



NEGOTIATING RELIGIOUS MODERATION: QUR'ANIC INTERPRETATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF WASATIYYAH DISCOURSE IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This article examines the construction and negotiation of wasatiyyah (Islamic moderation) discourse in Indonesia through Qur'anic interpretation as a complex socio-religious phenomenon. Drawing on discourse analysis and critical examination of contemporary tafsir literature, this study demonstrates that wasatiyyah is not a static theological concept but a contested discursive space negotiated among state institutions, Islamic scholars, civil society organizations, and digital platforms. The analysis reveals that while wasatiyyah discourse is promoted as an authentic Islamic principle grounded in Qur'anic teachings particularly the concept of "ummatan wasatan" in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143 its actual implementation reflects diverse, sometimes contradictory interpretations shaped by socio-political contexts. The study argues that understanding wasatiyyah requires attention to how different actors strategically employ Qur'anic exegesis to construct narratives of religious moderation aligned with their institutional interests. This article contributes to Islamic studies and religious discourse analysis by illuminating the power dynamics embedded in the production of religious knowledge and the negotiation of moderate Islam in pluralistic Indonesia.

Keywords: *wasatiyyah, religious moderation, Qur'anic interpretation, discourse analysis, Indonesia*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji konstruksi dan negosiasi wacana *wasatiyyah* (moderasi Islam) di Indonesia melalui penafsiran Al-Qur'an sebagai fenomena sosial-keagamaan yang kompleks. Dengan menggunakan analisis wacana dan telaah kritis terhadap literatur tafsir kontemporer, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *wasatiyyah* bukanlah konsep teologis yang statis, melainkan ruang diskursif yang diperdebatkan dan dinegosiasikan di antara institusi negara, para ulama, organisasi masyarakat sipil, serta platform digital. Analisis ini mengungkap bahwa meskipun wacana *wasatiyyah* dipromosikan sebagai prinsip Islam yang autentik yang berlandaskan pada ajaran Al-Qur'an khususnya konsep "*ummatan wasatan*" dalam Surah Al-Baqarah ayat 143 implementasinya dalam praktik justru mencerminkan beragam, bahkan terkadang bertentangan, penafsiran yang dipengaruhi oleh konteks sosial-politik. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa pemahaman terhadap *wasatiyyah* menuntut perhatian pada bagaimana berbagai aktor secara strategis memanfaatkan tafsir Al-Qur'an untuk membangun narasi moderasi beragama yang selaras dengan kepentingan institusional mereka. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada studi Islam dan analisis wacana keagamaan dengan menyoroiti dinamika

kekuasaan yang melekat dalam produksi pengetahuan keagamaan serta proses negosiasi Islam moderat di Indonesia yang pluralistik.

Kata kunci: wasatiyyah, moderasi beragama, tafsir Al-Qur'an, analisis wacana, Indonesia

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1. Introduction

Indonesia stands as a singular case in global Islamic affairs the world's largest Muslim-majority nation with an established constitutional commitment to religious pluralism and diversity. Yet the country faces mounting pressures from religious radicalism and communal tensions alongside state-led efforts to promote moderate Islam. Central to these efforts is the concept of *wasatiyyah*, often translated as "the middle way" or "Islamic moderation," which has become a cornerstone of official religious policy, educational curricula, and public discourse (Kustiadi et al., 2026). However, the meaning and application of *wasatiyyah* remain highly contested across intellectual, institutional, and popular registers.

The Thematic Interpretation of Religious Moderation (TTMA) published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2022 represents a significant institutional engagement with *wasatiyyah*. Rather than treating moderation through traditional ethical-religious principles alone, this official interpretation explicitly integrates state-related concepts into Qur'anic hermeneutics (Kustiadi et al., 2026). This development raises critical questions about the relationship between scriptural interpretation, state ideology, and the construction of moderate Islamic identity in contemporary Indonesia.

The central argument of this article is that *wasatiyyah* discourse in Indonesia should be understood not merely as theological doctrine but as a discursive practice through which religious authority is negotiated, legitimized, and contested. This negotiation occurs across multiple interpretive sites—classical tafsir scholarship, state-sponsored exegetical projects, digital platforms, and

grassroots Islamic institutions. By examining how different actors interpret Qur'anic verses on moderation, we can illuminate the power relations embedded in religious knowledge production and the political stakes of defining Islamic authenticity.

2. Wasatiyyah As Qur'anic Concept And Contested Discourse

2.1 The Theological Foundation: Ummatan Wasatan

The term *wasatiyyah* derives primarily from the Qur'anic concept articulated in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143, which describes the Muslim community as "ummatan wasatan" variously translated as "a justly balanced community" or "a people who are moderate" (Farhan & Subagio, 2024). This verse serves as the textual anchor for contemporary wasatiyyah discourse, invoked repeatedly across tafsir literature, government documents, and educational materials as the Qur'anic warrant for Islamic moderation.

However, scholarly interpretations of this verse diverge significantly. According to prominent Indonesian exegete Sayyid Qutb, the concept encompasses six distinct indicators of wasatiyyah: dimensions of creed ('aqidah), thought, law (shari'ah), social relations, place (temporal and spatial context), and time (historical moment) (Fauziah et al., 2025). This multidimensional framework suggests that wasatiyyah is not merely an ethical posture but a comprehensive approach to Islamic life requiring contextual application. In contrast, classical and contemporary exegetes demonstrate convergent emphasis on wasatiyyah as the foundational antithesis to extremist tendencies (ghuluw), though they differ on specific applications to modern circumstances (Nizamuddin et al., 2026).

The interpretation of "ummatan wasatan" has become a site of interpretive contestation in Indonesia. Some scholars emphasize its normative-textual meaning as adherence to traditional jurisprudential schools, others adopt a contextual-progressive interpretation emphasizing adaptive Islamic practice, and still others

employ a pragmatic-political reading aligned with state policies ([Abraar, 2025](#)). These competing interpretations cannot be reduced to mere theological disagreement; rather, they reflect deeper struggles over the right to define authentic Islam and legitimate religious authority in post-authoritarian Indonesia.

2.2 Pluralization and Power in Wasatiyyah Interpretation

Contemporary Indonesian tafsir scholarship reveals significant variation in how wasatiyyah is constructed. Hamka's influential *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, written partly during his imprisonment under the Old Order regime, presents wasatiyyah as an essential value for religious harmony and national unity, emphasizing tolerance, balance, and proportion ([Farhan & Subagio, 2024](#)). This framing already contains political dimensions Hamka articulated Islamic moderation as compatible with Indonesian nationalism during a period of state-religious tension.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs' Thematic Interpretation advances this state-aligned framing further by incorporating state principles such as national commitment, the state's mediating role, and critical religious reasoning toward state authority into Qur'anic exegesis ([Kustiadi et al., 2026](#)). This represents what might be called the institutionalization of wasatiyyah the embedding of moderation discourse within state bureaucratic and ideological structures.

Yet alternative interpretive frameworks persist. The Shiite perspective of Ayatollah Makārim Ash-Shīrāzī offers a contrasting approach, arguing that wasatiyyah should be more inclusive, referring to moderation as a character quality rather than a marker of certain majority populations ([Ridho & iqbal, 2024](#)). This suggests that wasatiyyah is not theologically determined but discursively constructed in ways that serve particular institutional interests and worldviews.

The construction of wasatiyyah discourse also involves strategic textual choices. Critical discourse analysis of digital Islamic media platforms reveals that both *Islami.co* and *IBTimes.id* construct moderate Islamic discourse through deliberate selection of Qur'anic verses particularly QS Al-Baqarah 2:143 and QS Al-

Imran 3:104 ([Aminuddin, 2024](#)). While both platforms emphasize moderation as moral balance and anti-extremism, they diverge in theological framing and sociocultural orientation, with Islami.co emphasizing classical exegesis alongside contextual storytelling, while IBTimes.id frames moderation in civic and political terms linked to national unity ([Aminuddin, 2024](#)).

3. State Discourse And The Institutionalization Of Moderate Islam

3.1 Ministry of Religious Affairs and Official Tafsir

The Indonesian state's engagement with wasatiyyah discourse has deepened significantly since 2019, when religious moderation was formally incorporated into the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM). The Ministry of Religious Affairs has produced multiple official publications including the Tafsir Tematik Moderasi Beragama (Thematic Tafsir of Religious Moderation), translated Qur'ans emphasizing moderation, and training programs for religious educators ([Taufik et al., 2025](#)).

These state-sponsored interpretations serve multiple functions simultaneously. First, they legitimize specific readings of Islamic texts by positioning them as official, authoritative renderings. The 2019 edition of *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya* (Qur'an and Translation) introduced subtle but significant shifts in terminology compared to earlier editions, reflecting evolving state priorities ([Cholily, 2023](#)). This demonstrates that translation and interpretation are not merely linguistic acts but sociopolitical engagements shaping public understanding of Islam.

Second, state tafsir constructs a moderation paradigm that emphasizes dialogical cooperation between religion and the state ([Kustiadi et al., 2026](#)). Unlike classical Islamic jurisprudence that theoretically maintains religion's independence from political authority, state-sponsored interpretation integrates

state concepts (ulū al-amr, national commitment, state authority) directly into scriptural exegesis. This represents what scholars have termed the "securitization" of religious moderation framing specific interpretations as security imperatives for national stability (Fansuri, 2025).

However, this institutionalization of wasatiyyah generates significant contestation. Some scholars argue that state control over religious interpretation risks narrowing interpretive pluralism traditionally valued in Islamic scholarship (Taufik et al., 2025). The epistemological discourse surrounding religious moderation reveals political bias, particularly since the principles of Religious Moderation closely align with the characteristics of Islam Nusantara associated with Nahdlatul Ulama, identified as a close ally of the ruling regime (Syarif, 2024). This suggests that while wasatiyyah is presented as a universal Islamic value, its institutional elaboration reflects specific political alignments.

3.2 Constructing Moderation Through Counter-Radicalism

State promotion of wasatiyyah discourse is explicitly framed as a response to radicalism and terrorism. The Ministry of Religious Affairs' institutional tafsir functions as a state instrument in counter-radicalization efforts, defining jihad as primarily defensive, emphasizing non-violent expressions of Islamic commitment, and affirming the compatibility of the Indonesian state with Islamic principles (Taufik et al., 2025). This counter-radical framing shapes how wasatiyyah is understood in public discourse.

Through Critical Discourse Analysis drawing on Foucault's theory of power relations, research reveals that state-endorsed tafsir operates as a power mechanism: by positioning state-sponsored exegesis as normative reference, the initiative risks undermining the pluralism and independence traditionally valued in Islamic scholarship (Taufik et al., 2025). The narrative of religious moderation is constructed through strategic selection of verses, textual-contextual interpretation, and delivery emphasizing tolerance and anti-extremism, normalizing moderation

as part of broader Islamic teachings aligned with government, organizational, and media agendas ([Yusufa et al., 2025](#)).

Yet this framing obscures deeper complexities. Religious moderation discourse functions not merely as a response to extremism but as a technology of governance that shapes which religious expressions are legitimated and which are marginalized ([Fansuri, 2025](#)). Some scholars argue that by dichotomizing "moderate" and "extremist," state discourse creates ideological limits that constrain the full spectrum of legitimate Islamic expression, potentially stigmatizing non-violent yet non-conforming religious movements as security threats ([Fansuri, 2025](#)).

4. Institutional Actors and Organizational Contests

4.1 Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah: Competing Moderation Narratives

Indonesia's two largest Muslim organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, constitute crucial actors in wasatiyyah discourse construction. Both organizations have historically claimed adherence to moderate Islam, yet empirical research reveals nuanced differences in their conceptualization and grassroots implementation ([Aulia et al., 2024](#)). Comparative analysis of NU and Muhammadiyah perspectives on interfaith moderation using the Mann-Whitney U test demonstrates significant distinctions in religious tolerance, social inclusiveness, and economic activities, though both organizations share common values emphasizing dialogue and moderation ([Aulia et al., 2024](#)).

NU's particular approach to wasatiyyah is historically rooted in Javanese Islam's engagement with local traditions and Sufi-influenced spirituality. Leadership figures within NU, particularly Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), articulated a progressive approach to religious moderation emphasizing tolerance, brotherhood, and nationalism through contextual interpretation of the Qur'an

(Lubis et al., 2024). Gus Dur's concept of Islamic moderation included awareness of religious diversity, implementing religion's function for public good, nationalist orientation, emphasis on interreligious dialogue, and upholding justice and tolerance principles (Lubis et al., 2024).

Muhammadiyah, meanwhile, has pursued a more explicitly reformist trajectory, emphasizing rational engagement with modernity while maintaining Islamic authenticity. Contemporary Muhammadiyah leadership has articulated religious moderation through integration of nationalism and Islamic values, though research on the dimensions of leadership and ideology reveals ongoing tensions between maintaining doctrinal purity and engaging pragmatically with state and society (Arifin et al., 2024).

The differences between these organizations reveal that wasatiyyah is not a unified concept but a contested discursive space. Both organizations claim to promote moderate Islam, yet their actual programs reflect different emphases and strategies. This organizational pluralism complicates the narrative of a single "moderate Islam" and demonstrates instead that wasatiyyah functions as a flexible signifier capable of accommodating diverse interpretations and institutional interests.

4.2 Educational Institutions and the Internalization of Moderation

Islamic educational institutions particularly pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) and madrasah serve as critical sites where wasatiyyah discourse is translated into pedagogical practice. Research on religious moderation in Islamic schools reveals that the values of wasatiyyah are being actualized through multiple mechanisms: contextualizing values in learning, instilling moderation values in technology use, emphasizing the middle way (tawassut), balance (tawazun), equality (musāwah), and tolerance (tasāmuh) (Alnashr & Hakim, 2024).

The values actualized include civilization (ta'addub), exemplary conduct (qudwah), citizenship and nationalism (muwaṭānah), balance, firmness and

directness (i'tidāl), equality, deliberation (shūra), tolerance, and dynamic innovation (tathawwur wa ibtikâr) (Alnashr & Hakim, 2024). This comprehensive framework suggests that wasatiyyah in educational contexts encompasses not merely abstract theological principles but concrete practices shaping student development and social relationships.

However, the implementation of wasatiyyah values in educational settings reveals significant challenges. Research on pesantren in Banten demonstrates that these institutions navigate multiple competing discourses traditionalist, modernist, and transnational Islamic movements such as Salafism and Hizb ut-Tahrir each proposing alternative notions of orthodoxy and Islamic authenticity (Harto et al., 2025). This suggests that wasatiyyah is contested even within institutions designated to promote it, with different pedagogical approaches reflecting broader intellectual and ideological divisions within Indonesian Islam.

5. Digital Platforms and the Dissemination of Moderation

5.1 Social Media as a Site of Interpretive Negotiation

Digital platforms have emerged as crucial spaces where wasatiyyah discourse is constructed and contested. Analysis of Islamic digital platforms like Islami.co and IBTimes.id reveals that these media actively construct moderate Islamic discourse through strategic communication, curated content, and mission-driven digital activism (Mahzumi et al., 2025). These platforms position themselves as ideological counterbalances to radical religious narratives, particularly among young Indonesian Muslims.

The discourse on religious moderation in oral Qur'anic interpretation on YouTube channels operates within a knowledge-power network involving Muslim individuals, nations, media, and communities (Yusufa et al., 2025). Critical discourse analysis reveals that interpretations conveyed by prominent Islamic

figures normalize understanding of religious moderation as part of broader Islamic teachings, aligning with agendas of government, organizations, and media (Yusufa et al., 2025). The normalization of moderation discourse through curated narrative selection and strategic framing demonstrates how digital platforms function as agents in the construction of moderate Islam.

Yet YouTube discourse also reveals ideological limitations. The dichotomy between "moderate" and "its opponent" created in religious moderation interpretations reveals the existence of ideological limits imposed by dominant actors, such that moderation discourse functions as a tool of social and political regulation rather than a neutral theological principle (Yusufa et al., 2025). This critical observation challenges assumptions that wasatiyyah represents a transparent or universally agreed-upon concept.

5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis of Religious Authority

Research on Islamic debates regarding contemporary issues such as non-religious music on digital platforms reveals how religious authority is negotiated through discourse in digital spaces (Ghozi et al., 2025). Different platforms construct divergent interpretive communities: Yufid TV employs literalist Salafi interpretation rejecting music, while Bincang Syariah adopts contextual and maqāṣid-oriented approaches (Ghozi et al., 2025). These platforms function as new arenas for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and negotiation of religious legitimacy in modern Muslim societies.

This multiplicity of digital religious discourse suggests that wasatiyyah is not a coherent institutional project with clear boundaries but rather an ongoing negotiation involving multiple actors with different resources, authority claims, and institutional positions. The Islamic digital sphere reflects broader transformations in religious authority from traditional institutions to decentralized networks—a shift with significant implications for how moderation is understood and practiced.

6. Theological Perspectives and Interpretive Diversity

6.1 Wasatiyyah as Foundation for Islamic Ethics and Law

Contemporary Islamic scholarship demonstrates that wasatiyyah functions not merely as a principle of moderation but as a foundation for broader ethical and legal frameworks. In the conceptualization of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (the objectives of Islamic law), wasatiyyah serves as a guiding principle for achieving the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth while maintaining balanced approaches in worship, social interactions, economics, politics, and education (Abdul-Jabbar, 2025). This integration of wasatiyyah with maqāṣid suggests that moderation is conceived as integral to Islamic jurisprudence, not merely as a pragmatic compromise.

The understanding of Islamic moderation in Qur'anic interpretation encompasses recognition that moderation constitutes a balanced middle path between excess (ifrāṭ) and negligence (tafrīṭ), a central Islamic tenet affirmed in Qur'anic verses (Suparta et al., 2025). The Prophet Muhammad is presented as embodying moderation through gentleness, openness, and respect for diversity, providing a model for balanced thought and practice (Suparta et al., 2025). This theological framing grounds wasatiyyah in prophetic example, suggesting its authenticity as Islamic principle.

6.2 Contested Interpretations and Alternative Frameworks

However, scholarly examination reveals significant contestation around wasatiyyah's meaning and application. One critical study argues that while wasatiyyah is often understood within a normative framework of religious moderation, ethnographic examination of Indonesia's multicultural Muslim society reveals three dominant interpretations competing for public recognition: normative-textual, contextual-progressive, and pragmatic-political (Abraar, 2025).

Although presented as a middle path, wasatiyyah discourse is frequently employed as a tool of power to legitimize authority and marginalize dissenting voices (Abraar, 2025).

This recognition of wasatiyyah's discursive function its capacity to serve power relations challenges romantic narratives portraying moderation as a transparent or universally beneficial principle. Instead, it suggests that understanding wasatiyyah requires critical attention to whose interests are served by particular interpretations and what possibilities are foreclosed by treating specific formulations as definitively Islamic.

Research on religious pluralism in Indonesia reveals additional complexities. While some Muslim scholars interpret pluralism as an expression of tolerance and peaceful coexistence grounding this in Qur'anic verses they claim recognize the legitimacy of all religions others adopt more controversial positions asserting the equality of all religious truth claims (Muhammad, 2025). These debates about pluralism's relationship to wasatiyyah demonstrate fundamental disagreements about the scope and implications of Islamic moderation.

7. Challenges and Tensions in Wasatiyyah Construction

7.1 The Risk of Ideological Narrowing

A significant tension in contemporary wasatiyyah discourse concerns the possibility that state-sponsored and institutionalized moderation might narrow the spectrum of legitimate Islamic expression rather than widen it. Research on how hijrah movements characterized by return to Islamic pious practices and lifestyle changes are increasingly constructed as security threats within Indonesia's moderation agenda reveals problematic dimensions (Fansuri, 2025). While presented as secular concerns about national stability, securitization of religious interpretation risks delegitimizing non-violent yet non-conforming Islamic

expressions, thereby undermining the pluralism moderation supposedly promotes.

Similarly, research on religious authority in the digital age reveals tensions between pursuing institutional moderation and respecting traditional Islamic epistemologies. By centralizing interpretive authority under state or organizational auspices, institutionalization of wasatiyyah potentially marginalizes individual Qur'anic interpreters and the pluralistic interpretive traditions characterizing classical Islamic scholarship (Taufik et al., 2025).

7.2 Integration with Socioeconomic Justice

A second significant challenge concerns the integration of wasatiyyah with socioeconomic justice and equity. While contemporary discourse emphasizes wasatiyyah's role in religious moderation and counter-radicalism, systematic literature review reveals that much discussion positions moderation primarily as a normative response to radicalization with limited integration into frameworks addressing economic justice, poverty, or inequality (Diman et al., 2026). This suggests potential limitations in treating wasatiyyah as a comprehensive Islamic framework if it neglects material conditions of marginalization and deprivation.

Research on Islamic moderation and halal industry development demonstrates that wasatiyyah and *maṣlaḥah* (public welfare) remain fragmentarily implemented due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, inconsistent policy coordination, and limited accessibility for micro and small enterprises (Saefullah et al., 2025). This gap between rhetorical endorsement of moderation principles and their effective implementation in policy and practice reveals challenges in translating wasatiyyah from discourse to material reality.

7.3 Gender Dimensions and Women's Participation

Religious moderation discourse has largely marginalized gender analysis and women's perspectives. Research on gender bias in religious discourse on child

marriage reveals how women are systematically excluded from interpretive processes while their bodies and roles are heavily regulated through appeals to Islamic authority ([Atieqoh et al., 2026](#)). This suggests that constructing wasatiyyah as truly balanced and moderate would require genuine inclusion of women's intellectual contributions and systematic examination of how moderation discourse affects women's autonomy and rights.

8. Toward a Critical Understanding of Wasatiyyah

8.1 Reconceptualizing Moderation as Dynamic Process

Rather than treating wasatiyyah as a fixed theological doctrine or institutional policy, this analysis suggests reconceptualizing moderation as a dynamic discursive and political process through which religious authority is constantly negotiated. Wasatiyyah functions simultaneously as:

- A theological concept grounded in Qur'anic interpretation
- An institutional framework promoted by state and organizational actors
- A pedagogical principle guiding Islamic education
- A digital narrative shaping public Islamic discourse
- A contested signifier capable of accommodating diverse interests and worldviews

This multivalent character means that understanding wasatiyyah requires attention to specific contexts, institutional actors, and power relations rather than assuming a unified, stable meaning across domains.

8.2 Power, Knowledge, and Religious Authenticity

The construction of wasatiyyah discourse reveals fundamental questions about religious authority, knowledge production, and authenticity in contemporary Islam. By analyzing how state, organizations, scholars, and digital platforms differently interpret and promote wasatiyyah, we recognize that

"authentic Islam" is not predetermined but constructed through social, political, and interpretive processes. The negotiation of wasatiyyah discourse thus illuminates broader dynamics through which religious meaning is produced and contested in pluralistic, post-authoritarian societies.

8.3 Implications for Religious Studies and Islamic Studies

From a scholarly perspective, this analysis contributes to Islamic studies by demonstrating that contemporary phenomena like "moderate Islam" cannot be understood through purely theological analysis but require attention to institutional structures, state power, educational practices, and digital communication. The construction of wasatiyyah in Indonesia offers a detailed case study in how religious concepts acquire social salience and institutional significance in specific historical and political contexts.

For religious studies more broadly, the Indonesian case demonstrates that "moderation" is not a transparent category but a contested framework through which different actors pursue sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicting interests. This suggests that scholars should approach moderation discourse with the same critical attention typically directed toward fundamentalism or radicalism—recognizing that all framings of authentic religion are situated within particular power relations and institutional contexts.

9. Conclusion

The construction and negotiation of wasatiyyah discourse in contemporary Indonesia reveals religious moderation to be far more complex than state or organizational narratives typically acknowledge. Rather than a fixed theological principle or transparent antidote to extremism, wasatiyyah functions as a contested discursive field through which diverse actors—state institutions, Islamic

organizations, scholars, educators, and digital platforms—negotiate authority, legitimacy, and the meaning of authentic Islam.

Qur'anic interpretation serves as the crucial site where this negotiation occurs. By strategically selecting verses, employing particular exegetical methodologies, and linking theological interpretation to institutional interests, different actors construct divergent meanings of *wasatiyyah* aligned with their respective projects. The state's integration of moderation into official *tafsir* differs fundamentally from NU's emphasis on pluralism, which again differs from Muhammadiyah's rationalist reformism and Salafi rejections of institutional moderation altogether.

This multiplicity is neither incidental nor regrettable but constitutive of how religious discourse functions in pluralistic, democratic contexts. Rather than seeking a definitive theological resolution to questions about the authentic meaning of *wasatiyyah*, productive scholarship should examine how specific interpretations acquire social force, whose interests they serve, what possibilities they open or foreclose, and how they shape religious and political practice.

Future research should attend more carefully to gender dimensions of moderation discourse, the relationship between *wasatiyyah* and economic justice, the perspectives of marginalized Muslim communities, and the uneven implementation of moderation rhetoric in actual institutional practice. Only through such contextual, multisited analysis can scholars move beyond treating *wasatiyyah* as a given theological category toward understanding moderation as a complex, ongoing negotiation through which Indonesian Muslims construct meaningful, authoritative, and contested expressions of Islamic faith in a diverse, challenging world.

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