihad* or opinion, but a serious deviation from the creed. Why is that? Because theologically, it delegitimizes the dignity of fellow human beings who have been glorified by Allah SWT. In addition, takfiri destroys the bonds of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (brotherhood among Muslims) and destroys interfaith harmony (Maisari, 2025). In the Indonesian context, this fragmentation is very worrying because it can trigger horizontal conflicts that threaten the national consensus (*Pancasila* and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) and social cohesion that has been nurtured for centuries.

Seeing this urgency, Islam as a religion of mercy for all creation has actually provided theological and ethical tools to overcome radicalism. Islam offers a solid middle path (moderation/*wasatiyyah*) as an antithesis to all forms of extremism (Sholikhah & Muvid, 2022). This concept of moderation should not stop at rhetoric, but must be actualized through the pillars of *tasamuh* (tolerance) and a broad redefinition of brotherhood. Islam teaches that brotherhood is not limited to *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), but also includes *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national brotherhood) (Najamudin et al., 2024). The awareness that loving one's homeland is part of the manifestation of faith is very important to protect the people from extremist ideologies that seek to separate religion from the national context.

To strengthen the academic position of this research, several previous studies were reviewed. First, research by Sholikhah & Muvid (2022) emphasized the concept of moderate Islam as an alternative process for countering radicalism in Indonesia through education. Second, research by Iting et al. (2025) mapped the roots of radicalism from a sociopolitical perspective and offered a community-based security approach. Third, a study by Maisari (2025) examined the challenges of extremism from a critical perspective of religious moderation with a focus on social behavior change in the digital age. The similarity between these studies and this study is the commitment to making *wasatiyyah* the main solution. However, the difference lies in the locus of analysis. Previous studies have mostly reviewed from the perspective of public policy and general education, while this study delves deeper into the ontology of *aqidah*.

The novelty of this research lies in its theological-sociological synthesis that directly links takfiri practices as a form of doctrinal deviation inherited from the mentality of the classical Khawarij with solutions based on the integration of ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood) and ukhuwah wathaniyah (national brotherhood). This research offers a new proposition that strengthening the spirit of nationalism is not separate from religion, but rather an instrument for safeguarding the purity of faith itself from the distortions of extremist ideology. In other words, defending the state is an integral part of protecting religion.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) Comprehensively analyze the roots of extremist thought from theological and sociological aspects; (2) Analyze how extremist and takfiri ideologies are forms of clear deviation from the faith; and (3) Examine the effectiveness of the concepts of tasamuh and ukhuwah wathaniyah as defenses for national harmony in Indonesia.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach. The type of research used is library research or literature review. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study is on conceptual analysis of the phenomenon of extremism and Islamic solutions based on existing literature (Maisari, 2025).

The data sources in this study are secondary data obtained from various literature, such as scientific books, journal articles, policy documents, and relevant research reports. The collected data was then analyzed using content analysis techniques with a descriptive-critical and descriptive-analytical approach. This process included identifying the main ideas from the sources, organizing the data into thematic categories, and analyzing the connections between ideas to construct a systematic and coherent argument (Sholikhah & Muvid, 2022).

Data Analysis Technique: Using content analysis, which includes identifying ideas, thematic categorization, and coherent argument inference. **Data Credibility/Validity Test:** Conducted through source and theory triangulation, which is comparing data from various scientific literature to ensure consistency of findings.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. The Roots of Extremism Complexity

Extremism stems from a narrow and literal understanding of religious texts without considering the context in which they were revealed. Sociopolitically, feelings of injustice and economic marginalization provide fertile ground for the spread of this ideology. In addition, the development of social media has accelerated the propaganda of hate speech and the recruitment of radical groups.

2. Extremism as a Deviation from Aqidah

The practice of takfiri (easily accusing others of apostasy) is a major indicator of deviation from aqidah. Its historical roots refer to the Khawarij who declared the Prophet's companions infidels because of differences in political choices. This deviation is also seen in the narrow interpretation of the concept of *wala' wal bara'*, which is hostile to anyone outside the group. In contrast, *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah* promotes balance and rejects destructive claims of absolute truth.

3. Wasatiyyah Solution: Tasamuh and Ukhuwah Wathaniyah

Religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*) is the antithesis of extremism. The value of *tasamuh* (tolerance) must be instilled through Islamic education to respect differences in opinion (*furu'iyah*). Furthermore, strengthening *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national brotherhood) becomes a theological basis for accepting the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and Pancasila. Love for the homeland is a manifestation of faith (*hubbul wathan minal iman*) that protects the nation from transnational ideologies.

Discussion

1. The Roots of Extremist Thought

Based on an analysis of available sources, the roots of extremist thought are highly complex and multifactorial.

Ideological and Theological Factors: The main factor is a narrow, literal, and rigid understanding of religion in interpreting sacred texts (the Qur'an and Hadith) (Setiawan, 2025). This understanding often ignores the historical and social context (*asbabun nuzul* or *asbabul wurud*) of the text (Rochim et al., 2025). This is exacerbated by a misunderstanding of concepts such as *jihad* and *wala' wal bara'* (loyalty and enmity) (Sholikhah & Muvid, 2022).

Socio-Political and Economic Factors: Extremism often arises as a response to socio-political and economic conditions (Iting et al., 2025). A sense of social injustice, political marginalization, poverty, and the state's failure to ensure welfare are fertile ground for the growth of radicalism (Larasati et al., 2025). Extremist groups exploit this collective frustration by offering their ideology as a solution (Rochim et al., 2025).

Psychological and Identity Factors: Psychological factors such as the need for identity, purpose in life, and acceptance within a group also play a role. Radical groups often provide a strong sense of identity for those who feel alienated or marginalized from society (Iting et al., 2025).

Globalization and Media Factors: Advances in information technology and social media have accelerated the spread of radical ideologies. Social media has become a primary tool for propaganda, recruitment, and the dissemination of hate speech (Iting et al., 2025).

2. Extremism as a Deviation from Islamic Doctrine

Extremist ideology, particularly that which has developed in Indonesia, represents a deviation from orthodox Islamic doctrine (Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah).

Takfiri Deviation: The most prominent feature of extremism is the tendency to easily declare other individuals or groups who hold different views as infidels (takfir). They claim a monopoly on truth and view other groups as misguided (Maisari, 2025).

Historical Roots (Khawarij): This takfiri attitude is not new, but rather a legacy of the first extremist group in Islamic history, the Khawarij. The Khawarij were known for their extreme views, which declared the companions of the Prophet, such as Ali bin Abi Talib and Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, to be infidels because they were considered not to have ruled according to Allah's law (Iting et al., 2025).

Distortion of Wala' wal Bara': Extremist ideology also distorts the concept of *aqidah wala' wal bara'*. They interpret this concept narrowly as a demand to love their own group and to absolutely hate anyone outside their group, including non-Muslims or Muslims who are considered "impure" (Warsito et al., 2024).

Contrast with Aswaja: The creed of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja), as formulated by scholars such as KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, actually serves as a bulwark to protect the ummah from extremist and takfiri ideologies. Aswaja emphasizes balance, moderation, and tolerance (Dafani et al., 2025).

3. Islamic Solutions: Tasamuh and Ukhuwah Wathaniyah

Faced with the threat of extremism that undermines faith and harmony, Islam offers a comprehensive solution through religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*) (Maisari, 2025).

Strengthening Tasamuh (Tolerance): The first solution is to instill the value of *tasamuh* (tolerance) (Larasati et al., 2025). *Tasamuh* is an attitude of respecting and acknowledging differences, both in beliefs and religious views (*furu'iyah*) (Warsito et al., 2024). This attitude is the antithesis of the claim of absolute truth and the *takfiri* attitude promoted by extremists (Maisari, 2025). Islamic education must be at the forefront in instilling this value of tolerance from an early age (Larasati et al., 2025).

Strengthening Ukhuwah Wathaniyah (National Brotherhood): Extremism often rejects the legitimacy of the nation-state (Maisari, 2025). To counter this, the concept of *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national brotherhood) must be strengthened (Warsito et al., 2024). Indonesian Muslims need to understand that love for the country is part of faith (*hubbul wathan minal iman*) (Dafani et al., 2025). *Ukhuwah wathaniyah* places all citizens, regardless of ethnicity and religion, as fellow countrymen whose harmony must be maintained. This concept is balanced with *ukhuwah Islamiyah* and *ukhuwah basyariyah* (Warsito et al., 2024).

D. CONCLUSION

Extremism in Indonesia is triggered by rigid textualist interpretations and social injustice. Ideologically, this is a deviation from religious doctrine that adopts the *Khawarij* mindset through *takfiri* practices. The solution is to strengthen religious moderation through the pillars of *tasamuh* and *ukhuwah wathaniyah*, which balance religious commitment with national loyalty.

The government and educational institutions need to strengthen religious education curricula based on religious moderation. Strategic policies must be directed at promoting the narrative of *ukhuwah wathaniyah* as the foundation of national stability to counter transnational extremist ideologies.

Further research is expected to use empirical methods or field studies of communities exposed to radicalism to test the effectiveness of the concept of *tasamuh* in the practical process of deradicalization.

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