



Abdurrahman Wahid's Concept of Pluralism in the Qur'anic Perspective: Justice, Religious Freedom, and Freedom of Opinion as Human Rights

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Abstract

Religious diversity constitutes one of Indonesia's most enduring social realities and one of its most contested political challenges. Sectarian conflicts rooted in religious difference have periodically erupted across the archipelago, from Poso and Ambon in the early 2000s to more diffuse instances of intolerance documented by the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) in subsequent years. Amidst this landscape, the thought of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur)—Islamic scholar, former Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, and fourth President of the Republic of Indonesia—stands as the most prominent and intellectually sustained advocacy for religious pluralism in modern Indonesian Islam. This article examines the meaning of pluralism as articulated by Abdurrahman Wahid and situates it within a Qur'anic framework, with particular attention to three dimensions: justice ('adl), freedom of religion (hurriyyat al-dīn), and freedom of opinion as fundamental human rights. Employing a qualitative-descriptive methodology grounded in library research and thematic (mawdū'ī) Qur'anic analysis, the study draws on Wahid's major works alongside classical and contemporary tafsir literature. The findings reveal that Wahid's pluralism is not the theological relativism condemned by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) in its 2005 fatwa, but a substantive commitment to the equal dignity of all human beings as affirmed by the Qur'an itself—most clearly in QS. al-Baqarah [2]:256, QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]:13, and QS. al-Kāfirūn [109]:6—and exemplified by the Prophet's Madinah Charter. The article contributes to the scholarly understanding of progressive Islamic thought in Indonesia and to global debates on Islam and human rights.

Keywords: Abdurrahman Wahid; pluralism; Qur'anic perspective; religious freedom; justice; human rights; Indonesia; Nahdlatul Ulama.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity is inscribed in Indonesia's constitutional identity. The national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*—'Unity in Diversity'—acknowledges what is empirically undeniable: the world's largest Muslim-majority nation is also home to substantial Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian communities, as well as hundreds of indigenous spiritual

traditions. Yet this diversity has been accompanied by recurring episodes of interfaith tension and violence. The burning of a church in Poso during the communal conflicts of 1998–2001, the sectarian violence in Ambon, and more recent incidents of discrimination against religious minorities in Bantul, Yogyakarta—where a Christian was effectively barred from residing in a village on account of his faith—all testify to the fragility of religious coexistence in the absence of robust intellectual and institutional frameworks for pluralism.

It is against this background that the thought of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, universally known as Gus Dur (1940–2009), assumes particular significance. Gus Dur was one of the most consequential Islamic intellectuals in modern Indonesian history: a product of the *pesantren* tradition, a prolific author and journalist, longtime Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama (the world's largest Islamic organization), and the fourth President of Indonesia (1999–2001). Throughout his public life, he was the most prominent and consistent advocate for religious pluralism, the equal dignity of all citizens regardless of faith, and an Indonesia in which the rights of religious minorities are fully protected. His advocacy drew on a deep familiarity with the classical Islamic scholarly tradition, a wide engagement with Western philosophy and social theory, and a practical political commitment to democratic pluralism that was grounded in his reading of the Qur'an itself.

The academic and public conversation about religious pluralism in Indonesia has been sharply polarized since the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) issued its fatwa in July 2005, declaring the '*paham pluralisme agama*' (religious pluralism doctrine) forbidden for Muslims. The MUI defined its target as the view that 'all religions are the same and their truths are relative,' a definition that critics argued caricatured the actual positions of Indonesian pluralist thinkers, including Gus Dur. In response, a range of Muslim intellectuals—among them Ahmad Suaedy, Abdul Moqsih Ghazali, and Rumadi—argued that the fatwa itself reflected an exclusivist posture incompatible with the Qur'an's affirmation of human dignity and religious freedom. This debate has continued to animate Indonesian Islamic public discourse, producing a substantial body of scholarship but relatively little sustained analysis of Gus Dur's pluralist framework in its specifically Qur'anic dimensions.

This article addresses that gap by examining two central questions: first, what is the meaning of pluralism according to Abdurrahman Wahid in the Qur'anic perspective? Second, how does Qur'anic pluralism manifest in the dimensions of justice, freedom of religion, and freedom of opinion as human rights? The article proceeds through a review of the theoretical and historical context of pluralism, a discussion of Wahid's intellectual biography and the foundations of his pluralist framework, an analysis of the Qur'anic verses most directly relevant to each of the three dimensions, and a concluding reflection on the implications of Wahid's thought for contemporary Indonesian Muslim discourse and for global conversations about Islam and human rights.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Pluralism: Conceptual Clarifications

The term 'pluralism' carries multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings that must be carefully distinguished. In its most common sociological sense, pluralism refers simply to the empirical reality of diversity—ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural—within a single social space. This descriptive or 'weak' sense of pluralism is relatively uncontroversial; it is the situation that most multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies find themselves in. A stronger sense of pluralism involves a normative commitment: not merely acknowledging diversity but positively valuing it, engaging with those who differ, and treating difference as an occasion for mutual enrichment rather than conflict or conversion. It is this stronger normative sense that characterizes Gus Dur's advocacy.

A third, still stronger sense of pluralism—which is the position targeted by the MUI's fatwa—claims that all religions are epistemologically equivalent paths to the same ultimate reality, such that no religious tradition can claim a higher degree of truth than any other. This position, associated with theologians such as John Hick and closely related to religious relativism, does indeed raise serious theological difficulties for any tradition committed to the finality or completeness of its revelation. Critics such as Anis Malik Thoha have argued that adopting this strong pluralism undermines the coherence of Islamic theology. Crucially, however, Gus Dur's pluralism does not occupy this third position. As Abdul Muid (2014) has argued, Wahid's framework affirms the integrity and independent truth-claims of each religious tradition while insisting that mutual respect, cooperation, and the protection of human rights do not require that any tradition abandon its own claims. The confusion between these distinct positions—normative pluralism as civic commitment and philosophical pluralism as religious relativism—has generated unnecessary controversy and obscured the substantial Qur'anic grounding of Wahid's actual views.

Alwi Shihab's taxonomy of pluralism is helpful here. Shihab distinguishes between 'cosmopolitanism'—the mere coexistence of different groups in the same space without genuine interaction—and genuine pluralism, which involves active engagement with and appreciation for the other. He further distinguishes pluralism from relativism, noting that a genuine pluralist need not abandon the conviction that her own tradition is true in order to respect others' right to follow their own. This distinction is pivotal for understanding Wahid's position: his pluralism is a civic and theological commitment to equal human dignity, rooted in the Qur'an's own affirmation of human diversity as divine intent, not a capitulation to the view that all religious truth-claims are equally valid.

Historical Development of Pluralism in Islamic Context

The history of religious pluralism in the Islamic tradition is considerably more complex and contested than the contemporary polemics often suggest. The earliest and most significant historical model of inter-religious coexistence in Islamic political thought is the Madinah Charter (Mīthāq al-Madīnah), concluded by the Prophet Muhammad upon his migration to Madinah in 622 CE. This document established a political community (ummah) that explicitly included Jewish tribes alongside Muslim immigrants and Madinan converts,

guaranteeing freedom of religious practice for each community while creating a framework for collective security and mutual obligation. Article 25 of the Charter states unambiguously: 'The Jews of Banu Auf are one community with the believers; the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have their religion.' This historical precedent is foundational for Wahid's pluralism, as it demonstrates that the Prophet himself built a multi-religious polity on the basis of equal rights and mutual respect rather than coerced uniformity.

The subsequent history of Islamic governance shows a more mixed record, with periods of genuine religious tolerance under some rulers and severe restriction under others. The Ottoman millet system provided a framework for relative autonomy of non-Muslim religious communities within an Islamic state, while the Andalusian *convivencia*—contested as the term is—offers at least partial evidence of creative coexistence among Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars. These historical examples are not uncomplicated, but they do demonstrate that the Islamic tradition contains resources for pluralist practice that predate the modern Western concept of religious freedom.

In contemporary Indonesia, pluralism discourse has developed in dialogue with both the Islamic scholarly tradition and Western liberal political thought. Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) introduced the concept of 'kemodernan' (modernity) into Indonesian Islamic public discourse in the 1970s, arguing that secularization (as the de-sacralization of politics, not the elimination of religion from public life) was a condition for authentic Islamic flourishing. His use of the philosophical concept of the perennial philosophy—the idea that all religions share a common ultimate referent—made him a target of conservative criticism but also opened important conversations about the relationship between Islam's universal claims and the rights of non-Muslims. Abdurrahman Wahid's approach was different from Madjid's in important respects: Wahid was less interested in philosophical synthesis and more interested in the practical politics of coexistence and the protection of vulnerable minorities, making his pluralism more robustly civic and less abstractly theological.

Abdurrahman Wahid: Intellectual Biography and Pluralist Formation

Abdurrahman Wahid was born on September 7, 1940, in Denanyar, Jombang, East Java, into one of the most distinguished families of Indonesian Islamic scholarship. His paternal grandfather, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, was the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama and one of the most revered Islamic scholars in Indonesian history. His father, KH. Wahid Hasyim, was a prominent activist and politician who served as Minister of Religious Affairs in the Sukarno era and played a key role in the constitutional compromise that established Pancasila rather than an Islamic state as the foundation of independent Indonesia—a decision that itself reflects a pluralist commitment to the rights of non-Muslim citizens (Barton, 2016).

Gus Dur's educational formation was remarkably cosmopolitan for someone with such deep roots in the pesantren tradition. He received his early religious education at multiple pesantren in Java, including the prestigious Al-Munawwir in Krapyak, Yogyakarta. He then pursued higher education at Al-Azhar University in Cairo and at the University of Baghdad, where he encountered modern Islamic thought in its Arab context as well as a wide range of Western philosophical and social-scientific literature. Upon returning to Indonesia in the early

1970s, he joined the Faculty of Theology at Hasyim Asy'ari University in Jombang, began contributing regularly to major national publications including *Tempo* and *Kompas*, and progressively built his reputation as one of the most intellectually wide-ranging voices in Indonesian Islamic discourse.

Wahid's path to national prominence ran through Nahdlatul Ulama. He was elected Chairman of PBNU in 1984 and again in 1989 and 1994, transforming the organization's public profile and political orientation. His strategy of 'khittah' (return to the NU's original non-partisan mandate) involved withdrawing NU from formal political party affiliation, allowing it to engage more freely with civil society across religious and ethnic lines. Under Wahid's leadership, NU became a significant institutional force in defending the rights of religious minorities and resisting both Islamist exclusivism and state authoritarianism. His election as President of Indonesia in 1999 represented the culmination of this trajectory, even as his brief and turbulent presidency (he was removed from office in 2001) limited his ability to translate pluralist principles into durable policy.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive methodology grounded in library research (*studi kepustakaan*). The choice of qualitative methodology reflects the textual and interpretive character of the inquiry: the objects of analysis are conceptual frameworks embedded in written texts—Wahid's own writings, Qur'anic verses and their classical and contemporary interpretations—that require interpretive engagement rather than statistical measurement. The descriptive element of the methodology reflects the aim to systematically characterize Wahid's pluralist framework before proceeding to evaluative and comparative analysis.

Primary sources include Wahid's major works on pluralism, particularly *Islam Kosmopolitan: Nilai-Nilai Indonesia dan Transformasi Kebudayaan* (2007) and the anthology *Pluralisme Indonesia: Pandangan Gus Dur dan Cak Nur*, alongside his extensive journalism. Qur'anic primary sources include the verses most directly relevant to the three dimensions of his pluralism: QS. al-Baqarah [2]:256 (no compulsion in religion), QS. al-Hujurat [49]:13 (creation of peoples and tribes for mutual acquaintance), QS. al-Kafirun [109]:6 (to you your religion, to me mine), QS. al-An'am [6]:108 (do not insult what others worship), and QS. al-Ma'idah [5]:44–69 (theological recognition of earlier revelations). Secondary sources include classical tafsir works—al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, al-Zamakhshari—alongside the contemporary Indonesian tafsir of Quraish Shihab and relevant academic scholarship on Indonesian pluralism and Wahid's thought.

The primary analytical method is thematic Qur'anic analysis (*tafsir mawdu'i*), which identifies and examines all Qur'anic verses thematically related to pluralism and its three specified dimensions. This is complemented by content analysis of Wahid's written output, tracking the Qur'anic and Islamic scholarly grounding of his pluralist claims. A comparative strategy situates Wahid's readings against both the classical tafsir tradition and the MUI's position, identifying where and how Wahid's interpretation diverges and on what grounds. An

interpretive paradigm governs the analysis throughout, attentive to the sociohistorical context in which both the texts and their interpretations were produced.

RESULTS

The Qur'anic Foundation of Wahid's Pluralism: Diversity as Divine Design

The most fundamental Qur'anic basis for Wahid's pluralism is his reading of diversity itself as divinely intended rather than regrettable. QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]:13 states: 'O humankind, We have created you from a male and a female and made you peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you.' Wahid reads this verse as a direct Qur'anic affirmation that human diversity—ethnic, cultural, and, by extension, religious—is part of God's creative design rather than a deviation from an original unity that must be recovered through conversion or coercion. The purpose of diversity, in this reading, is mutual knowledge and enrichment (*li ta'ārafū*), not homogenization. This interpretation aligns with the position of al-Ṭabarī, who emphasized that the verse addresses all of humanity (*yā ayyuhā al-nās*), not only Muslims, and that the criterion of human worth is moral conduct (*taqwā*) rather than religious or ethnic identity.

This reading of QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]:13 provides the theological foundation for Wahid's commitment to pluralism as a positive value rather than a necessary evil. If diversity is part of God's creative intent, then the appropriate human response to religious difference is not elimination or suppression but curiosity, engagement, and cooperation. Wahid drew on this theological premise to argue that Indonesian Muslims have an Islamic religious obligation—not merely a civic duty—to protect the rights of their non-Muslim fellow citizens and to engage with them as partners in the national project of building a just and flourishing society. This framing made pluralism an authentically Islamic commitment rather than a concession to liberal Western values.

Justice ('Adl): The First Dimension of Qur'anic Pluralism

The first dimension of Wahid's Qur'anic pluralism is justice ('*adl*). The Qur'an is insistent and repetitive in its demand for justice, presenting it as a fundamental attribute of God and a primary obligation of human beings. QS. al-Nisā' [4]:135 commands believers to 'be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for God, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives.' QS. al-Mā'idah [5]:8 extends this requirement explicitly to the treatment of non-Muslims: 'And do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness.' Wahid read these verses as establishing an Islamic duty of equal justice that applies unconditionally across religious boundaries—a duty that he argued has practical implications for legislation, judicial practice, and the allocation of public resources in a multi-religious state.

Wahid's advocacy for justice had specific institutional dimensions. As NU Chairman and as President, he consistently argued that the Indonesian state must treat all citizens—regardless of their religious affiliation—equally before the law and in the distribution of public goods. He opposed religiously discriminatory legislation and championed the rights of minority communities, including the ethnic Chinese and non-Abrahamic religious

communities, whose civic status had been compromised under Suharto's New Order regime. This advocacy was explicitly grounded in his Qur'anic reading: he argued that an Islamic state that treats non-Muslim citizens unjustly is not genuinely Islamic, because the Qur'an's demand for justice admits no religious qualification. In this respect, Wahid aligned himself with the classical Islamic jurisprudential principle that non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic polity (dhimmī) are entitled to the full protection of their rights and property—a principle that he extended, in the contemporary democratic context, to full and equal citizenship.

Freedom of Religion (Hurriyyat al-Dīn): The Second Dimension

The second dimension of Wahid's Qur'anic pluralism is freedom of religion. The locus classicus for this dimension is QS. al-Baqarah [2]:256: 'There is no compulsion in religion (lā ikrāha fī al-dīn). The right course has become clear from the wrong.' Classical commentators have offered varied interpretations of this verse's scope, with some restricting it to relations between Muslims and the 'People of the Book' (ahl al-kitāb) and others reading it as a broader affirmation of religious freedom. Wahid adopted the broader reading, arguing that the verse establishes a Qur'anic principle of non-coercion in matters of religious conviction that applies universally and unconditionally. He grounded this reading in the observation that the verse contains no limiting clause that would restrict its application to particular communities or historical circumstances.

Wahid also invoked QS. al-Kāfirūn [109]:6—'To you your religion, and to me my religion' (lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn)—as a direct Qur'anic acknowledgment of religious plurality and the legitimacy of non-Muslim religious practice. He argued that this verse, revealed in the Meccan period when the Muslim community was a vulnerable minority, establishes a prophetic precedent for mutual respect and non-interference in religious matters that remains binding regardless of the relative social power of different communities. The Prophet did not insist on religious uniformity even when he had the political power to impose it; the Madinah Charter's guarantee of religious freedom for Jewish communities is the clearest historical instantiation of this principle. Wahid used this precedent to argue that Indonesian Muslims in the contemporary period are similarly obligated to respect and protect the religious freedom of their non-Muslim neighbors.

The verse QS. al-An'ām [6]:108—'Do not insult those they invoke other than God, lest they insult God in enmity without knowledge'—further elaborates the Qur'anic framework of religious respect. Wahid read this verse as establishing not only a prohibition on verbal aggression toward other faiths but a broader principle of respectful restraint: that Muslims should express their religious convictions through positive witness and ethical conduct rather than polemical denunciation of other traditions. This reading informed his own public style, which was famously non-confrontational and frequently deployed irony and humor rather than condemnation in engaging with religious difference.

Freedom of Opinion as Human Right: The Third Dimension

The third dimension of Wahid's pluralist framework is freedom of opinion and expression as a fundamental human right. This dimension is both the most politically

contested and the most directly relevant to Wahid's role as a public intellectual and political leader. The Qur'anic grounding of this dimension is less explicit than that of the first two, but Wahid drew on several textual and theological resources to make the case. The Qur'an's consistent emphasis on 'aql (reason) and 'ilm (knowledge) as foundations of genuine faith—its frequent invitations to observe, reflect, and reason—implies, in Wahid's reading, that authentic religious conviction cannot be produced by coercion but only by free intellectual inquiry. The famous Qur'anic invitation to 'call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best' (QS. al-Naḥl [16]:125) presupposes interlocutors capable of independent judgment.

Wahid also drew on the political philosophy of the Madinah Charter to ground freedom of political opinion. The Charter created a community in which diverse groups—Muslim, Jewish, and pagan Arab—participated in collective decision-making about matters of common concern. While the Charter was not a liberal democratic document in the modern sense, it established a precedent for governance through negotiation and mutual agreement rather than autocratic imposition. Wahid's own presidency was notable for his insistence on parliamentary accountability and his resistance to the temptation to use the authority of Islamic religious teaching to override democratic processes. He consistently distinguished between the Islamic religious tradition—which he revered and engaged with deeply—and the claims of any particular group to speak for Islam in the political sphere, insisting that in a pluralist democracy all citizens must be free to hold and express their political and religious convictions without coercion.

DISCUSSION

Wahid's Pluralism and the MUI Fatwa: A Mischaracterization

The MUI's 2005 fatwa defined 'paham pluralisme agama' as the doctrine that 'all religions are the same and their truths are relative,' a definition that entailed the further claim that no religious tradition can maintain that it is uniquely or more completely true than others. This definition clearly does target a real philosophical position—the religious pluralism of John Hick and others—that Islamic theology cannot easily accommodate. However, critical examination of Wahid's actual writings reveals that his pluralism does not occupy this position. Wahid never claimed that Islam and Christianity or Islam and Hinduism are equally true in the sense that they are epistemologically interchangeable. What he claimed was that all human beings have equal dignity before God, that religious diversity is part of God's design, that the Qur'an itself commands justice toward non-Muslims, and that a just political order must protect the rights and freedoms of all citizens regardless of their faith. These are not claims about the relative truth of religions; they are claims about the political and moral obligations of Muslims in a pluralist society.

The MUI fatwa's conflation of normative civic pluralism with philosophical religious relativism has been criticized by a range of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, and this criticism appears well-founded on the textual evidence. The Qur'an itself makes truth-claims about the finality and completeness of the Islamic revelation while simultaneously commanding Muslims to deal justly with non-Muslims, to refrain from insulting others' religious objects,

and to accept that 'to you your religion, to me mine.' These injunctions are not in logical tension if one distinguishes between theological claims about truth and political-ethical claims about rights and treatment. Wahid's pluralism operates in the political-ethical domain; it does not require abandoning the Islamic theological claim to final revelation. The failure to make this distinction generated unnecessary controversy and obscured the genuinely Qur'anic character of Wahid's advocacy.

The Madinah Charter as Political Model

One of the most consistent themes in Wahid's pluralist writing is his appeal to the Madinah Charter as a historical and normative model for Muslim engagement with religious diversity. The Charter is significant for several reasons. First, it was established by the Prophet himself, giving it prophetic authority that no later jurist can easily override. Second, it established a politically inclusive community that guaranteed religious freedom and collective security for non-Muslim communities, demonstrating that an Islamic political order need not be religiously exclusive. Third, it grounded collective obligations in a shared commitment to the welfare of the community (ummah) rather than in religious uniformity, thereby creating a model of civic solidarity across religious difference.

Wahid argued that the Madinah Charter provides the Islamic theological basis for Indonesia's Pancasila state—a state that affirms monotheism as a foundational principle while guaranteeing equal rights and religious freedom to all citizens regardless of their specific faith. Just as the Charter created a political community in which Jews, Muslims, and pagan Arabs participated on the basis of shared civic obligations, Pancasila creates an Indonesian political community in which Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, and adherents of indigenous traditions participate as equal citizens. Wahid's argument is not that the Charter provides a direct template for modern democratic governance—the historical contexts are too different for that—but that it establishes the principle that Islamic political thought is not inherently exclusivist and that a politically pluralist order can be an authentically Islamic achievement.

Implications for Indonesian Muslim Discourse

Wahid's pluralist framework has important implications for ongoing debates in Indonesian Muslim discourse about the relationship between Islam and democracy, the rights of religious minorities, and the proper role of religious authority in public life. Against those who argue that a fully Islamic social order requires legal enforcement of Islamic norms for all citizens regardless of their faith, Wahid's Qur'anic argument provides a counter-position that does not require Muslims to abandon their religious commitments. The Qur'an's commands of justice, non-coercion in religion, and respect for religious difference constitute Islamic reasons for pluralist politics—reasons that are internal to the Islamic tradition rather than borrowed from secular liberalism.

This matters particularly in the Indonesian context, where resistance to pluralism is often framed as resistance to Western cultural imperialism. Wahid's counter-argument was precisely that pluralism is not Western but Qur'anic—that the Prophet's own practice at

Madinah established the principle of equal rights and religious freedom before modern Western liberalism existed. This framing makes pluralism an authentic Islamic option rather than a concession to non-Islamic pressure, potentially broadening its appeal within a Muslim public that is justifiably alert to the colonial history of Western interventions in Muslim societies. It also places the burden of proof on those who would restrict religious freedom: if the Qur'an commands non-coercion and the Prophet guaranteed religious freedom in the Madinah Charter, then the default Islamic position on religious freedom should be affirmative, with restrictions requiring explicit textual justification.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined Abdurrahman Wahid's concept of pluralism in the Qur'anic perspective, analyzing three dimensions of his pluralist framework: justice ('adl), freedom of religion (hurriyyat al-dīn), and freedom of opinion as fundamental human rights. The analysis yields several conclusions that have implications for Indonesian Muslim discourse and for broader scholarly debates about Islam and pluralism.

First, Wahid's pluralism is not the theological relativism targeted by the MUI's 2005 fatwa. It is a substantive civic and ethical commitment to equal human dignity, rooted in Qur'anic injunctions—particularly QS. al-Baqarah [2]:256, QS. al-Hujurat [49]:13, and QS. al-Kafirun [109]:6—and exemplified by the Madinah Charter. Wahid's pluralism does not require Muslims to abandon the claim that Islam is the final and complete revelation; it requires them to treat all human beings with justice and to protect their freedom of religious belief and practice, as the Qur'an itself commands.

Second, Wahid's three-dimensional framework provides an integrated account of pluralism that is simultaneously theologically grounded, historically substantiated, and practically actionable. His appeal to 'adl links pluralism to the Qur'an's central ethical demand for justice that admits no religious qualification. His invocation of hurriyyat al-dīn grounds the protection of religious freedom in both the explicit Qur'anic text (QS. al-Baqarah [2]:256) and the prophetic model of the Madinah Charter. His defense of freedom of opinion as a human right connects the Qur'an's emphasis on reason and free inquiry with the demands of democratic citizenship in a pluralist society.

Third, the political and social implications of Wahid's framework are substantial for Indonesia. In a society where religious intolerance continues to generate periodic crises—discriminatory local regulations, violence against minority communities, institutional barriers to religious practice—Wahid's Qur'anic pluralism offers Muslim leaders and citizens an Islamic religious basis for resistance to exclusivism that does not require any concession to secularism or foreign ideology. The pluralism he advocates is authentically Indonesian in its cultural inflection and authentically Islamic in its theological grounding.

Future scholarship should pursue two directions. Empirical research on the reception and practical impact of Wahid's pluralist ideas within specific communities—particularly within the NU network that remains the principal institutional carrier of his legacy—is urgently needed. Comparative research situating Wahid's pluralism in relation to the thought of other Muslim pluralist thinkers from contexts of religious diversity—Turkey, Malaysia,

Nigeria, the United States—would illuminate both the specificities and the universalities of the Islamic resources he mobilized. Both directions would contribute to a more complete understanding of the diversity of Muslim engagement with religious pluralism in the contemporary world.

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