

## *Encouraging Islamic Hospitality with Indigenization in Indonesia and Malaysia*

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### Abstract

Every society has struggled endlessly to maintain its identity since colonial times. One of them is the cultural concept of carrying out worship in a religion, which has been expanded massively through the cultivation of black-and-white ideology, right and wrong, or which means the truth of the teachings determines the obedience of religious people. However, this issue has become popular because many people want to be more compliant, so the migration movement is massive in society. This article examines that since Islamophobia emerged as a result of the 9/11 tragedy, Indonesia and Malaysia have conceptualized friendly Islam with the theme of religious moderation. This research uses a qualitative approach with the critical juncture method. Research findings show that in Malaysia, a multi-ethnic party won last year's elections after falling out with a Malay-Muslim party. Identity politics is quite strong in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Indonesia is busy promoting Wasatiyya Islam as a basic religion, and it was also promoted in the R20 last year. For years, these two countries have tried to become friendly countries for various ethnicities and religions. Thus, indigenization is more suitable because the two countries have similar traditions and cultures, so indigenization is important for politics and the state.

Keywords: Indigenization, Religious Moderation, 9/11 Tragedy, and Political Identity



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## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian society is no longer foreign to the term 'Islam Nusantara' or Islam archipelago because the majority have recognized it as a traditional practice that is by culture. Islam Nusantara was initiated by the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, namely Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) to form a friendly and moderate Islamic identity. Even so, the concept of Islam is accepted by many Muslim communities because NU members in Indonesia are around 150 million people or around 59.2 percent of the total Indonesian Muslim population. With the additional tone of the term Nusantara, it does not mean that the concept of Islam is incompatible. The concept of Islam is to the mission of the religion which is *rahmatan li al-'alamin*.<sup>1</sup> So, the result gave birth to models of thought, understanding, and experience of Islamic teachings that are friendly, moderate, inclusive, tolerant, peace-loving, harmonious, and respectful of diversity. In addition, Islam Nusantara is an encounter between Islam and local culture (tradition), especially Java.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of Islam Nusantara was taken from what was defined by Abdurrahman Wahid, the three-term chairperson of NU (1984-1999) and the fourth President of Indonesia as the 'Indigenization of Islam' or the indigenization of Islam. According to him, the development of Islamic culture is a product of acculturation between Islamic values and culture in the Indonesian archipelago. Thus, NU is very conservative towards religious rituals and worship because it adheres to the study of the Yellow Book, the result of interpretations from the Qur'an and Hadith. Meanwhile, on the other hand, NU continues to accept all local cultures and practices.<sup>3</sup> It is not without reason that Wahid has such an Islamic concept. If traced further, the history of the entry of Islam into Indonesia through cultural acculturation carried out by Wali Songo, because in the past the archipelago was controlled by Buddhists and Hindus. As we know, there is the biggest temple in the world, Borobudur, which is part of the history of Buddhism in Indonesia.

From time to time, the meaning of the word 'Archipelago' continues to change and is now interpreted as Indonesia according to what is stated in the dictionary. Meanwhile, the Malay world is attached to Malaysia. However, when referring to existing history, the meaning of the archipelago is broader than just Indonesian territory. In 1334, Gadjah Mada, the main minister of the Majapahit Kingdom, used the word Nusantara to refer to the maritime area (archipelago) of the Kingdom. However, since the 1990s, the term Nusantara has been used for the politicization of Nusantara Islam in Southeast Asia. Even though the meaning of the word Nusantara is quite broad, Malaysia

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<sup>1</sup> Achmad Syafrizal, 'Sejarah Islam Nusantara', *Islamuna: Jurnal Studi Islam* 2, no. 2 (5 December 2015): 235–53.

<sup>2</sup> Mujamil Qomar, 'Islam Nusantara: Sebuah Alternatif Model Pemikiran, Pemahaman, Dan Pengamalan Islam', *El Harakah: Jurnal Budaya Islam* 17, no. 2 (2015): 198–217.

<sup>3</sup> Faried F. Saenong, 'Nahdlatul Ulama (NU): A Grassroot Movement Advocating Moderate Islam', in *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements* (Brill, 2021), 121–50, [https://www.academia.edu/49881876/Nahdlatul\\_Ulama\\_NU\\_A\\_Grassroot\\_Movement\\_Advocating\\_Moderate\\_Islam](https://www.academia.edu/49881876/Nahdlatul_Ulama_NU_A_Grassroot_Movement_Advocating_Moderate_Islam).

did not use it in Islam Hadhari (Islamic Civilization) propagated by the former prime minister of Malaysia Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, but the concept of Islam Nusantara has indirectly influenced Malaysian politicians who wish to develop radical Islamic groups in Southeast Asia. Indonesian and Malaysian scholars collaborated to develop the International Journal of Islam Nusantara.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to Indonesia, the development of Nusantara Islam in Malaysia is not massive due to political differences overshadowing religion. The influence of the politicization of religion is quite strong in Malaysia because Islam is the official religion. In fact, since the 1950s there have been the forces of Islamization that Norshahril Saat and Afra Alatas<sup>5</sup> define as a 'greening' process. This Islamization process is attached to the history of the battle between the two parties, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the Islamic Party of Malaysia. Both try to make themselves true Muslims. Because, basically every Malay ethnic community, must be Muslim. With this religious approach, the two parties want to show their alignment with the Malaysian people.

The history of identity politics in Malaysia has posed many dilemmas because the Muslim population is not as large as in Indonesia. The number is only around 19.84 million people or 61.3 percent. Also, many conflicts occur due to the attachment of religious identity to ethnic origin. So, in 2016, Anwar Ibrahim began to promote the idea of friendly Islam to respond to the development of conservative Islam in Malaysia. Last year the UMNO party, which incidentally is a nationalist party, won the general election. Thus, both Indonesia and Malaysia have a long history of promoting a friendly Islam through the strengthening of local traditions or indigenization. In addition, the concept of peaceful Islam is taken for national and international political interests.

## II. CONCEPTUALIZING INDIGENOUS SOCIETY

Before there was the term, indigenous people, anthropologists examined tribe as a social formation subject to distinguish it from other social formations. To find it by looking at the presence of a community that has been described as tribes. However, now the term has been replaced with indigenous people. Both have almost the same definition but differ in political background. In some literature or maybe what has been defined by the community, indigenous people are referred to as settlers or aliens because of differences in culture or the color of their skin. Indigenous originates from a long history of settlement and usurpation. In short, there is colonization of the tribal population and they bring a new culture so that the colonized people are defined as indigenous people. Because, in the middle of the 19th century, the so-called tribes were subordinated or marginalized economically, politically, and socially. Thus, the idea of indigenous people

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<sup>4</sup> Hans-Dieter Evers, 'Nusantara: History of a Concept', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 89, no. 1 (310) (2016): 3-14.

<sup>5</sup> Norshahril Saat and Afra Alatas, 'Islamisation in Malaysia Beyond UMNO and PAS' 2022, no. 96 (26 September 2022).

must be proven on the basis of the territories inhabited by them in the past and the present.<sup>6</sup>

When talking about indigenous social work, there are two streams of literature and both have a relationship with the history of colonization. Namely developing nations in Africa, Asia, and South America and developed Western contexts such as the USA, Canada, and Australia. Apart from that, studies on indigenous people also highlight unique culture and its consequences as a minority, both culturally sensitive and culturally specific knowledge and practice.<sup>7</sup> Indigenization is also used by conservative nationalists to justify privilege and ethnicity as mobilizing badges. In Indonesia, for example, in the 1920s, there was an indigenization that produced Indonesian identities over Javanese, Sumatran, Balinese, and other identities.<sup>8</sup> Even so, nationalism, which is usually measured by this identity, often causes riots between groups of people. For example, there is an indigenization movement in India where the Christian population takes over Hindu culture which has become the state religion.<sup>9</sup>

Syed Farid Alatas<sup>10</sup> divides indigenous social science into four levels. First, at the metatheoretical level, it refers to the analysis of worldviews and the ontological, epistemological, and ethical assumptions that underlie social scientific work. In this case, it is exemplified in postcolonial thinking which is trapped in colonialist or neocolonialist thinking. Second, at the theoretical level, indigenization refers to the creation of concepts and theories from historical experience and cultural practices. Third, at the empirical level, it refers to issues relevant to the Third World which have so far been ignored. Fourth, at the level of applied social sciences, indigenization refers to the determination of solutions, plans, and policies. Thus, indirectly this concept of indigenization encourages Third World countries that have the colonial experience to exist in the international sphere. Such an indigenization process is a tactical and strategic step for the decolonization process.

Martin Van Bruinessen<sup>11</sup> distinguishes between Arabization, Westernization, and indigenization. However, in this context, Martin uses a case study in Indonesia as an illustration of how Islamization is not singular as defined by previous scholars. Arabization in Indonesia emerged after the New Order when movements based in the Middle East, such as the Ikhwanul Muslimin, Hizbut Tahrir, and various Salafi groups emerged. Members of the Indonesian Arab community have become important figures

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<sup>6</sup> André Béteille, 'The Idea of Indigenous People', *Current Anthropology* 39, no. 2 (1998): 187–92.

<sup>7</sup> Mel Gray and T. Hetherington, 'Indigenization, Indigenous Social Work and Decolonization: Mapping the Theoretical Terrain', in *Decolonizing Social Work* (Routledge, 2016), 25–41.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Hack, 'Decolonization and Violence in Southeast Asia: Crises of Authority and Identity', in *Beyond Empire and Nation: Decolonizing Societies in Africa and Asia*, ed. Els Bogaerts and Remco Raben (Leiden: KITLV, 2012), 137–66.

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Oddie, 'Indigenization and Nationalism / Indigénisation et Nationalisme', *Archives de Sciences Sociales Des Religions* 103, no. 1 (1998): 129–52.

<sup>10</sup> Syed Farid Alatas, 'On the Indigenization of Academic Discourse', *Alternatives* 18, no. 3 (1 July 1993): 307–38.

<sup>11</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Indonesian Muslims in a Globalizing World: Westernisation, Arabisation, and Indigenizing Responses*, The RSIS Working Paper Series 311, 2018.

among the leaders of radical organizations, such as Laskar Jihad and Jemaah Islamiyah. They are tasked with correcting the practices and beliefs of Indonesian Muslims with the slogan 'back to the Qur'an and Hadith'. Apart from Islamization which adopts Arab cultural practices, in Indonesia, there are also Islamic movements that Westernize. They tend to be more inclusive of Western thought and are opposed to impure Islam by those who defend Arab culture. Most of the figures who initiated this thought went to school in the Netherlands, North America, Western Europe, or Australia. They call for secularism, liberalism, and pluralism to develop Muslim discourses that are compatible with modernity, liberal democracy, gender equality, harmonious inter-religious relations, and rationalism. In contrast to Arabization and Westernization, the Islamic indigenization movement initiated by Abdurrahman Wahid is more attached to local aspects where the process of Islamization does not erase the existing culture, but connects it. In my opinion, this indigenization can bring the issue of Islamization into a positive thing.

Every Muslim wants to be an obedient servant to God. It is undeniable that the development of Arabization continues to grow with that desire. Arabization and Islamization are two different contexts. Arabization is Arabic culture which is interpreted as a culture that is by Islam because the language used since the beginning of the revelation of the Qur'an used that language. Even so, along with the development of Islam which has spread to several countries, Islamic culture has become increasingly diverse but has not lost its substance. However, many sects are trying to restore a culture that is by Arabic and make Islam no longer tolerant of local culture. According to Baladas Ghoshal<sup>12</sup>, there should be a de-Arabization of Islam in Asia to avoid exclusivity and promote an inclusive Islam by its own indigenous cultures and traditions.

Thus, the process of indigenization in Asia is not only attached to the context of colonial history but to new cultures that continue to emerge along with the strengthening of freedom of expression. Especially in Indonesia, since the implementation of democracy, conservative Islam has begun to emerge, resulting in divisions between religious communities. Even so, this problem is a challenge for the government to make a picture of Islam in Asia or negotiate with a new culture. So far, the government has begun to accept the thoughts of progressive Muslims, such as Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, or Anwar Ibrahim to reinterpret what Islam is in the Asian context.

### III. METHOD AND CASE SELECTION

This study uses a qualitative approach which uses natural language with a small sample. Gerring<sup>13</sup> said that this qualitative method focuses on particular individuals, events, and contexts. In addition, the nature of these approaches is also incomparable. The steps

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<sup>12</sup> Baladas Ghoshal, 'Arabization: The Changing Face of Islam in Asia', *India Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2010): 69–89.

<sup>13</sup> John Gerring, 'Qualitative Methods', *Annual Review of Political Science* 20, no. 1 (2017): 15–36.

taken are conducting social research to obtain descriptive data in the form of words and pictures. That way, this research does not use statistical work but qualitative evidence, such as the reality on the ground and what was experienced by the respondents. In this case, researchers will interpret and explain the data obtained from the observation process, and documentation to get answers to problems in detail and clearly.

This research uses critical juncture which is an experimental, eventful, and mechanism-based historical causal analysis.<sup>14</sup> Before the existence of a critical juncture, there was a long history that took a critical point as a form of causal explanation of this research. The critical juncture of this research is to take the 9/11 tragedy which changed the world's view of Islam and how Muslim-majority countries react to it. In the case study, this research uses the history of Indonesia and Malaysia because both have cultural similarities in the context of 'Nusantara' and have a large Muslim population. Both of them have long experience in how to describe friendly Islam in national and international politics.

#### IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

##### A. *Malaysia History and Political Islam*

Islam entered Malaysia through trade and travel by scholars from Southeast Asia and the Middle East who married residents, including the royal family of the Hindu kingdoms that ruled the Malay Peninsula. In addition, they also opened religious schools so that almost all Malays converted to Islam. When Malaysia was ruled by the British, British colonial policies were partly responsible for Malaysia's current multi-ethnic citizens. The division of labor stemming from British colonial heritage is reflected in contemporary stereotypes of Malaysian ethnic identity in which Malays control politics, Chinese control the economy, and Indians predominate in manual labor in the plantations and professions. In the late 19th century, many Indian and Hadhramout (now called Yaman) Muslim traders and scholars immigrated to Penang and Singapore and began to question the Islamic legitimacy of the rule of Malay sultans and the form of Islam practiced by ordinary people. Thus, young people began to push for a reorientation of Malay Muslims towards a wider Muslim community. The results of these young people's ideas became the basis for the revival of Malaysian Islamic identity in the future.<sup>15</sup>

Arab people who trade and marry with native Malaysians make them local citizens because of the process of interaction with culture and society. During the colonial period, their closeness to the ruling family of Kedah and the support of the British made their status quite high. Because, for them, being Malay is an acknowledgment of moral and social superiority over the local community. After independence, they had to externalize the values that made them almost completely

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<sup>14</sup> Dan Slater and Erica Simmons, 'Informative Regress: Critical Antecedents in Comparative Politics', *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 7 (3 June 2010): 886–917.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher A. Furlow, 'Malaysian Modernities: Cultural Politics and the Construction of Muslim Technoscientific Identities', *Anthropological Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2009): 197–228.

immersed in Malay society. Even so, there are still phenotypic characteristics such as the use of surnames and the honorary titles sayyid and Sharifah.<sup>16</sup> When talking about natives, in Malaysia there are various forms, including Malays, Orang Asli, bumiputera, pribumi, Orang Asli, aboriginal, and all of that can be translated as 'Pribumi'. The term was divided because a new discourse on the rights of international indigenous peoples was superimposed on existing discourses and rearranged. As is well known, the Orang Asli group has been assimilated as Malay because they wear Malay clothes and embrace Islam. So, indirectly, the indigenous people of Malaysia are Muslim.<sup>17</sup>

Malaysia is ranked sixth out of 175 countries around the world that implement religious regulations. The country applies many rules and regulations in the name of Islam and claims to have a monopoly on the interpretation of Islamic law. In written history Islam spread to the Malay Peninsula starting in the 14th century, where there was the application of Islamic law which had been implemented since the colonial era, it was part and parcel of adat (custom). Religious leaders are taken from the community who are considered pious or have religious ability to become imams at local mosques or court imams. In the early 20th century, the Malay Peninsula came under a treaty whereby the British sought to expand their control, and local rulers sought accommodation against local rivals. Thus, with freedom in the Straits Settlements, Adat formalized the 'Muhammadan' law which was used to regulate Muslim family law in 1880. After that, in 1900 courts for Muslim citizens were established as a subordinate part of the judicial system.<sup>18</sup>

After Malaysia's independence, Malay social and political leaders were faced with the task of building the nation, one of which was building a national identity. In doing so, they need not only to find local and indigenous identities but also to identify and expand the resources that can be responsible for forming these identities. Islam is one of its main sources and Malaysia's Federal Constitution explicitly states Islam as the official religion. Supposedly, the constitution could provide freedom of religion, but it turned out to be the opposite.<sup>19</sup> This happened when the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) emerged in 1951 which was formed due to their disappointment with the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) which failed to accommodate the interests of Muslims. After that, the two became parties that considered each other most concerned about Muslims. UMNO is a nationalist party, but they accommodate Muslims because ethnic Malays are Muslim. Due to strong political influence, there is an agenda for Islamization in Malaysia which is called Greening Malaysia. The revivalist agenda entered mosques, universities, and da'wah organizations or those holding important positions in society in

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<sup>16</sup> Sharifah Zaleha binte Syed Hassan, 'History and the Indigenization of the Arabs in Kedah, Malaysia', *Asian Journal of Social Science* 32, no. 3 (2004): 401–24.

<sup>17</sup> Rusalina Idrus, 'Competing for the "Indigenous" Slot: Layered Histories and Positionings in Peninsular Malaysia', *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 37, no. 1 (2022): 58–84.

<sup>18</sup> Tamir Moustafa, 'Judging in God's Name: State Power, Secularism, and the Politics of Islamic Law in Malaysia', in *Religious Rights* (Routledge, 2017), 267–82.

<sup>19</sup> Edmund Kee-Fook Chia, 'Wawasan 2020 and Christianity in Religiously Plural Malaysia', in *From Malaysia to the Ends of the Earth*, ed. Elaine Wei-Fun Goh et al., Southeast Asian and Diasporic Contributions to Biblical and Theological Studies (Claremont Press, 2021), 119–38.

the 1970s and 1980s. They promote an Islamic perspective in all social and political aspects.<sup>20</sup>

### B. *Indigenous Society in Indonesia*

The history of the entry of Islam into Indonesia is almost the same as that of Malaysia, and previously it also had the history of the Archipelago being ruled by Singhasari (early 13th century) and Majapahit (late 13th to early 16th century). The influence of the indigenous system of worship in Indonesia came from India so it developed a close cultural contact since the early centuries of the Christian era. If seen now, Bali is the most representative example of ancient religion from India. In Javanese society, the Indian Brahmins and monks were highly respected so the religious system was propagated by them. This system was accepted by the Indonesian people and internalized with the same alien system as the local tradition. Indonesian society at that time was very egalitarian and to formulate the state system the Brahmins were invited.<sup>21</sup> Islam came to Southeast Asia quite late, so in the first century, Hindu traders came to the Indonesian archipelago. After that, the development of Hindu-Buddhist civilization emerged around the end of the seventh century and became the largest Hindu kingdom, namely Sri Vijaya. After that, the kingdom of Majapahit (1293-1520) appeared and gradually developed in Central Java after the kingdom of Sri Wijaya for 14 centuries succeeding many of its domains and glories. During the decline of the Majapahit empire, Islam came to be established in Indonesia and Malaysia. Islam is quite welcomed in these two countries. Perhaps around the beginning of the 15th century was the heyday of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. This success comes from the founder-ruler of Malacca state on the Malaysian peninsula. Strategically located for trade, the kingdom in Malacca had a relationship with the Muslim princess of the state of Pasai.<sup>22</sup>

The term 'Serambi Makkah' is attached to Aceh Province because it is home to several Muslim port governments. It has been known before, that the process of entering Islam into Indonesia was using trade. Thus, from the late 13th century, courts protected Islamic scholars and Sufis from across the Islamic world who brought various models of belief and practice. The role of the Sufis at the beginning of the Aceh government had a big hand in mobilizing resistance against the Dutch. This is because they believe that resistance to colonialism is a jihad in defending Islam against infidels who attack it. In the 20th century, local clerics strengthened the foundations of autonomous institutions in the form of educational institutions known as the Aceh language, namely dayah to exert social influence.<sup>23</sup> Resistance against the Dutch was carried out by Muslims not only in Aceh but in all areas where the majority of the people adhered to Islam. Even so,

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<sup>20</sup> Saat and Atlas, 'Islamisation in Malaysia Beyond UMNO and PAS'.

<sup>21</sup> K. Mitra, 'Religion in Pre-Islamic Indonesia', *In Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 72* (2011): 1029–36.

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad Saleem Ahmad, 'Islam in Southeast Asia: A Study of the Emergence and Growth in Malaysia and Indonesia', *Islamic Studies* 19, no. 2 (1980): 134–41.

<sup>23</sup> R. Michael Feener, 'State Shari'a and Its Limits: Reconfigurations of Practice, Community and Authority in Contemporary Aceh', in *Islam and the Limits of the State*, ed. R. Michael Feener, David Kloos, and Annemarie Samuels, 2016, 1–23.



after Indonesia's independence, the desire of Muslim groups to establish an Islamic state strengthened, causing many conflicts since the 1940s. Martin van Bruinessen<sup>24</sup> says that the roots of many radical Muslims in Indonesia come from the Darul Islam movement and the Masjumi party. In addition, the emergence of the 'Islamic campus' in the 1980s and the empowerment of Islam in the final year of Suharto, as well as the strengthening of Islamic politics in the 1999 elections.

Indonesian independence adhered to a nationalist movement system initiated by Soekarno and Hatta on August 17, 1945. Thus, Indonesia has Pancasila as the basis of state law. Even so, Indonesia is more Islamic than Pakistan because long before the second world war it already had an Islamic party as well as a nationalist or communist party. One of them is the Sarekat Islam which appeared in 1912. In addition, the pamphlets that were distributed throughout Java, if translated indirectly, Indonesia wanted to become a country with Islamic law. This proclamation was submitted by S. M. Kartosoewirjo in Medina, Indonesia, who recognized himself as the 'leader of the Islamic State of Indonesia'. Apart from Darul Islam led by Kartosoewirjo, there were Islamic organizations that also had Islamic state initiatives, such as the Madjelis Sjuro Islam Indonesia and Masjumi.<sup>25</sup> Not only Islamic parties or organizations, in 1989 Soeharto signed a new law governing the country's Islamic courts, known as the Religious Judicature Act. This religious court deals with matters of marriage and divorce on the islands of Java and Madura. Previously, the court regarding this family referred to the law of inheritance from the Netherlands which was not by the principles upheld by Islam. So, the Ministry of Religion proposed this law to accommodate the interests of Muslims. It was not immediately approved, but there were long negotiations that were finally approved by the president.<sup>26</sup>

Amid the rise of the Islamist movement, progressive Muslims began to voice moderation to promote a tolerant, moderate, and pluralist Islam. These intellectuals, such as Nurcholis Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, or Syafii Maarif balance conservative Islamic teachings and offer a friendly Islam. Even so, in the early 2000s, liberal and progressive experienced a decline because the term had a negative connotation and was also considered to be associated with a Westernized and leftist agenda. Greg Fealy<sup>27</sup> said that the triumph of liberal and progressive Muslims during the Soeharto era was caused by an Islamist agenda that was marginalized by the state and they received financial support from Western nations to promote Islamic pluralism and democratization. So, when there is no direct support from the state anymore, the Islamist movement is growing. One of them was influenced by the democratic system after the fall of the

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<sup>24</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, 'Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia', *South East Asia Research* 10, no. 2 (1 July 2002): 117–54.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Prins, 'Some Notes About Islam and Politics in Indonesia', *Die Welt Des Islams* 6, no. 1 (1959): 117–29.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Cammack, 'Indonesia's 1989 Religious Judicature Act: Islamization of Indonesia or Indonesianization of Islam?', *Indonesia*, no. 63 (1997): 143–68.

<sup>27</sup> Greg Fealy, 'Reformasi and the Decline of Liberal Islam', in *Activists in Transition: Progressive Politics in Democratic Indonesia*, ed. Thushara Dibley and Michele Ford (Cornell University Press, 2019), 117–34.

Soeharto regime. Currently, Indonesia is trying to reduce the conservative Islamic movement by bringing back the ideology of progressive Muslims.

In response to conservative Muslims who wanted to establish an Islamic state, Abdurrahman Wahid again echoed the spirit of Wali Songo in the process of Islamization in Indonesia. Because he saw that the Arabic context which increasingly wanted to be attached to Indonesia was very far from the condition of cultural diversity in Indonesia. So, he wanted to restore that spirit by calling it the 'Indigenization of Islam'. This ideology was created by looking at the history of Islam which was cultured with the local culture. Even so, there were pros and cons regarding Indigenous Islam. In 1989, the Kiai gathered at the Darut Tauhid Arjawinangun Islamic Boarding School, Cirebon, to try Abdurrahman Wahid. Even so, this concept is slowly being accepted and scholars have tried to adopt local culture effectively, starting from the way of dress, traditional rituals, and even traditions when celebrating holidays. Because, if it is not preserved, Islam will become an inclusive religion and the struggle of the previous Wali Songo will not continue. Many local cultures have been acculturated with Islam. So, the idea of indigenization of Islam continues to this day and is adopted by the government as Nusantara Islam.<sup>28</sup>

### C. *Post 9/11 in Southeast Asia*

The political landscape of Islam in Southeast Asia is changing due to the impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks and other terrorist issues. This impact brought major changes to political, social, economic, and cultural developments. Many countries in Southeast Asia became actors in the counter-terrorism agenda, including Malaysia and Indonesia. However, the Islamic political landscape has been characterized by events such as the regional economic crisis in 1997-1998 that worsened economic and social conditions and supported political and religious extremist activities. The interaction with external trends resulted in greater Islamic militancy. In addition, there was a major event in Indonesia where the fall of the New Order was the beginning of political chaos because it saw Islam as a path to political power with the emergence of elite and military factions and Islamic extremists. Meanwhile, in Malaysia that year there was also Islamization which was colored by the context of competition between the dominant parties, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the Pan-Malay Islamic Party (PAS). Moreover, there were terrorist bombings in Bali and Jakarta that illustrated the complexity of Islamic politics.<sup>29</sup> With the emergence of terrorism issues with major events in the United States, countries in Southeast Asia are increasingly showing that their countries are not involved and are trying to form strict counter-terrorism regulations.

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<sup>28</sup> Ainul Fitriah, 'Pemikiran Abdurrahman Wahid Tentang Pribumisasi Islam', *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 3, no. 1 (3 June 2013): 39–59.

<sup>29</sup> Angel M. Rabasa, 'Southeast Asia: Moderate Tradition and Radical Challenge', in *The Muslim World After 9/11*, 1st ed. (RAND Corporation, 2004), 367–412.

After massive changes in the Islamic political landscape in Southeast Asia, the problem of terrorism continues to emerge. Since 2016, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group has conducted propaganda attacks and recruited members from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Considering the danger of this terrorist attack, the regional ASEAN organization formed regulations to eradicate this threat. One of them is the Bangkok Declaration, which states that ASEAN will "promote regional peace and stability". In addition, the 2007 ASEAN Charter has introduced the concept of "collective responsibility in promoting regional peace, security and prosperity". Thus, in line with this mission, the regional-based organization developed a counter-terrorism arsenal since 9/11 through the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism (ACCT) in 2007 and 2009 developed the ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter-Terrorism. The association serves as an efficient platform for a dialog that promotes and encourages moderation for member states.<sup>30</sup> Malaysia and Indonesia are ASEAN members who are also active in promoting moderation as a strategy to combat terrorism. Therefore, with this platform, they can strengthen their countries' capacity to continue counter-terrorism.

Actually, besides ASEAN, many Muslim organizations are also involved in promoting the issue of interfaith peace to eradicate terrorism. This is because Muslims have often been criticized for the eradication process as well as the emergence of high cases of terrorism so they appear not to carry out their commitments firmly. Many organizations have been established to eradicate terrorism such as increasing interfaith dialogue, education for counter-terrorism, condemning terrorism and acts of violence by Muslims, and encouraging peaceful conflict resolution. A Muslim organization that also deals with terrorism is the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Interfaith dialog was built before the 9/11 tragedy in the Philippines, namely the Bishops-Ulama Forum which was established in 1996. After 9/11 the annual Doha Conference on Interreligious Dialogue was inaugurated in 2002. Also, the United Nations declared 2001 as the year of Dialogue among Civilizations and established the International Institute for Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations based in Iran. In addition to international-based organizations, non-governmental organizations that focus on education for peace issues also continue to grow in Indonesia and Malaysia. Such as the International Center for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP), the Wahid Institute, and Peace Education in Aceh. Activities routinely carried out by the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) and Sisters in Islam (SIL) in Malaysia also continue to hold routine activities for counter-terrorism.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the struggle of Muslim countries to address the problem of terrorism has never stopped since the major events in the United States.

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<sup>30</sup> Marguerite Borelli, 'ASEAN Counter-Terrorism Weaknesses', *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, no. 9 (2017): 14–20.

<sup>31</sup> David Smock and Qamar Huda, 'Islamic Peacemaking Since 9/11', *DIANE Publishing* 31 (1 March 2009).

#### D. Politicization of Islam Wasatiyya

After the 9/11 tragedy in 2001, the issue of Islamophobia strengthened which made several countries begin to form and build a friendly Islamic culture. In Malaysia, there is the concept of Wasatiyyah which was introduced by the fifth Prime Minister, Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak in September 2010 according to Islamic principles. The concept built is to support the multi-ethnic Malaysian community. Wasatiyyah here refers to moderation, middle, balance, or the middle path approach. Not only introduced, but also applied in various organizations, including The Wasatiyyah Institute, Global Movement of Moderates (GMM) Foundation, Discourse of Panel Thinkers on the Wasatiyyah Concept, The National Seminar on Understanding Wasatiyyah and Malaysia, and International Conference on Global Movement of Moderates (ICGMM). The concept offered by the Prime Minister is in line with the efforts of the Malaysian government to form a culture of society that is peaceful and harmonious amidst differences in race and belief.<sup>32</sup> Prof. Kamal Hassan, Chancellor of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) from 1999 to 2006 also voiced and conceptualized wasatiyyah according to Islam to respond to the 9/11 issue. According to him, the concept must be based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah (the Prophet's tradition). Three wasatiyyah concepts that are by Islamic values are (1) faith (belief), (2) 'ilm (knowledge), and (3) taqa (compliance to divine guidance). There are two goals of wasatiyyah according to Kamal, namely to correct the image of Islam which has been tarnished by extremism, and to overcome the spread of extremism among Muslims in the world.<sup>33</sup>

The context of moderation in Indonesia began in the post-Soeharto period or around 1999 due to the transition to democracy. Against this background, Abdurrahman Wahid and Syafii Maarif developed the theme of moderate Islam because at that time there were many religious conflicts. The two figures come from two major mass organizations, NU and Muhammadiyah, and their ideas are still being studied at the Wahid Institute and Maarif Institute. Both show how religious moderation develops in Indonesia and its influence on society.<sup>34</sup> Islamic mass organizations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah have also implemented their ideology to counteract conservative Islamic groups. Both want to balance conservative Islamic da'wah while at the same time preventing ideologies that lead to radical actions and intolerance. Even so, both of them have not been able to ward off the group's unilateral claims and tend to strengthen their group's ideology.<sup>35</sup> NU, which promotes Islam Nusantara, strengthens its argument with the revitalization of Ahlus-sunnah wal Jamaah, wherein the method of taking law combines texts and reason so that it is able to reconcile revelation and ratios.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Wan Mujani, Ermy Rozali, and Nor Zakaria, 'The Wasatiyyah (Moderation) Concept: Its Implementation In Malaysia', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 4 (1 July 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Muhammad Haniff Hassan, 'Wasatiyyah as Explained by Prof. Muhammad Kamal Hassan: Justice, Excellence and Balance', *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 6, no. 2 (2014): 24–30.

<sup>34</sup> Wahyudi Akmaliah, Priyambudi Sulistiyanto, and Sukendar Sukendar, 'Making Moderate Islam in Indonesia', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 10 May 2022, 1–15.

<sup>35</sup> H. Jubba, J. Awang, and S. A. Sungkilang, 'The Challenges of Islamic Organizations in Promoting Moderation in Indonesia', *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 6, no. 1 (2021): 43–54.

<sup>36</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Tuhan Tidak Perlu Dibela* (Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 1999).

In 2016, the Minister of Religion (Menag) Lukman Hakim Saifuddin began to promote religious moderation as a program that is a solution to the religious life of a pluralistic Indonesian society. After the end of his term of office, in 2019 he launched the book *Moderation of Religion* which contains the concept of implementing religious moderation with notes on empirical experience in the life of religious communities along with its strategy. After that, the Ministry of Religion was given the mandate as the leading sector for the implementation of the Strengthening Religious Moderation program as a follow-up to Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number 18 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). Ulil Abshar Abdala in an essay written in Kompas Newspaper (6/7/2023) said that there are actually three sources of the idea of religious moderation promoted by the Ministry of Religion. First, this idea arose from NU's environment which accepted Pancasila, did not conflict with religious commitments and national commitments, as well as Gus Dur's idea of indigenous Islam. Second, the idea of Muhammadiyah entitled Progressive Islam is the result of the reinterpretation of Islamic teachings so that they are in accordance with the times. Third, namely the ideas of reformist figures, such as Nurcholis Madjid, Dawam Rahardjo, and Djohan Effendi. The idea of this reformist Muslim influences the formulation of religious moderation because it is inclusive and plural.

The spirit of Wasatiyyah's Islamic ideology is the right step for politicians who want to get into office. In Malaysia, prior to his election as Prime Minister in 2022, Anwar Ibrahim had been exploring ideas and concepts for friendly Islam for a long time. After leaving prison, he visited Indonesia with a mission to equalize understanding of religious moderation in 2018. In fact, he also actively wrote about what friendly Islam is with the aim of counter-terrorism, which at that time was happening a lot in Indonesia. According to him, this idea is very appropriate for the multi-ethnic Malaysian cabinet. Anwar Ibrahim's journey is the same as that of Joko Widodo, who has also been a pillar of Islam Nusantara in Indonesia since his political campaign in 2014. Apart from that, he has also actively embraced Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) as the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia as a basis for this thought.<sup>37</sup> The two leaders currently in office are figures from nationalist parties. Even though Anwar Ibrahim has left UMNO since 1999, the spirit of nationalism is still the same in the party he built, the People's Justice Party (PKR). Even though Joko Widodo is at the end of his term, the legacy of the religious moderation program at the Ministry of Religion is still ongoing.

#### E. *Islam and Foreign Policy*

Islam has been widely used for the strategies of political parties, militant groups, and even social movements. However, lately, Islam has also been used by the government to carry out its political mission to ensure regime survival because many people believe that leaders who understand religion will bring change to their government. In addition, the

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<sup>37</sup> Hisanori Kato, 'The Islam Nusantara Movement in Indonesia', in *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements*, ed. Muhammad Afzal Upal and Carole M. Cusack (Brill, 2021), 110–28.

government also brings Islam into global competition that can change the world order or can be called the geopolitics of religious soft power. Since the rise of the issue of terrorism after 9/11, the US has intervened in many countries to participate and cooperate in counterterrorism. Thus, several countries have positioned themselves as purveyors of a "moderate Islam", one of which is Indonesia. The country believes that this strategy can blunt the narrative of extremist groups. The way they do it usually adapts to the traditions that already exist in their respective countries. For example, Indonesia has long believed in the tradition of tolerance taught by the Wali Songo. Although in this case counter-terrorism is limited to issues of locality, issues of culture, norms, and religion are discussed in the post-liberal world order.<sup>38</sup>

The current approach to geopolitics is not limited to a war of weapons, but the wealth of cultural or religious approaches can be a strong strategy to establish relations with other countries. Culture can also unite countries that are in conflict, such as Malaysia and Indonesia in the submission of pantun as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.<sup>39</sup> Religion is also being looked at by China, which is very much a Communist Party. Because the importance of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) requires this strategy to exist, its reach includes government areas led by Buddhist communities in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar. In fact, before the initiative, the approach through the role of religion was already in place but not as sharpened as under President Xi Jinping. The manager of this strategy comes from the Chinese Communist Party which is engaged in exploring China's Buddhist relations with Southeast Asia.<sup>40</sup> The importance of religion in the role of diplomacy is not wasted by China to block Washington's influence in Asia. For a long time, the rivalry between China and the US has made foreign policy shocks in Southeast Asia in particular even stronger.

Foreign policy is inseparable from the dynamics of domestic politics and the beliefs embraced by society. In this case, Islam-based foreign policy in Europe and America is unlike what happens in Muslim countries that focus on religious norms themselves. Meanwhile, the approach of the two countries is more to their secular epistemology that understands normal politics so that it affects their foreign policies. The policy illustrates that the emergence of Islam in politics is equated with intolerance and fundamentalism. Although some Muslim-majority countries have implemented secularism, both countries consider it a mere imitation.<sup>41</sup> As in Turkey, where the issue of secularism is present in society, some groups reject an Islam-based foreign policy. However, this policy was used by President Tayyip Erdogan's regime to maintain its

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Mandaville Mandaville and Shadi Hamid Hamid, 'Islam as Statecraft: How Governments Use Religion in Foreign Policy' (Washington, DC United States: Brookings Institution, 16 November 2018).

<sup>39</sup> Shella Hajura, 'Shared Heritage Diplomacy of Indonesia and Malaysia as Soft Power in The Southeast Asia Region', *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional* 10, no. 2 (10 January 2022): 84–95.

<sup>40</sup> Gregory Raymond, 'Religion as a Tool of Influence: Buddhism and China's Belt and Road Initiative in Mainland Southeast Asia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 42, no. 3 (9 December 2020): 346–71.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 'Political Islam and Foreign Policy in Europe and the United States', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3, no. 4 (2007): 345–67.

power for more than 20 years. This policy is used for transnational institutions.<sup>42</sup> Even so, no country truly implements Islam as the foundation of foreign policy.

Although the Islamic approach to foreign policy seems pessimistic in some countries, the religious approach is used to fight the issue of terrorism that damages the image of Islam itself. There are actually two approaches in the fight against terrorism, namely through hard power and soft power relations. For the hard power approach through detention, surveillance, arrest, and intelligence to prevent destructive terrorism activities. While soft power through religious leaders who actively voice peace derived from Islamic religious norms to eliminate prejudice to foster a sense of tolerance towards others. This is because, so far, the issue of terrorism has arisen because of the egocentrism of a religion towards other religions so that hatred arises.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, this soft power approach is widely practiced by countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia and Malaysia.

#### F. *Islam Nusantara as a Soft-Power Relation*

In international relations, Islam is used as a soft-power relation with other countries. Since the Soeharto era, Indonesia has had several policies that focus on the role of Islam in relations with Muslim countries, such as Jakarta's policy on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), revolutionary Iran, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the religious conflict in Bosnia. Indonesia seeks to carry out a foreign policy that is not based on Islam, but instead becomes the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>44</sup> Even so, by having relations and policies with the Middle East, Indonesia shows its concern for the peace, stability, and well-being of the Ummah, the global Islamic 'Community'. Apart from that, they are concerned with issues of religious intolerance, radical Islam, church burnings, and so forth.<sup>45</sup>

Indonesia has always been home to a moderate Muslim population so it can seize the opportunity to project an international identity as a bridge between the Islamic world and the West. Things that have been done include promoting dialogue between civilizations and dialogue between religions as part of Indonesia's foreign policy agenda to address the issue of religious extremism.<sup>46</sup> In fact, during the Arab Spring, the Indonesian delegation deliberately promoted Indonesia as a good example of a democracy with a Muslim majority population. Robert Hefner said that Islam and democracy are compatible so Indonesia takes advantage of its reputation as a model of

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<sup>42</sup> Ahmet Erdi Ozturk, 'Islam and Foreign Policy: Turkey's Ambivalent Religious Soft Power in the Authoritarian Turn', *Religions* 12, no. 1 (January 2021): 38.

<sup>43</sup> Syed Mohammed Ad'ha Aljunied, 'Countering Terrorism in Maritime Southeast Asia: Soft and Hard Power Approaches', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 47, no. 6 (2012): 652–65.

<sup>44</sup> Leo Suryadinata, 'Islam and Suharto's Foreign Policy: Indonesia, the Middle East, and Bosnia', *Asian Survey* 35, no. 3 (1995): 291–303.

<sup>45</sup> Donald E. Weatherbee, 'Indonesia's Foreign Policy in 2016: Garuda Hovering', *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2017, 163–76.

<sup>46</sup> Dewi Fortuna Anwar, 'The Impact of Domestic and Asian Regional Changes on Indonesian Foreign Policy', *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2010, no. 1 (2010): 126–41.

Islam, democracy, and religious pluralism.<sup>47</sup> The Islamic factor influencing Indonesia's foreign policy can be seen in two events. First, his desire to have closer ties with the wider Muslim world. Second, Indonesia supports Muslim victims as a solidarity among Muslims which is reflected in its policy of supporting Palestinian independence.<sup>48</sup>

However, the journey to cultivate peaceful Islam in Indonesia has not been easy due to the political and economic crisis that led to the fall of the New Order regime in May 1998. The fall of this government led to protracted ethnic and religious violence so there was anxiety about whether it could overcome this communal violence. There are at least three issues of Indonesia's insecurity in Southeast Asia during democratization, namely the problem of terrorism, the return of Islam to national politics, and the rise of Islamic radicalism.<sup>49</sup> So, with the presence of this issue, Indonesia continues to promote Islamic moderation both at the national and global levels. Also, the actors involved are not only states but non-state actors such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). The members are involved in Indonesia's soft power and public diplomacy.<sup>50</sup> Indonesia's foreign policy also changed in the Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono era, which actively promoted moderate Islam in International Relations. Whereas, in the New Order era, there was exclusivity of Islam as an identity. According to Purwono, this foreign policy is the result of the construction of Islamic norms that grow in Indonesia.

In Malaysia, Islam is not only applied to domestic policy but also foreign policy which becomes the basis for decision-making to form rules, regulations, and policies. When Malaysia was colonized by the British, Westernization became part of the country. However, the basic elements of Islam have never been lost even though they have adapted to global change. As in Indonesia, Malaysia is also a multicultural region where the government adopts Islamic values as the basis for their policies, both at the domestic and foreign policy levels.<sup>51</sup> Islam Hadhari, which was initiated by Malaysia, appeared in the context of the global war against terrorism and was proposed as a solution to face the challenges of democratization in Malaysia amidst radicalism and terrorism in the global sphere. In addition, this discourse also strengthens the Malay-Islamic order in Malaysia so that it can face the challenges of globalization and the multiculturalism crisis. Robby<sup>52</sup> says that this view of Islam as a paradigm of

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<sup>47</sup> James Hoesterey, 'Is Indonesia a Model for the Arab Spring? Islam, Democracy, and Diplomacy', *Review of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 2 (1 July 2013): 157–65.

<sup>48</sup> Ann Marie Murphy, 'Islam in Indonesian Foreign Policy: The Limits of Muslim Solidarity for the Rohingya and Uighurs', *The ASAN Institute for Policy Studies* (blog), 2020, <https://en.asaninst.org/contents/islam-in-indonesian-foreign-policy-the-limits-of-muslim-solidarity-for-the-rohingya-and-uighurs/>.

<sup>49</sup> Rizal Sukma, 'Soft Power and Public Diplomacy: The Case of Indonesia', in *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011), 91–115.

<sup>50</sup> Andar Nubowo, 'Promoting Indonesian Moderate Islam on the Global Stage: Non-State Actors' Soft Power Diplomacy in the Post-New Order Era', *Muslim Politics Review* 2, no. 2 (22 December 2023): 238–83.

<sup>51</sup> Nur Fareha, 'Islam in Malaysia's Domestic and Foreign Policy: General Overview', *Proceedings of Legal Internasional Conference and Studies*, 2022.

<sup>52</sup> Hadza Min Fadhli Robby, 'Wacana Islam Nusantara Dan Islam Hadhari Dalam Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia Dan Malaysia', *Tashwirul Afkar* 40, no. 2 (29 December 2021).



international political theology takes ideas from Vendulka Kubalkova who should be involved in the scientific development and practice of international relations.

Like Joko Widodo, during the leadership of the fifth Prime Minister, Tun Abdullah Badawi, the role of Islam in Malaysia was used as a soft power tool for public diplomacy. Hadhari Islam here is used as a political campaign tool for Abdullah's victory. At the international level, the promotion of Hadhari Islam is used to counter the global perception that Islam is seen as a backward and underdeveloped religion. To promote this progressive Islam, Malaysia is sponsored by educational institutions and think tanks. Just as the International Islamic University of Indonesia has a role in promoting moderate Islam, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) also plays the same role in promoting Hadhari Islam.<sup>53</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

After the 9/11 tragedy, many Muslim countries started discussing friendly Islam and counter-terrorism with the assumption that the Islam they professed was not harmful to the world. Among them are Indonesia and Malaysia, which continue to develop Islam Nusantara and Islam Hadhari by the principle of locality. So, the indigenization of Islam is actually in line with what is expected by the community as a culture that is not conservative and still adopts a locality. Even so, these ideas and concepts became a way for the rulers who wanted to make it the way of power politics. Wasatiyyah Islam is not only a noble concept but also politicized to win the people's hearts who hope that democracy will run well in their country. Apart from that, this religious moderation is also a soft-power relation in the global sphere.

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## CONFLICTING INTEREST

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<sup>53</sup> Nur Fareha, 'Role of Islam in Malaysia's Public Diplomacy: Abdullah Badawi Administrations', *International Journal of Law Reconstruction* 2, no. 1 (16 July 2018): 14–30.

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