Religious Moderation, *Pela Gandong*, and *Jihad* Reconstruction:
conflict Prevention in Maluku through the Lens of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah*

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Abstract: This article analyzes religious moderation, *pela gandong*, and the reconfiguration of jihad to prevent war in Maluku. Conflict avoidance has been viable through a sophisticated understanding of religion, utilizing cultural mechanisms like *pela gandong*. The research utilized an empirical methodology analyzed via the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* theory. Data were obtained through extensive interviews and literature reviews to guarantee accuracy. The interviewed participants were individuals impacted by the war, community leaders, religious figures, scholars, and female leaders. The study concluded that the violence in Maluku was initially triggered by economic imbalances impacting social, political, and religious aspects. Moreover, the Maluku community throughout the conflict was regarded as a battleground, influenced by external group dynamics. Conflict prevention in Ambon can be accomplished by constructively reinterpreting jihad, fostering religious moderation, and revitalizing culture through *pela gandong*. *Pela gandong* is a tradition that strengthens social ties, highlighting a commitment to mutual respect, collaboration, and the maintenance of harmonious relations between two community groups, so promoting reconciliation and peace-building efforts. In the context of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which asserts that the aim of the Islamic law is to provide substantial advantages to humanity, the integration of culture and the precise interpretation of *jihad* is essential. Consequently, within the realm of Islamic jurisprudence, a contextual interpretation of *jihad* will provide a more beneficial comprehension than a textual examination. The basic purpose of Islamic law is to establish peace and harmony while preventing conflict within society.
Keywords: Religious moderation, *pela gandong*, jihad reconstruction, conflict avoidance, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*

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Abstrak*: Penelian ini membahas tentang moderasi beragama, pela gandong rekonstruksi jihad untuk mencegah konflik di Maluku. Pencegahan konflik terbukti dapat dilakukan dengan cara memberikan pemahaman agama yang moderat, menggunakan mekanisme budaya seperti pela gandong. Penelitian menggunakan adalah metode empiris dianalisis dengan teori maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Dengan mengandalkan pada wawancara mendalam dan studi literatur, data dikumpulkan untuk menjaga validitas data. Informan yang diwawancara adalah masyarakat yang merasakan konflik, tokoh masyarakat, tokoh agama, akademisi dan tokoh perempuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perjalanan konflik di Maluku awalnya disebabkan oleh faktor kesenjangan ekonomi yang berpengaruh kepada sosial, politik berimbas ke agama. Di samping itu masyarakat Maluku pada saat konflik dipahami sebagai perang, yang dipengaruhi faktor kelompok dari luar Maluku. dapat ditegaskan bahwa pencegahan konflik di Ambon dapat dilakukan dengan cara merekontruksi pemahaman jihad kearah yang positif, mengkampanyekan moderasi beragama dan merevitalisasi budaya melalui pela gandong. Pela gandong merupakan tradisi yang dapat memperkuat ikatan sosial yang menekankan pada komitmen untuk saling menghormati, bekerja sama, dan menjaga hubungan baik antara kedua kelompok masyarakat, sehingga upaya rekonsiliasi dan pembangunan perdamaian dapat tetap terjaga. Dalam konteks maqāṣid al-sharī'ah bahwa tujuan hukum Islam adalah untuk memberikan manfaat yang besar dan luas kepada manusia, maka penggunaan budaya dan pemaknaan jihad yang benar merupakan sebuah keniscayaan. Dengan demikian, dalam konteks hukum Islam, pemahaman jihad secara kontekstual akan memberikan makna yang lebih maslahat, dari pada memaknai secara tekstual. Menciptakan kedamaian dan keharmonisan serta menghindari konflik dalam masyarakat adalah salah satu tujuan utama dari hukum Islam.*
Katakunci: *Moderasi beragama, pela gandong, rekonstruksi jihad, pencegahan konflik, maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*

Introduction

The comprehension of the Islamic law, as drawn from the Qur'an and hadith, can influence the social, political, and cultural stability of a nation. There are two forms of knowledge: textual and contextual. Textual understanding leads to the establishment of rigorous Islamic law and engenders societal conflict, whereas contextual understanding fosters harmony and peace. The government and religious groups should cultivate moderate Islam as a counter-ideology and discourse to extremist Islam.[1]

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[1] Abdul Majid, et.al., "Salafi, Hadith, and Islamic Law: Identity Politics and Wahabi Movement in East Kalimantan," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 23, No. 1 (2023). Yusuf Hanafi,

Textual interpretation invariably encompasses themes of heresy, infidelity, caliphate, and jihad as articulated by each group's perspective, hence exacerbating the discord among religious factions. The emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and al-Qaeda has intensified the Middle East conflict, impacting Indonesia and leading to the formation of extremist and terrorist organizations such as *Jamaa'ah Islamiyah, Jama'ah Ansharu Tauhid, Jama'ah Ansharu Daulah*, and the Indonesian *Mujahidin* Council. [2] These groups were responsible for the Bali Bombings I and II, the Stock Exchange Bombing, the Philippine Embassy Bombing in the 2000s, as well as the Suicide Bombing in Makassar (targeting a church, 2021) and the Suicide Bombing at a Police Station in West Java, 2022.

The Indonesian government, via the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), in collaboration with socio-religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, initiated a counter-discourse movement known as Islam *washatiyah* or moderate Islam. The strategy of fostering collaboration between religious leaders and the government can mitigate the intensification of terrorism using a soft-power methodology. The significance of a more efficacious and durable strategy to religious moderation in addressing terrorism, alongside the necessity for collaboration between governmental and civil society entities in mitigating radicalization at the grassroots level. The predominant perspective among Indonesian Muslims is moderate, with radicals being a minority faction. [3]

Accordingly, academics, civil society, and cultural communities facilitate the regeneration of culture and local wisdom. In this environment, culture serves as a potent vehicle to transcend socio-religious conflict. The Poso, Ambon, and Aceh disputes can be handled through cultural methods. The cultural approach is more widely accepted, as the community has long embraced the ideas of peace. These values include *pela gandong* in Ambon, *suloh* in Aceh, and *da lihan na tulo* in Tapanuli.[4]

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et.al., "Sentiment Prevalence on Jihad, Caliphate, and Bid'ah among Indonesian Students: Focusing on Moderate-radical Muslim Group Tension," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, No. 1 (2022.

[2] Ahmad Salehudin, "Understanding Religious Violence in Indonesia: Theological, Structural and Cultural Analyses," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 6, No. 2 (2012). Indra Martian Permana and Fadzli Adam, "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Terrorism Action in Indonesia Between 2014-2018," *Islam Universalia: International Journal of Islamic Studies and Social Sciences* 2, No. 1 (2020).

[3] Muh Khamdan, et.al., "Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Facing the Shift of Terrorism Movement Patterns in Indonesia," *International Journal of Religious and Cultural Studies* 1, No. 2 (2024), p. 113-124. Saiful Mujani, et.al., "Islamism and Muslim Support for Islamist Movement Organizations: Evidence from Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 30, No. 1 (2023).

[4] Anwar Sadat Harahap, et.al., "*Dalihan Na Tolu* as a Model for Resolving Religious Conflicts in North Sumatera: An Anthropological and Sociological Perspective," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 7, No. 3 (2023), p. 1943. Abidin Nurdin, "Revitalisasi

Pela gandong has evolved into a social institution that serves as a unifying force for social interactions between nations, encompassing both Muslim and Christian communities. *Pela Gandong* effectively regulates the social interaction system of indigenous societies across multiple domains. The accumulated local wisdom is the outcome of the enduring struggle of the Maluku people, transmitted through generations from their ancestors, spanning centuries till the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The Maluku populace coexists together, irrespective of tribal and religious affiliations. They collaborate and cooperate in developing their region by implementing indigenous wisdom, including *Pela Gandong*, which is rooted in genealogical awareness and signifies brotherhood based on ancestry.[5]

From 1999 to 2002, a significant war transpired in Ambon City, resulting in around 5,000 fatalities. The climax of the battle occurred during the assault on the Silo Church and the Tobelo massacre on December 26, 1999. The Silo Church, located in the heart of Ambon, is one of the greatest Protestant churches in Maluku (GPM) and was incinerated the day following Christmas. On that day, about 800 Muslims were slain by Christians at the Tobelo Village Mosque. The assault ultimately forced Christians and Muslims to engage more intensely in violent conflict, rendering the military powerless to address the situation. The escalation of the war in Ambon is triggered by numerous causes, including economics, culture, politics, race and ethnicity, and religion. The most significant of the five triggering elements is religious divergence.[6]

Religious and ideological differences are a contributing factor to the conflict in Ambon. Islam and Christianity are the predominant religions in Ambon. Historically, these two religions have consistently been in conflict.[7] For instance, during the Crusades, Western Christians perpetrated acts of terrorism against the Muslim community. In reality, adherents of both religions encounter challenges in coexisting harmoniously. Consequently, disagreements frequently emerge. Assertions of veracity regarding a particular religion constitute one of the inciting causes. A segment of the Muslim society perceives Christians as unbelievers who must be eliminated, and possibly vice versa.[8]

Kearifan Lokal Di Aceh: Peran Budaya dalam Menyelesaikan Konflik Masyarakat," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 13, No. 1 (2013).

[5] Roni Ismail, et.al., "Resolusi Konflik Keagamaan Berbasis Kearifan Lokal: Studi Atas Pela Gandong Di Ambon," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 5, No. 1 (2022).

[6] M. Junaidi, "Sejarah Konflik Dan Perdamaian di Maluku Utara (Refleksi Terhadap Sejarah Moloku Kie Raha)," *Academia*, (2009).

[7] Kirsten E. Schulze, "The "ethnic" in Indonesia's Communal Conflicts: Violence in Ambon, Poso, and Sambas," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, (2017).

[8] Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Salafi Movement in Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics and Local Development," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, No. 1 (2007), p. 83-94. Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, militancy, and the quest for identity in post-New Order Indonesia,* SEAP Publications, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 2006.

This is intensified by the interpretation of *jihad* stemming from the faction led by Ja'far Umar Thalib. He served as the leader of the *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* Communication Forum (FKAWJ), established in February 1999. This group promulgated a resolution advocating for jihad by Indonesian Muslims in Maluku, which has seen communal conflict since early 1999. On April 6, 2000, they convened at the *Senayan* Main Stadium in Jakarta to proclaim their resolve to undertake jihad. Under the cover of *Laskar Jihad*, thousands registered and subsequently departed for Ambon to combat the Christians.[9]

Moreover, the interpretation of *jihad* occasionally serves as a justification for engaging in conflict with those of differing faiths. The concept of *jihad* serves as a formidable instrument for Muslims to combat adversaries of differing faiths from Christianity. The interpretation of *jihad* in the Qur'an and hadith encompasses multiple interpretations; yet, within the tradition of *fiqh*, there exists an orthodoxy that constricts the definition of *jihad* to that of warfare.[10] Generally, it can be asserted that all *fiqh* texts addressing jihad will center on the examination of warfare and its spoils. The Maluku community's comprehension of *jihad*, particularly in Ambon, continues to be rooted in the belief that *jihad* signifies a religious war against adversaries. Consequently, the mention of *jihad* evokes images of swords, weaponry, and violence, while alternative interpretations of *jihad* are dismissed.

The presence of *Lasykar Jihad* may have significantly shaped the Maluku community's perception of *jihad* as a physical conflict. The Maluku community has coexisted peacefully for an extended period, despite religious and ethnic disparities. This study is crucial for identifying the causes contributing to the violence in Ambon, emphasizing the significance of religious moderation, the necessity of *pela gandong* as a cultural medium, and the redefinition of *jihad* in the context of conflict prevention in Ambon moving forward.

In 2002, the Malino II agreement for peace in Ambon was signed by Muslims and Christians, facilitated by Jusuf Kalla, the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare.[11] Both parties were amenable to negotiation and committed to peace, pledging not to engage in hostilities against one another. The success of the Malino II agreement mirrored that of the Malino I agreement (2001), with the resolution of the conflict in Poso (Central Sulawesi) again facilitated by Jusuf Kalla. Malino is a region in Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, characterized by a temperate climate akin to that of Puncak, Bogor.

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[9] Muhammad Hamdan, "Filosofi Kafir Dalam Al-Qur'an: Analisis Hermeneutik Schleiermacher," *Tashwirul Afkar*, (2020).

[10] Joseph Makanda, "The Jihad Feminist Dynamics of Terrorism and Subordination of Women in the ISIs," *Generos*, 2019.

[11] Bagus Budi Sajiwo, "Perjanjian Malino Sebagai Hasil Dari Upaya Mediasi Konflik di Maluku," *Jurnal Suarga: Studi Keberagamaan dan Keberagaman* 1, No. 2 (2022), p. 31-47

The study employs an empirical methodology examined through the lens of *maqashid al-shariah* theory.[12] Data was acquired through comprehensive interviews and literature reviews to ensure data validity. The interviewed informants included individuals affected by the conflict, community leaders, religious figures, and scholars. The involvement of researchers in the field is crucial for acquiring precise data and executing comprehensive interviews with informants. Field research was undertaken for three months, from May to April 2023, in Ambon City, the focal site of the war. The acquired data was further examined utilizing the *maqashid al-shariah* theory, a framework commonly employed in Islamic jurisprudence. The *maqashid al-shariah* philosophy underscores the principle of benefit, since conflict resolution fosters peace and harmony within society.

Fundamental Origins and Factors of Conflict in Maluku

The Maluku conflict, which transpired from 1999 to the early 2000s, was a multifaceted dispute characterized by numerous causative causes. Nonetheless, other elements are frequently recognized as primary catalysts of the conflict in Maluku, including religious issues. A primary catalyst was the discord between Muslim and Christian factions in Ambon. This religious tension has persisted for an extended duration and has intensified during the times of strife. The dispute was triggered by a succession of violent occurrences between the two factions, encompassing inter-religious assaults and retaliations. Identity politics and the interplay of political and identity factors significantly influence the Ambon dispute. Ethnic tensions and nationalist feelings can intensify confrontations among religious organizations. Political rivalry, identity disparities, and attempts to preserve power or political sway might intensify the circumstances.[13]

The Maluku conflict comprises a series of disputes that transpired in Ambon City and its vicinity, specifically in Maluku Province, Indonesia, during the late 1990s. The conflict engaged Muslim and Christian groups in the region. The dispute in Ambon has intricate historical and ethnic origins. Ambon is a location with a rich history in the spice trade and served as a focal point of colonization in the past. Following Indonesia's independence, various political, social, and economic transformations transpired in Ambon, inciting tensions among disparate religious factions.[14]

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[12] Jonaedi Efendi and Prasetijo Rijadi, *Metode Penelitian Normatif dan Empiris,* Jakarta: Kencana, 2023. Faisar Ananda Arfa and Watni Marpaung, *Metode Penelitian Hukum Islam,* Jakarta: Kencana, 2018.

[13] Burhanuddin Tidore, "Resolusi Konflik Berbasis Teologi BakuBae: Studi Konflik Ambon 1999-2002," Media Jurnal Filsafat dan Teologi 3, No. 2 (2022), p. 212-235.

[14] L Tuhuteru, "Membina Sikap Masyarakat Dan Nilai-Nilai Demokrasi Pasca Konflik Sosial Ambon," *Seminar Nasional Konsorsium Untag …*, 2018.

The Ambon conflict commenced in mid-1999 following a minor altercation between Christian and Muslim youngsters in a village near Ambon City. This conflict subsequently intensified into a succession of assaults and reprisals involving large groups from both factions. Numerous individuals participated in the conflict, resulting in thousands of fatalities and injuries. The catalysts for the battle were sectarian discord, economic rivalry, and political elements. Additional causes that contributed to the intensification of the conflict included economic instability, unemployment, social inequality, and regional political tensions.[15]

The Indonesian government undertook efforts to resolve the conflict, engaging many stakeholders, including religious groups, indigenous populations, and foreign organizations. In 2002, the Indonesian government proclaimed a state of civil emergency in Maluku to manage the violence. Since that time, the situation in Ambon has progressively improved, but minor disturbance continues to arise intermittently. The Ambon battle inflicted profound scars on the local people. A multitude of individuals lost relatives, residences, and sources of income. Moreover, the conflict damaged the previously established inter-religious tranquility in the region.[16]

Economic and social issues, including income disparities, resource accessibility, and inequities in wealth distribution, can serve as catalysts for conflict. Economic discontent and social inequity can engender tensions among various groups. Provocation and the dissemination of false or deceptive rumors can incite conflict. Distorted or exaggerated sensitive problems can incite animosity, anxiety, and violent responses among opposing factions. The absence of law enforcement and security instability can exacerbate violence. The existence of armed factions, the incapacity of security personnel to manage the situation, and skepticism towards the legal system can exacerbate and prolong the conflict.

La Jamaa asserts that the first conflict was really a typical altercation; but, it escalated significantly, intertwining with SARA concerns and political factors, which constituted the underlying cause that rendered the wound challenging to heal.[17] Moreover, Syarif Tua asserts that the Ambon conflict was intentionally instigated by specific central factions following the collapse of the New Order regime in May 1998, with the objective of undermining national security, particularly in Maluku, renowned for its *pela gandong* connections.[18] The Ambon dispute cannot be reduced to a singular causative factor. The interconnected and

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[15] Junaidi, "Sejarah Konflik Dan Perdamaian di Maluku Utara (Refleksi Terhadap Sejarah Moloku Kie Raha)."

[16] Inayatul Ulya, "Pendidikan Islam Multikultural Sebagai Resolusi Konflik Agama di Indonesia," Fikrah 4, No. 1 (2016), p. 20.

[17] Interview with La Jamaa, a professor and Director of Graduate School of IAIN Ambon, 23 June 2023.

[18] Interview with M. Syarif Tuasikal, a community leader in Ambon, 23 June 2023.

intricate aspects influence one another and exacerbate the problem. A profound comprehension and thorough answers are essential to avert analogous conflicts and foster reconciliation and peace in the future.

Suriani asserts that the Ambon dispute was instigated by elite rivalry over the control of natural resources and bureaucratic and political positions, with economic jealousy being the underlying issues.[19] Husaini elaborated that the underlying causes encompassed social and economic inequalities, which led to the outbreak of the riots.[20] According to Mako, during the 1999 Ambon war, while he was still in high school, the underlying causes were not thoroughly comprehended; yet, he believed that the conflict necessitated that students pursue their studies outside of Ambon due to unfavorable conditions.[21]

Yatim elaborated that the war in Maluku, in his view, was rooted in Aqidah, thereafter influencing politics and other matters to obscure individuals' deceitful actions.[22] The Ambon conflict, which transpired in the late 1990s and early 2000s, was a multifaceted dispute originating from several underlying issues. The Ambon dispute unfolded through a sequence of events that escalated into confrontations between religious and ethnic factions. Historically, Ambon had a cosmopolitan heritage characterized by significant ethnic and religious variety. During the colonial period, the strategies of segregating religious groups and suppressing some factions, such as through forced conversion, could engender societal wounds and conflicts. The claim of external involvement suggests that the Ambon conflict was impacted by external sources, particularly pressures from beyond Maluku that intensified tensions among religious and ethnic groups.

This allegation pertains to claims of help and finance from external groups or nations participating in the Maluku conflict. The primary underlying issue in the Ambon dispute is the discord between Muslim and Christian factions. This religious conflict encompasses a sequence of assaults and retaliations between different factions, frequently instigated by trivial occurrences that subsequently evolve into broader violence. Similarly, political and economic rivalry can serve as variables that intensify the conflict. Dominance over resources, employment opportunities, economic distribution, and political conflicts engender tensions and rivalries among various groups.

Provocation and the dissemination of false or manipulative rumors significantly contribute to the escalation of the conflict. Exaggerated or distorted sensitive problems can incite fear, animosity, and vengeance among conflicting factions. Nursaid characterizes the Ambon Maluku Conflict as a socio-political

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[19] Interview with Suriani, a female leader in Ambon, 20 May 2023.
[20] Interview with Husaini, a community leader in Ambon, 23 May 2023.
[21] Interview with Fadil S Mako, a community leader in Ambon, 23 April 2023.
[22] Interview with Hayatuddin Yatim, a community leader in Ambon, 20 April 2023.

religious conflict, arising from tensions between the Islamic and Christian communities. Initially manifested as a package of social jealousy termed BBMJ (Bugis, Buton, Makassar, Java), not in Ambon Maluku, it has progressively evolved into a more dominating religious framework over time.[23] According to Tidpre, the conflict in Maluku arose from socio-cultural and employment disparities; however, it was exacerbated by community dynamics and social existence, where perceptions of injustice and differing lifestyles became emblematic, with religion serving as a principal factor in the social and humanitarian strife.[24]

Baco Sarluf asserts that the collapse of the New Order regime in 1988 did not promptly eradicate their influence. The remains of the New Order's authority sought to persist in safeguarding their interests and utilize the potential for discord between Muslims and Christians to incite fresh violence in Ambon. The conflict between Muslim and Christian youth in Ketapang in 1998 escalated into a significant confrontation in Ambon, persisting for three years (1999-2002), with political issues identified as the primary cause.[25] Yasri articulated that a struggle existed between Ambon and the Halmahera Islands. The foundation of the problem was the emergence of political instability in Indonesia following Soeharto's resignation and the devaluation of the rupiah during and after the Southeast Asian economic crisis.[26]

The absence of competent law enforcement and security instability are fundamental causes of the Ambon conflict. The existence of armed factions, the incapacity of security personnel to manage the situation, and the absence of confidence in the judicial system exacerbated and extended the conflict. The Ambon dispute is characterized by its complexity, with interrelated variables exacerbating the situation. A sustainable solution necessitates reconciliation, interfaith discussion, socio-economic advancement, and collaborative efforts from both government and community to foster collaboration and togetherness among the conflicting factions.

The understanding of Jihad in the perspectives of the societies of Maluku

Jihad is referenced in multiple passages of the Qur'an, with a total of 36 verses pertaining to jihad or including the term itself. The term jihad, in its various variants, appears 34 times in the Qur'an[27]

In the Qur'an, jihad encompasses various interpretations, including the *jihad* of desire, the *jihad* of teaching and elucidation, and the *jihad* of

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[23] Interview with Nursaid, an academic at IAIN Ambon, 24 April 2023.

[24] Interview with Nasir Tidpre, the community member in Ambon, 20 May 2023.

[25] Interview with, the religious leader in Ambon, 20 May 2023.

[26] Interview with Nur Aini Yasri, the community member in Ambon, 27 June 2023.

[27] Agus Handoko, "Konsep Jihad Dalam Perspektif Alquran (Studi Tematik Dalam Tafsir Al-Kasysyaf Atas Ayat-Ayat Jihad)," *Mizan: Journal of Islamic Law*, (2018).

perseverance. The author cites three interpretations of *jihad*: the *jihad* of warfare, the *jihad* of ethics, and the *jihad* of proselytization as presented in the Qur'an.[28] The concept of *jihad* reconstruction involves transforming the definition of *jihad* from a limited interpretation to a more expansive one, aligned with contemporary circumstances. *Jihad* can be articulated within three contexts throughout its implementation.[29]

In a personal setting, *jihad* is purifying the mind from external influences contrary to Allah's teachings by internal spiritual battle, fulfilling Allah's mandates, and refraining from His prohibitions. Secondly, within a communal framework, *jihad* involves the endeavor to uphold the principles of Islam in the society or inside the family by means of preaching and purging oneself of polytheism. Third, within a state setting, *jihad* aims to safeguard the nation (an Islamic territory) against external aggression or internal treachery, so preserving the order and calm of the populace in their worship, including the enforcement of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*. This *jihad* is applicable solely in areas that fully follow Islam.[30]

The interpretation of jihad within Maluku community differs based on distinct religious backgrounds and perspectives. Maluku comprises many ethnic and religious groupings, including Christians and Muslims, leading to varying interpretations of jihad among these communities. For the majority of Muslims in Maluku, the interpretation of jihad mostly pertains to the notion of personal endeavor to enhance faith and perform virtuous actions. In this sense, jihad underscores the internal fight to surmount personal deficiencies, enhance one's relationship with God, and make a constructive impact on society.

Mahasida asserts that jihad constitutes a profound endeavor to save the Islamic faith by the sacrifice of wealth, life, and physical being.[31] Kamal asserts that jihad entails steadfast adherence to Islamic beliefs by consistently fulfilling divine instructions and obeying those who will not misguide us.[32] Sahetapy posits that jihad is seen as an endeavor to attain a beneficial outcome; yet, in the absence of insight, moral ethics, and constructive concepts, the objective of jihad becomes skewed and devoid of significance.[33] During the strife in Maluku in the late 1990s and early 2000s, a minority employed the notion of jihad to rationalize violence between religious factions. The conflict that transpired did not reflect the

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[28] Alfi Syahriyati, "Al-Quran dan Radikalisme: Analisis Ayat-Ayat Jihad Dalam Media Online," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 2019,

[29] Ali Ridho, "Memahami Makna Jihad Dalam Serial Film Kartun Cisform: Jihad Fi Sabilillah (Analisis Wacana Teun A. van Dijk)," *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi*, (2019).

[30] Sefriyono Sefriyono, "Jihad Bukan Hanya Perang Suci: Telaahan Teoritik Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Jihad Dalam Al-Quran," *Turast: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian*, 2021.

[31] Interview with Junet Mahasisda, a community leader in di Ambon, 27 May. 2023

[32] Interview with Latri Kamal, a community leader in Ambon, 24 April 2023.

[33] Interview with Anitha S Sahetapy, a community member in Ambon, 27 April 2023.

predominant perception of jihad within the Maluku community. This is likely attributable to the influence of *Lasykar Jihad*, which originated outside Ambon; it is acknowledged that the group infiltrated Ambon during the height of the fighting.[34]

Following the fighting, numerous religious leaders, both Muslim and Christian, endeavored to foster reconciliation and peace in Maluku. These initiatives encompass interfaith conversation, reconciliation activities, and the establishment of a cohesive community. This interpretation of jihad underscores the endeavor to foster healthy interfaith relations, establish peace, and enhance unity among historically conflicting communities.

Sautrat elucidated that Jihad is an Islamic doctrine employed in conflict to safeguard the faith. For those Muslims affected by this theological strife, jihad is profoundly important, as it is taught that engaging in *jihad* to defend their faith and dying as a martyr is paramount. The comprehension of *jihad* within Maluku community is notably varied and intricately linked to the local historical, cultural, and social contexts. Moderate perspectives, interfaith discourse, and reconciliation are crucial in fostering inclusive comprehension and establishing interfaith harmony in the region.

Initiatives for Conflict Prevention in Maluku
1. Enhancing Religious Moderation

Enhancing religious moderation entails initiatives aimed at reinforcing moderate attitudes and practices within the society. To foster religious moderation, the initial step involves prioritizing education and awareness as fundamental elements. Educational curricula ought to incorporate instruction on inclusive principles, tolerance, and respect for religious diversity. Furthermore, informal education initiatives, seminars, and workshops may be conducted to enhance public knowledge and comprehension of the significance of religious moderation.[35]

Secondly, moderate religious leadership; it significantly influences the attitudes and behaviors of their communities. Encouraging religious leaders who advocate for moderation, tolerance, and interfaith communication is essential. Religious leaders might receive specialized education and training to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for promoting religious moderation.[36] Interfaith

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[34] Sukidi Mulyadi, "Violence under the Banner of Religion: The Case of Laskar Jihad and Laskar Kristus," *Studia Islamika* 10, No. 2 (2014).

[35] Yuliana Yuliana et al., "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Pada Anak Usia Dini Sebagai Upaya Pencegahan Radikalisme Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, (2022).

[36] Yoga Irama and Mukhammad Zamzami, "Telaah Atas Formula Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama Tahun 2019-2020," *KACA: Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushuluddin*, (2021)

discussion and collaboration to promote open communication among followers of many religions is a crucial step in fostering happy relationships. Meetings, talks, and collaborative activities may be conducted to foster comprehension and appreciation of religious diversity. Collaborative endeavors, including humanitarian missions, social events, and community programs, can enhance interfaith cooperation and solidarity.

Third, responsible media significantly influences public opinion and perception. Encouraging ethical media coverage of religious matters is essential. The media ought to advocate for themes of tolerance, conversation, and healing, while refraining from exacerbating divides and conflicts among religions.[37] Legislation and human rights safeguards provide the protection of human rights, especially religious freedom, which is crucial for fostering religious moderation. The government must uphold justice and equality for all citizens, irrespective of religion. The legal system must ensure equitable protection for people or groups that are victims of discrimination or religious intolerance.

Collaborative action plans among governments, religious authorities, civil society organizations, and the general populace should coordinate efforts to devise and execute strategies that enhance religious moderation. Joint action plans may encompass educational initiatives, dialogues, training sessions, and awareness campaigns aimed at fostering inclusive and tolerant societal attitudes. Enhancing religious moderation necessitates dedication and collaboration among multiple stakeholders. By advocating for the principles of moderation, tolerance, and discourse, we may cultivate a community that honors mutual respect and coexists harmoniously within religious differences.[38]

Religious moderation is an approach that promotes tolerance, respect, and communication among individuals or groups with differing religious beliefs. Religious moderation entails openness, respect, and the pursuit of mutual understanding, while acknowledging divergent viewpoints.[39] Principles and actions pertaining to religious moderation, such as tolerance, foster respect for religious diversity. This entails acknowledging the entitlement of any individual or group to own diverse religious beliefs and practices, free from discrimination or violence. Interfaith discussion is essential for fostering healthy communication among followers of diverse religions. This discussion seeks mutual learning, comprehension of differing perspectives, and the pursuit of shared ground and understanding.

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[37] Suprima Suprima, et.al., "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Dan Bela Negara Dalam Kurikulum Mata Kuliah Wajib Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta," *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, (2022)

[38] Ali Litiloly, "Implementasi Kebijakan Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Di Lingkungan Kementerian Agama Kota Ambon," *Jurnal 12 Waiheru*, (2020).

[39] Irama and Zamzami, "Telaah Atas Formula Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama Tahun 2019-2020."

Respect for diversity regards religious differences as a source of richness and strength. This entails honoring and valuing variations in religious convictions, rituals, and customs, without perceiving them as threats. Education and understanding regarding religion and diversity can significantly contribute to the promotion of moderation. Comprehending diverse religious views and practices enables individuals to cultivate inclusive attitudes, diminish prejudice, and enhance collaboration.

Moderate religious leadership significantly influences the perspectives and conduct of its adherents. Religious leaders advocating for tolerance, reconciliation, and interfaith cooperation significantly contribute to fostering an environment favorable to religious moderation. Collaborative activities and joint projects across various religious communities can enhance relationships and foster greater understanding. These projects encompass social, humanitarian, and developmental actions that engage all stakeholders irrespective of religious affiliation. Religious moderation is crucial in fostering harmonious societies, mitigating interfaith conflict, and advancing peace. It entails acknowledging individuals' rights to select and follow their own faith, while honoring differences and collaborating to foster mutual understanding and cooperation.

2. *Pela Gandong* as the Foundation for Peace

Pela Gandong represents a symbol of peace and cooperation between Christian and Muslim communities in Maluku. This tradition fosters intimate links between two villages or community groups of differing religions, promoting mutual assistance and a commitment to peace and harmony.[40] *Pela Gandong* is conducted through a sequence of traditional ceremonies that include offerings of food, beverages, and performances of dance and music. The ritual may also include the exchanging of gifts and visits between the two community groups.

The *Pela Gandong* tradition seeks to avert discord among religious factions, enhance unification, and foster harmony between them. The notion of peace and brotherhood in *Pela Gandong* is underscored by a dedication to mutual respect, collaboration, and the preservation of amicable relations between the two communal factions. *Pela Gandong* serves as a significant emblem in the endeavors for reconciliation and peacebuilding in post-conflict Maluku. Initiatives to conserve and rejuvenate this tradition persist to enhance religious harmony and foster trust among the populace of Maluku.[41]

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[40] Anju Nofarof Hasudungan, et. al., "Implementasi Nilai Local Wisdom Pela Gandong Dalam Pendidikan Pasca Rekonsiliasi Konflik Ambon," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah Indonesia 2*, No. 2 (2019).

[41] Anju Nofarof Hasudungan et al., "Transformasi Kearifan Lokal Pela Gandong Dari Resolusi Konflik Hingga Pendidikan Perdamaian Di Maluku," *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya*, 2020.

The *Pela Gandong* tradition encompasses a philosophy of life, articulated through concepts such as *"orang basudara," "Potong dikuku rasa didaging," "Ale rasa beta rasa," "Sagu salempang di pata dua," "Ain ne ain," "Kalwedo," "Kida bela,"* and *"Sitakaka walike*," which embody the local wisdom of the Maluku people. *Pela Gandong* serves to fortify social reconciliation among conflicting groups, factions, and communities burdened by historical trauma. The ethos of *Pela Gandong*, alongside governmental and civil society efforts, including educational institutions in Ambon, fosters a peaceful environment through various initiatives, such as the establishment of multi-ethnic villages and the provision of facilities and infrastructure for harmony. These endeavors aim to cultivate a peaceful Ambon, positioning Maluku as a model of peace and a learning resource for other regions in Indonesia. [42]

Ernit Suat elucidated that *pela gandong* serves as a mechanism for reconciliation and fortifying the connections among religious communities, which underpin the brotherhood of the Ambonese populace, a tradition rooted in ancestral heritage.[43] Tuasikal articulated that the reconstruction for the mallku community, particularly in Ambon, hinges on fostering unity and mitigating egos that may incite discord.[44] By upholding solidarity among diverse religious groups and consistently honoring one another while ensuring equilibrium in socio-economic advancement, [45] moderate and authoritative religious leadership assumes a pivotal role in the reconstruction of jihad. They possess the capacity to disseminate accurate messages regarding jihad, denounce violence and extremism, and advocate for interfaith dialogue and collaboration

Conflict resolution is a protracted process necessitating patience, collaboration, and commitment from all stakeholders. Furthermore, support from the international community can significantly contribute to resolving the conflict in Ambon through cultural mechanisms, specifically *pela gandong. Pela gandong* is a traditional peace practice originating from Maluku, particularly the Ambon region. This tradition embodies brotherhood and camaraderie between two villages or community groups of differing religions, established through traditional ceremonies and robust social connections.

3. The reconstruction of the meaning of *jihad*

The contemporary reconstruction of *jihad* entails efforts to renew and reinterpret the concept within a modern framework that aligns with the principles of moderation, peace, and respect for human rights. This process necessitates the

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[42] Tati Hartimah, et.al., "Pela Gandong for Social Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Ambon," *Buletin Al-Turas* 27, No. 2 (2021), p. 361-378.

[43] Interview with Erni Suat, a female leader in Ambon, 20 April 2023.

[44] Interview with Nurabia Tuasikal, a female leader in Ambon, 20 May 2023.

[45] Interview with Suriani a female leader in Ambon, 20 May 2023.

rejection of narrow and misguided interpretations of jihad frequently linked to violence and extremism. A critical examination of literature and its interpretations that shape the understanding of jihad is essential. This may include re-evaluating religious texts, emphasizing often-overlooked aspects, and contesting erroneous or extremist interpretations. It is imperative to empower Muslim communities to cultivate an accurate understanding of *jihad* and to advocate for peaceful values in daily life through education, socio-economic development, awareness-raising, and active engagement in initiatives aimed at preventing extremism.

Principles and methodologies pertinent to the reconstruction of contemporary *jihad* are multifaceted. This modern reinterpretation considers diverse social, political, and cultural contexts within an evolving global landscape. It seeks to redefine *jihad* in today's milieu, advocating for the principles of peace, justice, and human rights. The contemporary understanding of jihad underscores its nature as a personal endeavor aimed at self-improvement and societal contribution. It entails combating personal deficiencies, cultivating one's abilities, and positively impacting society and the world. In addition, spiritual *jihad* is a significant aspect of this reconstruction, focusing on enhancing one's relationship with God, deepening religious comprehension, and fostering virtuous character. Spiritual *jihad* prioritizes personal growth, introspection, and the pursuit of goodness.

Modern *jihad* reconstruction prioritizes dialogue and diplomacy as a means to promote peace and conflict resolution. This involves efforts to reach understanding and agreement through peaceful means, respecting differences and seeking solutions that benefit all parties. Rejection of violence and extremism in the name of religion. *Jihad* is understood as a just struggle, not a justification for acts of violence or terrorism. The spread of hatred, intolerance, and the imposition of will through violence are considered contrary to the true values of Islam. Comprehensive education and awareness of the correct concept of jihad are important in modern jihad reconstruction. This involves accurate and balanced teaching about jihad, including historical context, relevant religious texts, and an understanding that is in accordance with the values of humanity and peace.

Dini Tanassy emphasized that resolving the Maluku conflict requires a comprehensive approach beyond mere security measures, as these alone are inadequate to tackle the underlying socio-economic issues. Consequently, one can adopt a welfare approach. The reason for this is that the conflict that transpired was rooted in socio-economic factors. The welfare approach encompasses community development. [46] Modern *jihad* reconstruction is a complex and ongoing effort to reinterpret the concept of jihad in a more inclusive and peaceful modern context. This involves the active participation of scholars, religious

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[46] Interview with Dini Tanassy, a community member in Ambon 26 April 2023.

leaders, intellectuals, and the Muslim community as a whole to promote correct understanding and counter wrong and extreme understanding.

Andi Faisal Lestaluhu asserts that the contemporary interpretation of *jihad* among the Maluku populace is imbued with mutual compassion, exemplified by the concept of *pela gandong*. He posits that the resolution of future conflicts in Maluku hinges on the preservation and safeguarding of pela gandong, as both Muslims and Christians are fundamentally brothers.[47]

This context reveals a transformation in the interpretation of jihad, which was originally perceived solely as combat or lethal action. Subsequently, jihad has been redefined to encompass a wider scope, including endeavors to empower communities, advocate for peace and compassion, and prevent societal conflict, all of which are integral to the concept of *jihad*.

Transitioning from Conflict to Peace: The Perspective of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah*

The resolution of the Ambon conflict presents a multifaceted challenge necessitating collaborative efforts from diverse stakeholders, including the Ambonese populace. Following the conflict, social integration commenced gradually. This integration process fostered new values that instilled hope for a peaceful future. However, successful integration hinges on three conditions: First, effective economic interaction, political consensus, and an inclusive religious ethos must be established. Second, a model of harmony characterized by enhanced social interactions among different religions is essential. Third, the society must remain vigilant against the proliferation of radical religious ideologies and the entrenchment of identity politics that jeopardize peace.[48]

The Ambonese society can enhance conflict resolution through various perspectives. Strengthening interfaith dialogue and fostering reconciliation between Muslim and Christian groups is essential. This initiative should engage religious and community leaders, as well as individuals from both factions, dedicated to cultivating understanding, mutual respect, and improved collaboration.

Inclusive education and a deeper understanding of the religions in Ambon can play an important role in promoting tolerance and understanding. Interfaith education involving Muslim and Christian communities can help overcome prejudice, promote values of unity, and prevent future conflict. Efforts to address economic and social inequalities can help reduce the triggers of conflict. Inclusive

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[47] Interview with A. Faisal Lestaluhu, a community leader in Ambon, 26 April 2023.

[48] Saidin Ernas, "From Conflict to Social Integration: A Lesson from Ambon-Maluku," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 14 (2018). Toni Setia Boedi. "Resolusi Konflik Agama Di Pulau Ambon." *Jurnal Ketahanan Nasional* 14, No. 3 (2009).

development programs, poverty alleviation, equitable access to resources, and equal employment opportunities can provide stability and empower the community as a whole.

The role of Community Leaders in mediating conflict, building trust, and fostering unity. They can act as bridges between conflicting groups, promote dialogue, and advocate for peace. Community leaders can also play a role in strengthening local institutions that support reconciliation and conflict resolution.[49] The role of government has an important responsibility in facilitating the process of reconciliation and conflict resolution in Ambon. The government can create inclusive policies, ensure fair law enforcement, and strengthen institutions and mechanisms that support peace. The government must also actively involve the community in the decision-making process and the implementation of reconciliation programs. Reconstruction of jihad refers to efforts to improve the understanding and implementation of jihad in the context of Islam. The goal is to confront erroneous or extremist understandings of jihad that can lead to violence or terrorism. Reconstruction of jihad attempts to restore the original meaning and spirit of peace, justice, and moral struggle in the concept of jihad.

Al Qurtuby asserts that the involvement of religious leaders, both Christian and Muslim, in Ambon is pivotal in fostering peace and reconciliation. These figures, along with their identities and discourses, have significantly enhanced prospects for harmony. The Christian and Muslim leaders of Ambon are committed to collaborating against religious extremism and are fervently dedicated to establishing peace.[50]

The approaches that can be applied in the reconstruction of *jihad* include education and understanding, because by providing accurate and in-depth education about the concept of jihad in Islam. This involves understanding the historical context, a balanced interpretation of religious texts, and an emphasis on the values of peace, tolerance, and justice which are integral parts of *jihad*. Interfaith dialogue, especially with non-Muslim communities, can create a better understanding of *jihad* in Islam. This dialogue allows for the exchange of knowledge, opens up space to explain the correct Islamic perspective, and promotes cooperation in combating misunderstanding and extremism.

According to Torik, the current *jihad* is to overcome conflict not only for Maluku but also for all regions by fostering a sense of mutual love, tolerance and not being easily influenced by things that can trigger hostility[51] Reconstructing

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[49] Ridwan Nurdin, et.al., "The Role of Customary Leaders as Ḥakam in Resolving Divorce: A Case Study in Kuta Alam Subdistrict, Banda Aceh City," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 6, No. 2 (2023).

[50] Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "Peacebuilding in Indonesia: Christian–Muslim Alliances in Ambon Island," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24, No. 3 (2013).

[51] Inerview with Tariq Torik, a community leader di Ambon, 20 April 2023.

jihad is a complex and ongoing effort. It is important to involve various stakeholders, including religious leaders, scholars, government, and civil society, in this process. By reinforcing the accurate interpretation of *jihad* as a moral endeavor and fostering social conditions conducive to peace, the reformation of *jihad* can significantly contribute to countering extremism and promoting societal harmony. Sanjani asserted that addressing conflict necessitates an objective perspective on the issue. This can be challenging when personal factors are at play, often resulting in mutual blame that obscures the underlying problem.[52] Jhuain further highlighted the importance of prioritizing a social welfare approach alongside customary and religious traditions to avert conflict.[53]

Consequently, it is imperative to underscore that conflict prevention in Ambon can be achieved by reconstructing the interpretation of *jihad* positively, advocating for religious moderation, and revitalizing culture through *pela gandong*. In the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which posits that the objective of Islamic law is to yield significant and extensive benefits to humanity, the incorporation of culture and an accurate understanding of *jihad* is essential. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that the threat of conflict may emerge at any moment, with triggering factors originating from both within society and external sources; thus, preventive measures are of utmost importance.

The campaign for religious moderation, rooted in the tradition of pela gandong, emphasizes the interpretation of religion in alignment with Islamic legal principles that promote benefits, thereby mitigating conflict. Misinterpretations of religion can pose threats and jeopardize the nation's future, potentially leading to disintegration and conflicts akin to those witnessed in Ambon and Poso, particularly if the prevailing understanding is textual and radical. Consequently, Islam *wasathiyah* represents the pathway to peace and social harmony.

Conclusion

To resolve the Ambon conflict, collaboration between all parties, including the community, religious leaders, community leaders, government, and related institutions, is very important. Only with ongoing joint efforts, tolerance, mutual understanding, and close cooperation can conflict be resolved, peace can be upheld, and the reconciliation process can continue. It can also be emphasized that conflict prevention in Ambon can be done by reconstructing the understanding of jihad in a positive direction, campaigning for religious moderation and revitalizing culture through *pela gandong*. *Pela Gandong* is a tradition that can strengthen social ties that emphasizes a commitment to mutual respect, cooperation, and maintaining good relations between the two groups of society, so that reconciliation and peace-building efforts can be maintained in the

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[52] Intervuew with Afrisal Sanjani, a community leader in Ambon, 21 May 2023.
[53] Interview with Djuain Salasa, a community leader in Ambon, 22 May 2023.

future. In the context of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* that the purpose of Islamic law is to provide great and broad benefits to humans, the use of culture and the correct meaning of jihad is a necessity. Thus, in the context of Islamic law, a contextual understanding of *jihad* will provide a more beneficial meaning, rather than interpreting it textually. A contextual understanding will create peace and harmony and avoid conflict in society is one of the main goals of Islamic law. Therefore, Islam *wasathiyah* is the path to peace and social harmony.

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