Civil Religion as a Normative Framework for Preventing Radicalism in Indonesia: Integration of Pancasila and Deliberative Democracy —*Öffentlichkeit*

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Existing studies on radicalism and terrorism emphasize security, legal, and ideological lenses, framing it solely as a state threat, while overlooking its normative, symbolic, and moral appeals that foster societal legitimacy. This research analyzes radicalism as a crisis of civic integration and state moral delegitimization, proposing civil religion—synthesizing Durkheim's social facts, Rousseau's social contract, Bellah's civil religion, and Habermas's deliberative democracy—as a preventive framework treating radicalism as counter-civil religion. Through qualitative literature analysis, findings show civil religion builds public ethics, social cohesion, and cultural deradicalization by reframing violence, substituting identities, and integrating religion-nation symbols; in Indonesia, Pancasila embodies this, countering radicalism via inclusive identity, moral legitimacy, and deliberative pluralism alongside social justice, transcending mere securitization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on radicalism and terrorism in global academic literature generally develop within the framework of security, law, and ideology. In this approach, radicalism is understood as a threat to state stability and public order, thus orienting state responses toward law enforcement, risk-based prevention, and individual deradicalization programs (Nemeth & Hansen, 2022; Neumann, 2013). While this approach makes significant contributions to operational and policy aspects, several studies indicate that it fails to fully explain the challenges posed by radical ideas and practices comprehensively; however, such discourse can gain moral legitimacy and collective loyalty among citizens. Horgan consistently explains that radicalism functions not only as a political strategy or a form of instrumental violence but also as a normative claim to meaning, identity, and sacredness. (Horgan, 2008).

The state faces not only security threats but also challenges to the moral foundations of citizenship. Weber's classical and contemporary theories of the state posit that political stability depends not on coercive capacity but on normative legitimacy and social acceptance of state authority (Held, 2013). There is a perspective that states fail to build and maintain a shared framework of values capable of morally and symbolically binding citizens, making this space vulnerable to being filled by alternative ideologies that offer a more coherent normative and sacred order. In such situations, radicalism can be understood as a response to the crisis of civic integration, not simply as an ideological deviation. (Weiss & Bungert, 2019) Modern states require not only coercive tools to maintain order, but also strong normative legitimacy to build social integration and collective loyalty. The sociology of religion perspective introduces the concept of civil religion as a system of values, rites, and symbols that are

sacred to citizenship, enabling citizens to have a shared moral framework without having to submit to a particular institutional religion (Parmudi, 2018). This concept has its roots in Jean Jacques Rousseau in the context of the social contract as a way to create public harmony and support for state authority, including belief in God and a common morality that supports civil government (civil profession of faith) (Shaapera 2015) this concept was then translated into modern literature on civil religion.

The concept of civil religion is strongly relevant for explaining social integration in pluralistic societies, given that the function of civil religion is often not systematically articulated in state policy practices, particularly in countering radicalism and terrorism (Chapa, 2025). There are many cases where the values of civil religion have not experienced deep internalization in civic education, public discourse, or state institutions, so that this space is vulnerable to being filled by radical ideologies that offer structures of meaning, moral legitimacy, or claims of absolute authority that challenge the legitimacy of the state. (Nasution, 2020). Radicalism can be understood as a form of counter-civil religion, a system of normative meaning that competes with the values of the state's civil religion, particularly in conceptualizing loyalty, faithfulness, and morally meaningful actions toward both religion and the political order. When the state's civil religion is normatively weak, these alternative claims can gain strong traction, including the legitimacy of extreme actions interpreted as morally meaningful by their perpetrators. Terrorism, as the most extreme expression of radicalism, emphasizes how violent acts can be constructed as moral terms when the foundation of the state's civil religion is ineffective in binding civic loyalty (Danielson, 2019). Furthermore, the dominant secularist state response encourages the framing of radicalism as a security threat that could potentially deepen the crisis of civic moral legitimacy if not accompanied by a strategy to strengthen shared values that can encourage normative integration of society in an inclusive and democratic manner. Without a strong normative framework such as civil religion, a securitization approach can narrow the space for public deliberation and increase social resistance to the state (Watson, 2019).

Radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia have shown complex dynamics, where radical movements not only reject state policies, but also challenge the normative and moral legitimacy of the state (Muhammad & Hiariej, 2021). This research aims to understand how the concept of civil religion can function as a normative and symbolic foundation in the Indonesian context. The first question investigates how the concept of civil religion can be applied to build moral legitimacy, collective identity, and social integration in a pluralistic society, thereby preventing the emergence and development of radical movements. This question emphasizes the importance of mechanisms for internalizing state moral values, public rituals, symbolic narratives, and civic education as a medium for fostering a sense of belonging to the state while simultaneously preventing the penetration of radical ideologies. This research also focuses on the application of the concept of civil religion in reducing the appeal of radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia, as well as the factors that influence its effectiveness. In the context of a pluralistic democratic society, this research examines how civil religion can minimize the scope for radical ideologies, strengthen social integration, and affirm the moral legitimacy of the state without sacrificing the principles of religious freedom and the diversity of identities.

This study aims to understand the role of the idea of civil religion as a normative and symbolic framework in preventing and suppressing the development of radicalism in Indonesia. The main objective of the study is to explore how civil religion can be applied to build moral legitimacy, strengthen collective identity, and increase social integration in a pluralistic society, thereby becoming an effective foundation for preventing the penetration of radical ideology. This study also aims to assess the extent to which the idea of civil religion can reduce the appeal of radicalism and terrorism, and explore the factors that influence its effectiveness in the context of a diverse democratic society. Thus, this study aims not only to explain the mechanisms and practices of civil religion, but also to generate a comprehensive understanding of how this idea can serve as a strategic and normative instrument for the state in preventing radicalism without sacrificing the principles of pluralism, religious freedom, and social integrity.

The framework for this research is based on the understanding that radicalism is a social phenomenon that arises when there is a failure in the integration of values, moral legitimacy, and social cohesion within a society. From a classical sociological perspective, Emile Durkheim emphasized that society is shaped by social facts, namely collective norms, values, and practices that have the power to compel individuals to act in accordance with social interests (Durkheim, 2016). Radicalism emerges as a symptom when the social facts that shape moral solidarity and collective norms weaken, so that individuals or groups seek alternative identities and legitimacy through radical ideologies. In this context, social facts serve as the basis for the concept of civil religion, where collective values upheld by society and institutionalized by the state can form a moral cohesion that resists the penetration of radical ideologies. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's views emphasized the importance of the social contract and shared moral beliefs (civil profession of faith) as a means of uniting citizens in a commitment to

shared values. Rousseau showed that state legitimacy depends not only on coercive instruments, but also on the internalization of moral values and collective beliefs that are widely accepted by citizens (Rousseau, 1997). This view serves as the theoretical basis for the notion that civil religion is not merely symbolic rhetoric, but rather a normative mechanism capable of building collective consciousness and loyalty to the state order.

Robert N. Bellah later expanded the concept of civil religion as a symbolic and normative system of civic nature, functioning as a public moral framework that binds citizens through rituals, narratives, and symbols that affirm collective identity and the legitimacy of the state (Bellah, R. N., & Hammond, 2013). In the context of radicalism, civil religion can serve as a medium to minimize the space for radical ideologies to operate, counter alternative moral claims, and curb the spread of extreme values. Bellah emphasizes that civil religion requires active interaction between the state and society, where the state provides symbols, rituals, and a framework of values, while society internalizes, reproduces, and disseminates these values in everyday life. This framework is reinforced by Jürgen Habermas's thinking on deliberative democracy and the concept of Öffentlichkeit (public sphere or aspirational community society). This perspective emphasizes that moral legitimacy and shared values are built through a process of open communication between the government and society, where each group can express their aspirations, participate in public discourse, and reach normative consensus (Habermas, 1996). In other words, civil religion relies not only on formal rituals or state symbols, but also on the practice of public deliberation that is inclusive, transparent, and able to accommodate a plurality of identities and beliefs. Deliberative democracy provides a mechanism to affirm civil religion as the foundation of public morality while simultaneously building resistance to radical ideologies that are exclusive and dogmatic.

In the Indonesian context, this framework emphasizes that an effective civil religion must involve the dual roles of government and society. The government functions as the administrator of symbols, rituals, and normative policies that support shared moral values, while society acts as the internalizer and disseminator of these values through social interaction and deliberative participation. When these two elements operate synergistically, the concept of civil religion can suppress the spread of radicalism, minimize value conflicts, and strengthen the moral legitimacy of the state. This research confirms that the consensus of civil religion in Indonesia can be realized through Pancasila. Pancasila serves as a social fact and a collective normative framework, containing moral values, symbols, and fundamental principles of the state that can unify diverse identities, religions, and cultures. Pancasila functions as an instrument of civil religion that internalizes shared moral values, builds social cohesion, and provides a normative basis for countering radical movements. Thus, the integration of Bellah's ideas on civil religion, Durkheim's theory of social facts, Rousseau's social contract, and Habermas's deliberative democracy confirms that Pancasila can be an effective strategic normative framework for minimizing and countering radicalism in Indonesia.

Yakobus Adi Saingo (Saingo, 2022) In his study, "Strengthening the Ideology of Pancasila as an Antidote to Religious Radicalism," he emphasized that Pancasila, as the state's fundamental ideology, has the potential to become a primary tool for rejecting the ideology of religious radicalism that threatens diversity in Indonesia. This study uses a normative descriptive approach and emphasizes that Pancasila values are ideologically opposed to the principles of radicalism. The strength of this study lies in strengthening the philosophical and ideological framework. However, this study is not yet supported by empirical data and does not adequately demonstrate how the implementation of Pancasila values can concretely suppress radicalism. Wibowo and Romadha (Wibowo & Romadhan, 2023) in their study, "Pancasila Internalization Model in Overcoming Radicalism Within the Bureaucracy," they highlight the strategy of internalizing Pancasila values within the bureaucracy as a preventive measure against radicalism. This study presents a conceptual model to ensure the consistent application of Pancasila values by state officials. The strength of this research lies in its focus on the institutional context and the provision of a strategic model.

Nugraha and Habibah (Nugraha & Habibah, 2023) The study, "The Role of Pancasila in Fighting Radicalism and Separatism," emphasizes the importance of strengthening Pancasila values in confronting radicalism and separatism. This study provides a broad overview of how Pancasila can strengthen social cohesion and reject the exclusive ideologies espoused by radical groups. Budiono, Amin, and Ridh (Budiono et al., 2025) In their study, "Strategy for Planting Pancasila Ideology in Countering Terrorism in State-Owned Enterprises," they used an empirical approach through interviews and observations within state-owned enterprises (SOEs). This study demonstrates that disseminating Pancasila values through training and synergy between the government and the community can prevent the infiltration of radical ideology in the workplace. The strength of this study is the provision of empirical data and its focus on the practical application of Pancasila values. However, its weakness is its overly specific context within SOEs, requiring further study to generalize to the wider community.

Susilawati, Kuswanjono, and Syamsudin, in their study, "Pancasila Internalization and Implementation as a Deradicalized Effort in Indonesia," emphasize the need for internalizing Pancasila values to prevent the emergence of theocratic ideologies that conflict with state values. This study highlights a deradicalization strategy based on national values. Its strength lies in the presentation of a strong conceptual framework. Kamal and Ashif (Kamal et al., 2023) the study, "Prevention of Radicalism in the Era of Globalization through Digitalization of Pancasila Education," highlights strategies for preventing radicalism through the digitalization of Pancasila education, relevant in the era of globalization and the use of digital media. The strength of this research is its modern and contextual approach to the challenges of radicalism in the digital world. Abdul Rahman (Rahman, 2024) through a study entitled "Mainstreaming Pancasila-Based Deradicalization in Indonesia," the authors emphasize that instilling an understanding of Pancasila can shift extremism toward moderation and reject radicalism based on ignorance of national values. The strengths of this study are its focus on value moderation and the relevance of national integration amidst globalization, while its weaknesses are the lack of empirical data and the study's literary and conceptual nature.

Based on these studies, most emphasize the values of Pancasila as a normative foundation in preventing radicalism, both philosophically and conceptually, and a small number use a limited empirical approach. However, no study has explicitly integrated Bellah's civil religion concept with Habermas's deliberative democracy approach to emphasize the interaction mechanism between government and society in suppressing radicalism. Your research has a unique advantage because it combines the concept of civil religion with the values of Pancasila as a collective normative framework, emphasizes the deliberative role between government and society, and presents an integrative theoretical approach that combines classical sociological thought (Durkheim, Rousseau, Bellah) with Habermas's theory of deliberative democracy. Thus, this research provides an applicable analytical framework for systematically understanding, countering, and minimizing radicalism movements in Indonesia, which has not been offered by previous studies.

2. METHOD

The research was conducted using a systematic deduction and induction-based literature analysis approach (Djulaeka & Rahayu, 2020). This research is based on primary and secondary data. Secondary data consists of books, journal research, and other sources relevant to the research topic (Djulaeka & Rahayu, 2020). The primary data discusses the conceptual framework of Robert N. Bellah's civil religion thinking, where civil religion is understood as a set of symbols, rituals, and values used to unite citizens in a moral commitment to their political community (Bellah, R. N., & Hammond, 2013). Furthermore, Emile Durkheim's theory of social facts is used to understand collective norms and values as "social facts" which have coercive power in the structure of society (Durkheim, 2016). And Jean Jacques Rousseau's idea of a social contract is used to assert that the legitimacy of the state depends on the internalization of shared moral values and the consent of citizens to political authorit.. (Rousseau, 1997) Furthermore, Jurgen Habermas' concept of deliberative democracy explains the importance of public space (*Öffentlichkeit*) as an arena of discourse that enables citizens and state institutions to reach a consensus on values through rational public dialogue (Habermas, 1996). This theoretical framework serves as the basis for formulating how civil religion and Pancasila values can serve as a normative foundation for mitigating radicalism. Secondary data includes books, research, reports, texts, and other sources relevant to the research topic under discussion (Djulaeka & Rahayu, 2020).

An inductive approach was used to critically examine literature related to Pancasila, radicalism, collective moral values, and deradicalization, allowing findings to lead to a broader understanding of the concepts. Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature review. The first stage was identifying literature through scientific databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and university digital libraries (Sari et al., 2025). The keywords used include "civil religion," "radicalism prevention," "Pancasila ideology," "deliberative democracy," and "social integration." The second stage is the selection of relevant sources, their credibility, and their direct relevance to the research problem. The third stage is the categorization of the literature according to the main themes: the idea of civil religion, the mechanisms of deliberative democracy, the values of Pancasila as a social fact, and thoughts that discuss the normative aspects of radicalism prevention. These categories assist in displaying the data so that analysis can be focused on the relationship between theory and the research problem (Creswell, 2016).

The literature analysis was conducted using content analysis and conceptual analysis approaches. Content analysis was used to detail the narratives and content of relevant literature, while conceptual analysis was used to establish relationships between key concepts, such as collective values, moral legitimacy, and public communication mechanisms (Sari et al., 2025). The analysis process begins with data reduction, namely focusing

the literature on the parts that are directly relevant to the topic (Djulaeka & Rahayu, 2020). The data is then organized into a narrative that connects theoretical aspects with the Indonesian socio-political context, particularly with the realization of Pancasila values as a collective normative framework. Finally, a synthesis is conducted to produce coherent and in-depth theoretical conclusions. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, this research applies source and theory triangulation. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing findings obtained from various credible primary and secondary literature (Sari et al., 2025).

In this study, theoretical triangulation was applied to evaluate the conceptual integration between the ideas of civil religion, social fact theory, social contract theory, and deliberative democracy. This approach aims to ensure that the analytical frameworks used are consistent and complementary in explaining the socio-political phenomena that are the focus of the study. Theoretical triangulation allows researchers to highlight congruences or tensions between concepts, so that the interpretation of research results is not biased towards a single theoretical perspective. Furthermore, this study employed a literature audit as an additional methodological principle, namely the systematic recording of all sources and references used in the analysis. This procedure ensures transparency and scientific accountability, as every claim, interpretation, or conclusion drawn can be traced back to the original source. The combination of theoretical triangulation and literature audit strengthens the internal validity of the study while minimizing the risk of conceptual distortion. Thus, this method not only ensures analytical rigor but also affirms the academic integrity of the study, providing a solid foundation for theoretical synthesis and the application of concepts in an empirical context. This approach allows the study to produce a holistic and accountable understanding of the relationship between civil religion, social norms, and the practice of deliberative democracy (Miles et al., 2014).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Genealogy of Civil Religion: From Social Cohesion to Resilience against Radicalism

The concept of civil religion emerged from modern intellectual dynamics that highlighted the challenges of maintaining moral cohesion and political legitimacy amidst religious fragmentation, social differentiation, and state secularization. Modernity brings the promise of rationality, individual freedom, and autonomy of thought, but simultaneously gives rise to fundamental dilemmas: a crisis of collective meaning, weakening social solidarity, and a disconnection between citizens and their political communities. In this context, civil religion emerges as a concept that attempts to unify shared values that can provide a moral foundation for public life without restoring the dominance of a particular institutional religion. Civil religion is not simply a theological doctrine, but rather a normative framework that connects symbols, rituals, and public narratives with the nation's collective identity. Thus, this concept enables modern societies to foster social cohesion through universal values such as justice, freedom, and shared responsibility, without diminishing the plurality of individual beliefs. This idea also serves as a bridge between personal ethics and political legitimacy, addressing society's need for a widely accepted moral foundation. In the context of the modern state, civil religion serves to strengthen social bonds, foster civic loyalty, and provide symbolic legitimacy for public institutions, thus becoming a crucial instrument for social stability and integration.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was one of the first thinkers to explicitly formulate the concept of civil religion (religion civile). In Du Contrat Social, Rousseau asserted that the state requires a minimum set of moral beliefs to underpin the social contract and foster citizen loyalty to the law and the common good. Civil religion, according to Rousseau, is not theological-dogmatic, but rather serves to instill a "social sentiment" that encourages obedience to the law, love of country, and commitment to communal life. Rousseau emphatically warned that religious fanaticism poses a threat to the republic, as it replaces civil loyalty with absolute obedience to transcendent authority. Rousseau provided an important signal that political stability cannot rely solely on positive law and coercive power but requires moral legitimacy internalized by civil society. Rousseau believed that legitimacy and internalization must begin with the larger elements: the state and society.

Sociologically, Émile Durkheim deepened this dimension by positioning religion as the primary source of social solidarity. In The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Durkheim asserts that religion, in whatever form, is essentially a symbolic system that separates the sacred and the profane in order to form a collective conscience (Durkheim, 1912). The sacred, for Durkheim, does not necessarily refer to God or a metaphysical entity, but rather to the values considered most sublime and inviolable by a community. Durkheim's perspective presents civil religion as a process of sacralizing national values, constitutions, and public institutions to create a strong moral bond. The integration of these two theories leads to the position that the modern state must play an active role in shaping public symbols and rituals that function like religious rituals: creating a sense of community, strengthening collective identity, and affirming

commitment to shared norms. Without this symbolic sacralization process, modern society risks experiencing anomie, disappointment, and moral segregation, opening the way for conflict and extremism.

Robert N. Bellah later formulated civil religion more systematically within the context of modern society. In his influential essay, Civil Religion in America, Bellah defines civil religion as "a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that give a religious dimension to a nation's political experience, without identifying with any particular religion." (Bellah, 1967). Civil religion, according to Bellah, is neither a state religion nor a political ideology, but rather a moral canopy that shelters religious plurality and worldviews within a unified horizon of national meaning. Bellah emphasizes that civil religion also has a critical function. It not only legitimizes the state but also provides a moral standard for correcting abuses of power. Thus, civil religion is not synonymous with narrow nationalism or the cult of the state, but rather with a public ethic that demands moral responsibility from the state and its citizens.

In the context of radicalism and terrorism, this genealogy of civil religion is highly relevant. Various studies show that radicalism does not arise solely from theological factors, but from a combination of identity crisis, state delegitimization, and the collapse of social solidarity (Juergensmeyer, 2003; Horgan, 2009). From a phenomenological perspective, radical movements offer what can be called a total meaning system: a comprehensive system of meaning that provides certainty of identity, purpose in life, and moral legitimacy, often through the glorification of violence. Civil religion functions as a counterstructure of meaning to this offer. By providing a framework of collective meaning that is inclusive, nonviolent, and oriented toward living together, civil religion resists the allure of ideological absolutism that characterizes radicalism. When citizens have strong moral and symbolic ties to their political community, radical narratives that negate the state and plurality lose their existential resonance. Civil religion cannot be understood as a theoretical concept, but rather as a historical and sociological response to the crisis of meaning in modern society—a crisis that also serves as fertile ground for the growth of radicalism and terrorism.

The Normative Foundation of Civil Religion: Public Ethics and the Delegitimization of Ideological Violence

Civil religion rests on the basic assumption that communal life in a pluralistic society can only be sustained if the public sphere is governed by a set of moral values that are acceptable across faiths, ethnicities, and social identities. In this context, civil religion functions as a source of public morality that does not originate from a particular religious tradition, but is formulated as a shared ethic that binds all citizens. Robert N. Bellah emphasizes that civil religion is not merely a symbolic tool for state legitimacy, but rather contains an ethical-critical dimension that assesses political practices based on public moral values, not on the interests of power or narrow ideologies (Bellah, 1967). This critical dimension is important because it distinguishes civil religion from ideological nationalism or the cult of the state. Civil religion, on the other hand, places the state under the moral scrutiny of mutually agreed-upon public values. Within this normative framework, loyalty to the state is not absolute, but rather conditioned on the state's commitment to protecting life, justice, and human dignity. This assumption is the root cause of the genealogy of radicalism; radicalism is a response to accumulated societal disappointments and therefore must be understood as an inseparable part of radicalism and economic distribution. Thus, civil religion articulates a dialogical and reflective ethical relationship between citizens and the state.

Public ethics is a crucial component of civil religion, encompassing a number of fundamental principles, including respect for life (sanctity of life), recognition of human dignity, social justice, solidarity, and collective responsibility (Bellah, 1967). These principles serve as a moral minimum for communal life, as well as a normative boundary for the expression of ideology and belief in the public sphere. From this perspective, not all claims of truth or religious expression can be publicly justified. Acts of radicalism and terrorism can blatantly harm fundamental public needs and therefore cannot be justified under any pretext. This assumption emphasizes that collective societal movements can openly diminish the meaning of absolute understanding. Radicalism and terrorism are antagonistic to the public ethics of civil religion. Radical ideologies, particularly those based on religion, often construct moral legitimacy through claims of absolute truth and construct an "us versus them" logic. Violence is then justified as a sacred instrument to uphold a perceived ideological order. Within the framework of the public ethics of civil religion, this logic is fundamentally delegitimized, as ideological violence is seen as a direct violation of the values of life and humanity that underlie shared moral consensus.

Terrorism is not simply understood as a legal crime or a security threat, but as the most extreme form of violation of public ethics. As Michael Walzer argues, terrorism is a rejection of political morality itself, as it deliberately targets those who are morally blameless (Walzer, 1977). From a civil religion perspective, such actions lack any moral legitimacy, regardless of the theological or ideological claims they may hold. Civil religion provides a strong moral basis for the state to prevent and combat radicalism without marginalizing religion from the public sphere (Habermas,

2005). The state does not act as a secular authority hostile to religion, but rather as a guardian of public values, ensuring that religious and ideological expressions do not violate the fundamental principles of communal life. This approach aligns with Jürgen Habermas's view of the need for a civic ethic that allows for the coexistence of a plurality of beliefs within the framework of constitutional democracy (Habermas, 1996).

State action against radicals derives legitimacy not solely from legal mandates, but from a moral responsibility to protect citizens and maintain social integration. Civil religion thus serves as a normative bridge between religious freedom and the state's obligation to reject ideological violence. The state does not judge the theological truth or falsity of a religious teaching, but rather assesses its moral and social implications in the public sphere. However, the effectiveness of civil religion's normative foundation depends heavily on the state's consistency in translating these values into just and inclusive political practices (Danielson, 2019). When the state fails to achieve social justice, perpetuates discrimination, or uses violence disproportionately, the moral legitimacy of civil religion is eroded. Under these conditions, radical narratives can gain traction by claiming moral superiority over the state. Therefore, civil religion must be understood not as a static normative doctrine, but as an ethical horizon that is constantly tested in political practice and social life. It is precisely in this tension between values and reality that civil religion maintains its relevance as a normative framework for delegitimizing ideological violence and building societal moral resilience against radicalism and terrorism.

Civil religion, Social Integration and the Formation of an Inclusive National Identity

Civil religion effectively builds social integration in plural societies, especially at the symbolic and affective levels. Unlike political ideology, which is rational-instrumental in nature, civil religion operates through symbols, rituals, and collective narratives that shape citizens' emotional attachment to their political community. Émile Durkheim asserted that collective rituals and symbols produce what he called collective effervescence, the moral energy that arises when individuals experience themselves as part of something larger than themselves (Durkheim, 2016). This moral energy is the foundation of social solidarity and collective integration.

In the context of the modern nation-state, national symbols, constitutions, flags, national anthems, and state rituals such as national day commemorations and honoring heroes serve as the primary medium of civil religion (Habermas, 1996). Through these symbols and rituals, national values are presented as possessing transcendent meaning and worthy of respect. Robert N. Bellah states that the symbols of civil religion lend a sacred dimension to political life, so that the state is perceived not merely as an administrative power structure but as a moral community (Bellah, 1967). The social integration generated by civil religion is highly significant in the context of preventing radicalism. It is assumed that radicalism and extremism tend to thrive in social spaces characterized by alienation, marginalization, and identity crises. Individuals who feel disconnected from their social and political communities are more susceptible to accepting radical narratives that offer alternative identities that are totalizing and exclusive (Wiktorowicz, 2005).

Civil religion provides an inclusive national identity, allowing individuals to maintain their religious identity without having to negate national loyalty. National identity within the framework of civil religion is not built on religious or cultural homogeneity, but rather on shared values that are normative and symbolic. Thus, religious loyalty and national loyalty are not positioned antagonistically, but as two complementary dimensions of identity in public life. This approach has important implications in the context of a religious society like Indonesia. Rather than forcing the secularization of the public sphere, civil religion integrates religious expression into a broader national framework. This aligns with José Casanova's view, which emphasizes that religion in modern society does not have to be privatized but can contribute positively to the public sphere as long as it adheres to shared norms (Casanova, 1994).

Internalizing national identity through civil religion creates an existential experience that can be described as being part of a moral whole. Individuals do not simply "become citizens" administratively, but experience themselves as part of a moral community with shared goals and values. This experience is affective and symbolic, shaped through repeated participation in public rituals and engagement with national narratives. This phenomenological experience has a significant impact on an individual's resilience to radical narratives. Radical ideologies often position the state as a thaghut (villain), corrupt, or enemy of religion that must be totally rejected. However, when individuals have internalized national identity as part of their moral horizon, such narratives lose their persuasive power. The state is no longer perceived as a foreign or repressive entity, but rather as a shared space that, while imperfect, is worthy of struggle and improvement. Thus, civil religion functions as a mechanism of social integration that operates at the symbolic, affective, and existential levels (Bellah, 1967). This integration does not erase differences, but rather provides a common framework that allows them to coexist constructively.

In the context of preventing radicalism and terrorism, the formation of an inclusive national identity through civil religion is a crucial cultural prerequisite for long-term social resilience.

Civil religion as an approach to cultural deradicalization

Various recent studies have shown that a deradicalization approach that relies solely on security and law enforcement instruments has serious limitations. While coercive approaches are crucial for suppressing violence, they fail to address the cultural and normative roots of the radicalization process itself. John Horgan emphasized that radicalization is not an instantaneous event, but rather a gradual process involving cognitive, emotional, social, and personal identity dimensions (Horgan, 2008). Therefore, sustainable prevention and deradicalization strategies require an approach that operates at the level of meaning, values, and identity—where civil religion holds strategic relevance in analyzing and understanding the symptoms of radicalism and its deradicalization.

Civil religion operates as a cultural deradicalization approach by providing a normative and symbolic framework capable of countering radical narratives without resorting to the language of repression. Unlike counter-radicalization, which is directly ideological, civil religion works non-confrontational, through the formation of public ethics and an inclusive collective identity. Deradicalization is understood not as the elimination of religion or an effort towards secularization, but rather as a process of reintegrating individuals and groups into the national moral community (Budiono et al., 2025). Civil religion's contribution to deradicalization can be explained through three main mechanisms. First, moral reframing. Civil religion reframes ideological violence as an act that fundamentally contradicts public values such as respect for life, humanity, and solidarity. This framework provides an understanding that violence is no longer perceived as heroic or sacred, but as a violation of shared ethics. This reframing process is crucial because radical ideologies often monopolize moral and religious language to justify violence (Juergensmeyer, 2003). Civil religion intervenes in the moral realm by presenting inclusive and non-violent public ethical standards (Nugraha & Habibah, 2023).

Second, identity substitution. Radicalization often goes hand in hand with an identity crisis and a search for meaning in life. Radical movements offer an alternative identity that is total and exclusive; a promise of moral nobility and transcendence. Civil religion provides an inclusive and meaningful national identity, so individuals do not have to choose between being religious and being citizens. From a sociological perspective, the national identity internalized through civil religion serves as a social anchor that prevents individuals from becoming trapped in extreme identities (Wiktorowicz, 2005). Third, symbolic integration. Civil religion integrates religious expression into national symbols, rites, and narratives, preventing religion from being positioned as an entity alienated from the state. This symbolic integration is crucial in the context of religious societies, as radicalism often stems from the perception that the state is secular, alien, or hostile to religion. By providing symbolic space for religion in public life, civil religion reduces the tension between religious and national identities, while simultaneously closing the space for legitimacy for antagonistic radical narratives.

These three mechanisms operate at the experiential level of the subject. Individuals engaged in public rites and national narratives experience themselves as part of a broader moral community. This experience generates a sense of recognition and emotional attachment, weakening the appeal of exclusive, confrontational radical narratives. Politically, a civil religion-based deradicalization approach has a strategic advantage because it allows the state to carry out its preventive function without criminalizing religious identity. The state does not position religion as a problem, but rather asserts the normative boundary between legitimate religious expression and unjustifiable ideological violence. This approach is in line with Axel Honneth's criticism of the dangers of symbolic injustice, namely the injustice of recognition which can actually strengthen ressentiment and radicalism (Honneth, 1995). Civil religion, as an approach to cultural deradicalization, does not operate through repression or indoctrination, but rather through the formation of meaning, public ethics, and collective identity. This approach asserts that resilience against radicalism and terrorism can only be built sustainably if society has a shared moral horizon that can accommodate differences without justifying violence.

Pancasila as Indonesia's Civil Religion in Preventing Radicalism

In the Indonesian context, Pancasila can be understood as a unique form of civil religion with historical, cultural, and religious roots. As the nation's philosophical and ideological foundation, Pancasila serves not only as a constitutional guide but also as a symbol of morality and collective identity. Notonagoro emphasized that Pancasila is "a value system that explores the personality of the Indonesian nation." (Notonagoro, 1975) emphasizes the integration of local values, culture, and spirituality of Indonesian society within an inclusive

normative framework. Pancasila occupies a unique position between religion and politics, between public morality and state authority, without being either theocratic or radically secular. As a civil religion, Pancasila articulates the principles of divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice as the foundation of public morality that binds all citizens. The divine dimension (belief in God) in Pancasila is not intended as an exclusive doctrine, but rather as a basis for moral ethics that is acceptable across religions and beliefs. In this way, Pancasila affirms that spiritual values can serve as a shared moral foundation without having to impose a particular religious identity. The principles of humanity and unity directly reject ideological violence and identity fragmentation, so that radicalism and terrorism that emphasize exclusivism and the legitimacy of violence are in direct contradiction to the values of Pancasila (Holidin, 2022).

Pancasila acts as a symbolic anchor for national identity and social cohesion (Darmaputera, 1988). Through state symbols, public rituals, and civic education, the values of Pancasila are internalized by society as the moral foundation and collective identity of the nation. This process reflects the fundamental principle of civil religion, where shared norms are maintained to strengthen social cohesion, understanding, and agreement on universal public values. As Bellah notes, civil religion provides a basic framework that allows modern societies to maintain moral and symbolic legitimacy without relying on the dominance of a particular institutional religion. In the Indonesian context, Pancasila serves as a medium connecting personal ethics, civic loyalty, and collective responsibility, enabling every citizen to feel a sense of attachment to their national identity. The integration of these values into state practices, education, and public rituals makes Pancasila not merely a formal ideology but also a guide to living together that fosters social solidarity. Thus, the internalization of Pancasila through civil religion mechanisms plays a crucial role in strengthening the stability and integration of pluralistic societies (Bellah, 1967).

The phenomenon of social marginalization or ongoing structural injustice can weaken this internalization and open up space for radical narratives. This assumption forms a kind of case for the emergence of radicalism. Therefore, moral legitimacy is needed; for example, Pancasila must be consistently supported and agreed upon across various dimensions of public life, including state policy, welfare distribution, human rights protection, and recognition of plurality. This means that Pancasila becomes the fundamental basis for formulating strategic and tactical frameworks. From a deradicalization perspective, Pancasila serves as a medium for reframing morality and identity (moral reframing and identity substitution). Pancasila's values emphasize that ideological violence and intolerance contradict the nation's moral consensus. Educational programs and state rituals that emphasize unity, tolerance, and social justice can instill the internalization of Pancasila values as an inclusive national identity, so that individuals do not seek meaning in life within exclusive and confrontational radical narratives (Buehler, 2016).

Politically, the effectiveness of Pancasila as a civil religion depends heavily on the state's consistency in upholding its principles. Social inequality, structural discrimination, corruption, or abuse of power can undermine Pancasila's moral legitimacy, giving rise to a sense of injustice that radical narratives exploit. Therefore, the implementation of Pancasila as a civil religion requires an integration of moral norms, policy practices, education, and symbolic rituals, so that it becomes an effective instrument in preventing radicalism and terrorism. (Buehler, 2016) Internalization of Pancasila values produces an existential experience for citizens as part of the national moral community (Darmaputera, 1988). Individuals who feel an emotional and symbolic attachment to Pancasila tend to reject violent ideologies, because their religious and national identities complement each other, not contradict each other (Intan, 2019). Thus, Pancasila is not only a constitutional foundation, but also a moral and symbolic framework that forms social resilience against radicalism and extremism.

Integration of Civil Religion, Pancasila, and Habermas's Deliberative Democracy: Öffentlichkeit as an Arena for Deradicalization

Modern democracy, according to Jürgen Habermas, is characterized not only by electoral procedures or representative institutions, but primarily by the existence of a deliberative public sphere (Öffentlichkeit) that allows for rational-critical communication between citizens. Habermas emphasizes that the public sphere is an arena in which collective opinion and will are formed through deliberation free from structural domination and the rhetoric of power (Habermas, 1996). A healthy public space becomes the foundation of normative legitimacy, where public policies and social practices are tested based on rationality and moral argumentation, not the dominance of power (Coggon, 2012). This characteristic is part of an open political system that guarantees freedom of expression for all elements. In the context of a pluralistic and religious society, Habermas recognizes that religion plays a significant role in public life, but he emphasizes the importance of a "translation proviso," meaning that religious arguments must be able to be translated into a public language that can be understood by all citizens, regardless of their beliefs (Rhodin, 2017). This is where civil religion and Pancasila find their relevance. Civil religion serves

as a normative and symbolic framework that enables shared moral values to be internalized by a pluralistic society. Meanwhile, Pancasila provides a shared moral language that articulates the principles of divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice as the basis for public ethics acceptable across faiths.

The integration of civil religion with deliberative democracy opens up opportunities for the public sphere to function as an arena for deradicalization. In an inclusive and deliberative public sphere, radical ideological claims are tested through rational argumentation, empirical evidence, and mutually accepted moral norms. Ideological violence loses its communicative legitimacy, as citizens and public institutions have a normative and symbolic basis for rejecting violence. In sociological terms, a deliberative public sphere enriched by civil religion serves as a mechanism for social integration, where moral solidarity and an inclusive national identity are internalized and strengthened (Dryzek, 2002). Technically, this framework can be realized through several strategies. First, local and national deliberative forums, which integrate (collectively) communities across faiths and beliefs. This framework requires a deep moral consensus to ensure that aspirations are not polarized. Habermas's public sphere challenges the dominance of particular egos (Habermas, 1996). Habermas's "style" public sphere also needs to ensure a shared mindset regarding Pancasila as the basic consensus of the main agreement (civil religion).

Second, public education and literacy that emphasize understanding the values of Pancasila, pluralism, and rational dialogue as civic competencies. Third, state rituals and public symbols that affirm citizens' commitment to shared moral values, while also providing a medium for phenomenological experiences as part of a collective moral community. Fourth, media and communication technology as a means of public deliberation that encourages citizen participation, transparency, and social oversight, while rejecting radical, exclusive narratives.

The integration of civil religion, Pancasila, and deliberative democracy has strategic advantages in preventing radicalism. First, this approach is preventative, emphasizing the internalization of collective values and identity before extremism develops. Second, it is inclusive, as it accommodates religious expression without marginalizing plurality. Third, it is normative, providing a legitimate moral basis for rejecting ideological violence. Thus, the public space animated by civil religion and Pancasila is not merely an arena for political communication but also a cultural and moral mechanism for deradicalization that strengthens social resilience against radical ideology and violence. This phenomenon demonstrates that the resilience of democracy and the success of deradicalization are inseparable from the synergy between political institutions, public moral symbols, and citizen participation. Civil religion provides a symbolic and ethical foundation (Rhodin, 2017), Pancasila provides a moral language (Darmaputera, 1988), and deliberative democracy provides an arena for rational-critical interaction (Brady, 2004). The synergy of the three creates a moral and social horizon that closes the gap for the penetration of radical narratives and strengthens social integration in a sustainable manner.

4. CONCLUSION

This research confirms that radicalism and terrorism cannot be adequately understood if they are merely positioned as security, legal, or ideological deviation issues. Radicalism is a social phenomenon rooted in the crisis of civic integration, the weakening of the moral legitimacy of the state, and the fragility of the collective value framework that binds citizens symbolically and normatively. In this context, radicalism operates as an alternative meaning system and even as a counter-civil religion—offering a counter-identity, loyalty, and moral legitimacy to a state order perceived as failing to fulfill the promises of justice, recognition, and meaning of life together. Through a synthesis of Émile Durkheim's thinking on social facts, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's social contract and civil religion, Robert N. Bellah's thinking on civil religion, and Jürgen Habermas's thinking on deliberative democracy and the public sphere, this research demonstrates that civil religion has a strategic function as a foundation for public ethics, a mechanism for social integration, and an instrument for cultural deradicalization. Civil religion works not through repression or ideological indoctrination, but through the formation of shared moral values, the internalization of public symbols and rituals, and the strengthening of an inclusive national identity. By providing a collective moral horizon that affirms respect for life, humanity, solidarity, and social justice, civil religion normatively delegitimizes the ideological violence and claims to absolute truth that are the hallmarks of radicalism. In the Indonesian context, Pancasila is understood as a unique form of civil religion that possesses historical, cultural, and normative legitimacy. Pancasila functions not only as the constitutional foundation of the state but also as a public moral framework that unites diverse religious, ethnic, and social identities within a single national community. The values of Pancasila—divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice—inherently contradict the logic of exclusivism and the legitimacy of violence espoused by radical ideologies. However, the effectiveness of Pancasila as a civil religion depends heavily on the consistency of the state and society in internalizing and realizing these values in public policy, democratic practices, and the distribution of social justice.

The integration of civil religion with Habermas's deliberative democracy strengthens the argument that the public sphere (Öffentlichkeit) is a key arena in the prevention and deradicalization of radicalism. An inclusive, rational, and participatory public sphere allows ideological claims—including radical ones—to be morally and communicatively tested, thereby depriving violence of its normative legitimacy. Within this framework, the state does not position religion as a threat, but rather as a part of public life that is accommodated as long as it adheres to public ethics and the principles of living together. The synergy between civil religion, Pancasila, and deliberative democracy thus forms sustainable moral and social resilience against radicalism. This study concludes that effective and long-term prevention of radicalism requires a paradigm shift from a purely securitization approach to a normative-cultural approach that emphasizes strengthening the moral legitimacy of the state, social integration, and an inclusive national identity. Civil religion, in the form of Pancasila, lived out through deliberative practices, provides a strategic framework for the Indonesian state and society to combat radicalism without sacrificing pluralism, religious freedom, and democratic principles. These findings also open up space for further research examining the empirical implementation of civil religion in public policy, civic education, and the dynamics of the digital public sphere as part of a more comprehensive deradicalization strategy.

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