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**A New Approach to the Concept of *Wasatīyya*:
From Moderation to Mediation for Peace in the World**

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Abstract

This lecture proposes a re-reading of the Qur’anic concept of *Wasaṭiyya* — traditionally translated as “moderation” or “the middle way”— as a dynamic ethical principle of mediation within the global pursuit of peace. While the classical understanding of *Wasaṭiyya* emphasizes balance and temperance within individual and communal conduct, this lecture argues for its evolution toward active relational engagement: the transformation from internal moderation to external mediation. Drawing upon Qur’anic hermeneutics, prophetic praxis (*Sīrah*), and the civilizational history of Islam, the lecture situates *Wasaṭiyya* not as a passive equilibrium, but as an active methodology of reconciling difference. Through historical exemplars — such as the Muslim custodianship of the key to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the preservation of Christian sanctuaries under Muslim governance, such as the Patriarchate of Peć in Kosovo—it illustrates how Muslim mediation has embodied trust, justice, and the protection of the sacred “other” across centuries. Theologically, this approach reclaims the Qur’anic description of the Muslim community as “*ummatan wasaṭan*”— a justly balanced nation—as a mandate to mediate between faiths, civilizations, and worldviews, upholding peace as both a divine trust and a moral duty. Philosophically, it situates the concept of *Wasaṭiyya* within a broader framework of ethical cosmopolitanism, in which coexistence is not mere tolerance but a form of creative moral stewardship. In its concluding reflections, the lecture proposes that the 21st-century application of *Wasaṭiyya* demands a paradigm shift — from the ethics of self-restraint to the ethics of engagement, from moderation as neutrality to mediation as service. The renewal of this principle offers a Qur’anic model for global peacebuilding, interreligious diplomacy, and the cultivation of a shared moral horizon grounded in truth, justice, compassion, and mutual recognition.

Keywords: *Wasaṭiyya* mediation, moderation, Qur’anic ethics, interfaith peace, Islamic theology, Muslim mediation, civilizational ethics, justice, global peacebuilding.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على أشرف المرسلين سيدنا محمد الفاتح لما أغلق والخاتم لما سبق ناصر
الحق بالحق، الهادي إلى صراطك المستقيم، وعلى آله حق قدره ومقداره العظيم.
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،

Distinguished scholars, respected colleagues, dear students, and honored guests,

It is both an honor and a moral responsibility to address this distinguished gathering here at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta — an institution whose intellectual legacy stands as a beacon of enlightenment (*al-tanwīr*), empowering (*al-ta'zīz*), reform (*al-iṣlāḥ*), and commitment (*al-'aẓm*) to the ideals of Islamic faith and humanism. Our subject today — ***A New Approach to Wasaṭiyya: From Moderation to Mediation for Peace in the World*** — calls not only to reflection but also to renewal; not merely to interpret tradition, but to act upon it with courage and compassion in a turbulent world.

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah Almighty declares: *وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ... وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا* (“And thus, God has made you a justly balanced (mediator) community (*ummatan wasatan*), so that you may be witnesses over mankind, and that the Messenger may be a witness over you...”)¹

The term *Wasaṭiyya* here transcends the superficial sense of “moderation” as mere temperance or neutrality. It speaks to the profound moral equilibrium that integrates faith and reason, justice and mercy, truth and humility. To be *wasatī* is not simply to stand between extremes — it is to embody a dynamic center that harmonizes diversity, that bears witness to truth, justice, peace and reconciliation with fairness and empathy.

The traditional interpretation of *Wasaṭiyya* has often centered on the virtue of moderation — the avoidance of excess in belief, action, or emotion. While this remains a noble and essential virtue, today's global context requires a more active stance: that of mediation.

Spiritually, mediation is the state of the heart that is connected to the Divine, but still present among people; seeks truth without arrogance; practices compassion without weakness; shows courage without aggression; maintains humility without self-erasure. Morally, the mediation is the ability to act justly when anger pulls one way and desire pulls the other. It is to stand in the center, steady — not controlled by impulse or pride.

¹ Qur'an. 2:143.

Mediation, in this sense, is not political negotiation alone. It is the spiritual and moral art of building bridges — between communities, between faiths, and between worldviews. It is the transformation of *Wasaṭiyya* from a passive restraint into an active engagement; from simply being balanced to balancing the world around us.

There is a clear guidance – indeed a commandment for us in *Qur'an, Ḥadīth and Sīrah* – the Praxis of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to act in the way of *Wasaṭiyya* as Mediation:

First, we have the example of the mediation (*Wasaṭiyya*) of the *Mu'ākhāh* (Brotherhood), which is highlighted by this noble verse of the Qur'an: *إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ، وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ* (“Certainly, those who trust in Allah are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy”).² To embody this divine commandment on his arrival in Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ formalized brotherhood between *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* and concluded the '*Ṣaḥīfah*' *al-Madīna* (“the Constitution of Madinah”), establishing mutual rights, responsibilities, and arbitration mechanisms across tribes and faith communities. This structurally mediated long-standing feuds into a civic compact. Certainly, the lesson for modern mediation is to embed the way of reconciliation in institutions and charters; to define clear procedures for dispute resolution across groups; to balance identity with shared civic commitments.

Second, we have the historic prophetic mediation (*Wasaṭiyya*) between the two disputing tribes *Aws* and *Khazraj*, which is highly celebrated in this noble verse of the Qur'an: *وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا، وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا، كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ.* (“And hold firmly to the Rope of Allah, all of you together, and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you: when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together, so that by His grace you became brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus, does Allah make His signs clear to you, so that you may be guided.”).³

Here is the clear message how the Prophet ﷺ transformed the feuding tribes of *Aws* and *Khazraj* into the cohesive *Anṣār - brotherhood* through spiritual leadership, shared rituals, mutual defense, and just distribution—turning a history of vendetta into durable fraternity. The lesson for modern mediation is to combine ritual/community-building with conflict settlement; to replace cycles of retaliation with shared institutions; to sustain peace through fairness in public goods.

Third, the mediation (*Wasaṭiyya*) is not reduced only to the public affairs, but it is meant to be in the family affairs as well. Allah Almighty said: *وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَأَبْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ*

² *Qur'an*. 49:10.

³ *Qur'an*. 3:103.

أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِن يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا، إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا. (“And if you fear a breach between the two (husband and wife), appoint an arbiter from his family and an arbiter from her family. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will cause harmony between them. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware”).⁴ Thus, the Qur’ān mandates appointing arbiters from each side to mediate marital discord. The Prophet ﷺ applied this ethos in counseling households, encouraging fairness, forbearance, and third-party involvement when needed. Thus, the lesson for modern mediation (*Wasatiyya*) is to have co-mediators trusted by each side in family matters; to balance rights with compassion and privacy; and to aim for reconciliation before contemplating severance.

Of course, the most striking historic example of mediation combined with moderation (*Wasatiyya*) is the Prophetic treaty of *al-Hudaybiyyah*. Though painful in appearance, the *Hudaybiyyah* truce opened space for safe contact, *da‘wah*, and alliances; it is a model of interest-based negotiation with calibrated concessions that produced long-term stability. Thus, lessons for modern mediation: prefer durable truces over short-term victories; concede symbols when substance is protected.

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It is because of these Qur’anic guidance and Prophetic praxis of moderation and mediation (*Wasatiyya*) that we may be proud of our Muslim history, beginning with the *Ṣaḥīfa al-Madīna* — the Charter of Medina — as a Blue Print for an Islamic edifice of the civic contract that united Muslims, Jews, and other tribes into one polity based on justice and mutual defense. The Jews of Medina retained their faith and legal autonomy, while sharing in the collective security of the community. This document remains a testament to how the Islamic vision of *Wasatiyya* (moderation and mediation) transformed theological differences into civic coexistence.

Down the road of Islamic history with this spirit of moderation and mediation in al-Andalus, Muslims became the custodians of a pluralistic culture in which Jews and Christians could not only coexist but collaborate. Under the Umayyad caliphate of Córdoba, knowledge flowed freely among faiths. Muslim philosophers, Jewish theologians, and Christian translators together built bridges that revived classical learning and transmitted it to Europe — the true embodiment of *Wasatiyya* as mediation.

Also, in Baghdad and later in Istanbul, Muslims institutionalized mediation through the *ahl al-dhimma* system and judicial pluralism. Non-Muslims lived under protection, judged by their own codes. The Abbasid *Bayt al-Hikmah* and the Ottoman millet system represent structured mediation between civilizations — harmonizing diversity through justice.

⁴ Qur’an. 4:35.

You heard me, I mentioned *ahl al-dhimma*. So, let me explain what I mean by that. I mean that despite the deliberate distortions, the concept of *dhimma* remains one of the most advanced avant-garde for the idea of human rights in the *Sharī‘a* Law when there was not a glimpse of the idea of the Universal Rights of UN.⁵ Without pressure from outside, the Muslim lawyers from inside of the spirit of moderation and mediation (*Wasaṭiyya*), worked out the law, which made upon the Muslim majority power an obligation to appreciate and protect five essential values of human rights to Non-Muslims who live among them: the right to *naḥs* – life, the right to *dīn* – religion, the right to *‘aql* – freedom, the right to *māl* – property and the right to *‘ird* – dignity. To those who complain against the concept of *dhimma* as they see it to be the status of the second citizen of Non-Muslims in the Muslim majority societies, I would kindly ask them to advocate that this concept of *dhimma* be implemented on Muslims wherever they live in the world as minorities in the Non-Muslim majority countries – I would ask them to advocate for this concept of appreciation and protection of these five essential values of human rights for Muslims: the right to *naḥs* – life, the right to *dīn* – religion, the right to *‘aql* – freedom, the right to *māl* – property and the right to *‘ird* – dignity.

It is this ethos of the concept of *ahl al-dhimma* that provided a critical explanation for the conspicuous absence of antisemitism in Islamic civilization—both in theory and in institutional practice.⁶ While Islamic societies, like all others, experienced moments of political tension or conflict with Jewish communities, these never evolved into the systemic racial or theological antisemitism that scarred the course of European history. The Qur’an’s view of Jews and Christians as *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book) embeds a fundamental theological acknowledgment of shared revelation, moral responsibility, and divine election. The Jewish covenant of Torah and the Gospel to the followers of Jesus are not abrogated but confirmed, each situated within the continuum of divine communication culminating in the Qur’an.

If we are asked what are the foundations for such an advancing legal and moral legacy of Islamic civilization, the answer would be the primordial covenant and the ontology of *Tawḥīd*.

The foundation of *Tawḥīd*, the doctrine of divine unity, is not merely a theological proposition within Islam; it is an ontological condition of existence itself. According to

⁵ Compare: Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī (720–790 AH/1320 – 1388 C.E.) was an Andalusī Sunni Islamic scholar. He was regarded in his time as among the leading jurist and legal theoretician in the Maliki school of law. He was well-versed in the science of hadith and Quranic interpretation. He was an eminent grammarian, linguist, and literary figure. He was considered the greatest scholar in Al-Andalus of his time and one of the most influential figures in the Maliki school.

⁶ See: Aḥmad ibn Naqīb al-Miṣrī. *Reliance of the Traveller* (“Umdat al-Sālik”) and *Tools for the Worshipper*, trans. Nuh Ha Mim Keller, “Book O: Justice,” §o11.0–o11.3 (“Non-Muslim Subjects of the Islamic State [Ahl al-Dhimma]”), pp. 247–248

the Qur'an, the first covenant between Allah and humankind occurred not in the flow of temporal history, but in the realm of primordial consciousness — the metaphysical pre-existence of the human soul: *وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِن بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ، أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ، قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ. („And recall (O Prophet) when your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of the sons of Adam, and made them witnesses against their own selves. asking them: 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes, we do testify.' We did so lest you claim on the Day of Resurrection: 'We were unaware of this.'")*⁷

This verse, known as the Covenant of Alast (*Mīthāq al-Alast*), reveals the metaphysical origin of faith. Before the birth of history, humanity affirmed the Oneness of its Creator. This primordial confession — *Qālū Balā!* (“Yes, indeed!”) — is the first articulation of *Tawhīd*, engraved not in books, but in the essence (*fiṭrah*) of every human being.

The Qur'an presents *Tawhīd* as embedded within the spiritual DNA of humanity. Man becomes *Insān* — a conscious, self-reflective being — only after receiving the *Rūḥ Allāh*, the breath of the Divine Spirit: *ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهِ* (“Then God fashioned him and breathed into him of His spirit”).⁸

This infusion of divine spirit constitutes the ontological imprint of *Tawhīd*. It transforms the human being from biological existence into theomorphic existence — a being aware of the One, capable of recognition (*ma'rifa*), responsibility (*amāna*), and remembrance (*dhikr*).

Modern scientific anthropology, beginning with Charles Darwin's naturalistic paradigm and expanded by thinkers such as E. B. Tylor and J. G. Frazer, posits that religion evolved from primitive animism, to polytheism, and finally to monotheism. Within this model, *Tawhīd* is not the origin but the outcome of human progress. The Qur'an, however, reverses this sequence: humanity begins with *Tawhīd* and devolves into polytheism through forgetfulness and arrogance: *لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ، ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ : سَافِلِينَ* („Allah created man in the best of forms, then reduced him to the lowest of the low”).⁹

In this vision, revelation functions not as discovery, but as remembrance — the restoration of the *fiṭrah* – natural faith that human beings forget and adopt an artificial religion of their own whims (*hawā*).

⁷ Qur'an. 7:172

⁸ Qur'an. 32:9

⁹ Qur'an. 95:4–6

The chain of revelation — *Tawrat, Injīl, and Qur'an* — represents one continuous reminder of the same original truth. Each divine Book is not a new religion but a new edition of the same covenant first spoken in the realm of *Alast* — *A lastu bi rabbikum*.

Adam carried the memory of creation, Noah renewed faith after corruption, Abraham shattered the idols, Moses redefined law, Jesus restored mercy, and Muhammad (peace be upon them all) sealed revelation as the final *tadhkira* — the reminder of the unity of God and the unity of humankind.

The doctrine of *fiṭrah* forms the cornerstone of Islamic theological anthropology. It posits that faith in One God is innate, while disbelief is acquired through corruption. In contrast to secular anthropology, the Qur'an presents belief as natural and disbelief as deviation.

Tawḥīd thus redefines knowledge itself: true knowledge is *dhikr* — remembrance of the pre-existent truth. Revelation is anamnesis — a sacred recollection of the first covenantal "Yes!" — *Qālū Balā!*

In contrast to the evolutionary theory of religion, the Qur'an views *Tawḥīd* as the source of human dignity. To recognize the One is to recognize the self, for the soul mirrors its Creator: وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ، أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ. (“Do not be like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. These are corrupted”).¹⁰

Thus, the Qur'anic vision is not of evolution but remembrance; not ascent by intellect, but return by spirit. The divine breath that made man *Insān* carries within it the signature of unity — the eternal *Qālū Balā!* inscribed upon every heart. *Tawḥīd* is not learned. It is remembered.

Based on this understanding of *Tawḥīd* — monotheism as the core of Islamic belief, we may throw a different light on the meaning of “Bani Isrā’īl” in the Qur'an not in the light of blood, but in the light of spirit and the universal journey toward God Almighty. The more we reflect, the more we sense that the Qur'anic concept of Bani Isrā'il transcends genealogy and enters the realm of spiritual anthropology. It describes not a single people, but a paradigm of humanity's covenantal journey toward God. From Noah and Abraham to Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be upon them all), the Qur'an frames revelation as a continuous dialogue of faith, trust, and renewal. Within this framework of covenantal ethics, the idea of mediation—moral, spiritual, and civilizational—emerges as central to the Qur'anic worldview.

¹⁰ *Qur'an*. 59:19

As we know, Western Christendom’s troubled history of antisemitism was deeply rooted in two competing yet intersecting theological constructs: the “Two Covenant Theory” and “Covenant Replacement (Supersessionist) Theology.” The former struggled to reconcile the ongoing validity of Jewish covenant alongside the Church’s salvific claims, while the latter outrightly replaced the Jewish covenant with the New Covenant in Christ. The ensuing historical antagonisms—manifested in polemic literature, ecclesiastical decrees, and tragic persecutions—stemmed from this unresolved conflict of covenants.

Islam’s *Wasatiyya* (moderation and mediation) however, neutralized such antagonism by transcending the binary of exclusive covenants. The Qur’anic revelation neither invalidates the Torah nor the Gospel but reintegrates them into the original, universal *mīthāq*—the covenant of divine recognition that predates all particular revelations (Qur’an 7:172). This theological inclusivity prevented Islam from developing any doctrine of collective Jewish culpability or racialized enmity. Even when the Qur’an criticizes segments of the Jewish or Christian communities, it does so within the framework of moral accountability, not metaphysical condemnation; its rebukes are ethical, not ethnic.

This structural theocentrism—anchoring judgment in moral conduct rather than genealogical or covenantal status—ensured that Islamic civilization maintained, at least in principle, a framework of plural coexistence. The *dhimma* system, though hierarchical in legal terms, represented a covenantal protection, not persecution, granting Jewish and Christian communities autonomy in worship, law, and education. From *Medina’s Charter* of 622 CE, which established Jewish Community as part of the *ummah*, to the flourishing of Jewish scholarship under Muslim rule in Andalusia, Baghdad, and Cairo, the *Wasatiyya* as a moderation and mediation paradigm sustained a civilizational ethos markedly distinct from the exclusivist dualism of medieval Christendom.

In philosophical and theological terms, *Wasatiyya* through moderation and mediation thus operates as an epistemology of balance: a synthesis of revelation and reason, of particular identity and universal ethics. It reflects a Quranic anthropology that regards humanity as one community diversified by divine design: لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا، وَلَوْ شَاءَ ۖ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ، فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ.. (‘‘To each among you have Allah prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so, strive as in a race in all virtues.’’).¹¹

This principle undercuts the theological foundation upon which antisemitism historically rested: the notion of divine favoritism and exclusion. Instead, Islam’s vision of divine

¹¹ Qur’an. 5:48

unity (*tawḥīd*) translates into an ethic of relational justice (*al-‘adl al-ijtimā‘ī*), recognizing difference as a sign (*āyah*), not a curse.

Consequently, the absence of antisemitism in Islamic thought is neither accidental nor merely sociopolitical; it arises organically from the logic of *Wasatiyya* itself—a mediating theology that restores proportionality (*ta‘ādul*) and reaffirms the continuity of the Abrahamic lineage within the oneness of divine purpose. Where the Western tradition often oscillated between replacement and rivalry, Islam sustained a third path of witness (*shahāda*)—affirming that the same divine breath animates the covenants of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad.

The dialectic between exclusivity and universality within the Abrahamic traditions has been a persistent subject of theological reflection. In Judaism, the covenant (*berit*) signifies a divinely ordained and enduring election of Jews as the bearers of Torah and witness to divine law. Christianity, reinterpreting this notion through the New Covenant in Christ, universalizes the salvific promise, extending it beyond ethnic or ritual boundaries while often implying a supersession of the Mosaic covenant. Islam, however, enters this theological conversation as a mediating revelation (*wasīl*), affirming the legitimacy of both the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl* while restoring the primordial unity of revelation. The Qur’an presents the Prophet Muḥammad as the *khatam al-nabiyyīn* (seal of the prophets), whose mission confirms – *taṣdīq* rather than cancels prior dispensations: وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ، فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ، وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ، فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ، وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ (‘And Allah has revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book [i.e., the Qur’an] in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Book and as a criterion over it. So, judge between them by what Allāh has revealed and do not follow their inclinations away from what has come to you of the truth. To each of you We prescribed a law and an open way’).¹²

Islam’s theological mediation rests upon the concept of the universal covenant (*Mīthāq Alast*), as we have already indicated. This covenant precedes and undergirds all historical religious identities, asserting that divine lordship (*al-rubūbiyya*) and human acknowledgment (*al-‘ubūdiyya*) constitute the essential bond between Creator and creation. Whereas Judaism emphasizes the historical particularity of Jewish election and Christianity the soteriological universality of Christ’s mediation, Islam reclaims the ontological universality of divine-human commitment. Through this lens, revelation is seen not as competing claims but as successive confirmations of a single divine intention.

Thus, Islam functions as a theological mediator between the exclusivist covenantal Jewish consciousness and the universal redemptive claims of the Church. It offers a unifying hermeneutic that transcends sectarian boundaries, emphasizing the *tawḥīdic*

¹²*Qur’an*. 5:48

principle of divine unity as the horizon of all revelation. The Qur’anic worldview thereby situates Islam as both continuator and corrector—affirming the authenticity of prior scriptures while reasserting (*taṣdīq*) that the covenant belongs ultimately to all humanity. In interfaith discourse, this paradigm challenges exclusivist theologies by affirming a common theocentric foundation: all prophetic revelations arise from the same divine source, differing only in historical expression but converging in the primordial *Qur’ānic Mithāq of Alast* that binds humanity to God.¹³

It is in the spirit of this mediating theology, i.e., *Wasatiyya*, that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre /ˈsɛp(ə)lkə/ - Christianity’s holiest site—in Jerusalem has been entrusted to two Muslim families: Nuseibeh family (عائلة نُسَيْبِيَّة) and the Joudeh al-Husseini family (عائلة الجوده الحسيني). This unique custodianship dates back to the twelfth century, when internecine rivalries among Christian denominations threatened the unity of access to the church. In a profound act of interfaith trust, Christian patriarchs collectively decided that a neutral mediating Muslim family would safeguard the key. Each morning, a member of the Nuseibeh family unlocks the doors to allow worshippers to enter, and each evening, the same doors are closed under their supervision. The Joudeh family meanwhile, preserves the physical key itself—an ancient, iron artifact symbolizing the continuity of sacred responsibility. This trust has been passed uninterrupted from generation to generation. Theologically and symbolically, this arrangement expresses the Qur’anic principle of *Wasatiyya* – from moderation to mediation. Indeed, the Muslims of Jerusalem act not as conquerors or proprietors, but as custodians and mediators between Christian Christians parties. Their presence preserves the peace of the holy place and sustains inter-religious coexistence in a city often divided by creed. The key, therefore, is more than an object—it is a living covenant of trust between the children of Abraham.

While no formal “key custodianship” exists at the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate of Peć, the historical interaction between Muslims and Christians in Kosovo demonstrates another mode of mediation. During the Ottoman period, many Orthodox Christian monasteries—Peć among them—continued to function under Muslim custodianship. Their preservation and protection illustrate the Ottoman understanding of *dhimma* not as suppression, but as stewardship: safeguarding the rights and heritage of non-Muslim communities within the empire.

¹³ See: Primordial Covenant as the Basis of Religion: The Qur’anic Mithāq of Alastu According to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas Mohd Farid bin Mohd Shahrani [farid@ikim.gov.my. For relevant discussions, see Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 7–20; Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 153–78; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: Harper One, 2002), 61–73; and Mahmoud Ayoub, “The Qur’an and the Common Word,” in *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, ed. Paul R. Dekar (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), pp. 45–58.

The monastery of Peć, a 13th-century foundation and the spiritual heart of the Serbian Orthodox Church, was recognized and maintained through changing sovereignties. Its survival into modern times, even though conflict, stands as a testament to how Muslim governance could operate as an instrument of mediation rather than erasure. Though not identical to the Jerusalem example, it reflects a similar ethos: that the sacred of the Other must be preserved, for in doing so, one preserves the moral clarity.

These examples—Jerusalem and Peć—embody the deeper meaning of Muslim mediation. They transform the Qur’anic ideal of *ummatan wasatan* (“a justly balanced community”) into lived history. By safeguarding Christian sanctuaries, Muslims demonstrated a form of *Wasatiyya* that transcends theology and becomes civilizational ethics: to protect, to balance, and to ensure continuity of the sacred amidst diversity.

This tradition of mediation—rooted in justice and humility—reveals that Islamic civilization at its height was not defined by domination, but by responsibility. Muslims stood as trustees, not only of their own faith, but of the universal moral covenant between humanity and God.

In an age when religious conflict often overshadows cooperation, these legacies remind us of Islam’s historic vocation: to serve as the bridge between communities. Muslim custodianship of Christian holy places demonstrates that interfaith peace is not utopian—it is historical fact. It affirms that trust, once sanctified by sincerity, can endure centuries of political change.

The example of the Muslim families of Jerusalem and the historical coexistence in Peć thus illustrate the essence of the new approach to *Wasatiyya*: from moderation as restraint to mediation as service. It is the living testimony that the Qur’anic call to balance is also a call to active peacebuilding—to become witnesses not only in word, but in trust and in deed.

From its earliest centuries, Islam did not isolate itself from the Abrahamic discourse — it entered it as a moral mediator, witnessing the truths contained in earlier revelations while correcting their distortions. As we have already said, the Qur’an situates the Muslim community as “a witness over mankind” (*shuhadā’ ‘ala al-nās*) precisely because it stands at the intersection of previous covenants — neither denying the covenantal heritage of *Tawrāt* (the Torah) nor negating the universal aspirations of *Injīl* (the Gospel), but reaffirming their shared divine origin.

Our contemporary crises — from violent extremism to climate collapse, from refugee displacement to digital disinformation — are not only political or economic. They are spiritual in origin and moral in consequence.

The crisis of our age is a crisis of meaning, a fracture in the moral imagination of humanity. The concept of *Wasatiyya* offers an antidote — but only if we are prepared to reinterpret it as a global ethic of mediation.

Here, in Indonesia — the world’s largest Muslim-majority democracy — the Muhammadiyah movement has long embodied this transformative vision of Islam. Its commitment to *tajdīd* (renewal), to education, and to social justice represents the living expression of *Wasatiyya* from moderation to mediation in action.

Muhammadiyah’s great scholars, from Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan to the present generation, have interpreted Islam as a force for progress — not through conflict, but through dialogue and service. This is mediation in its highest moral sense: the application of balanced principles to heal the fractures of society and to empower the marginalized through knowledge, compassion, and solidarity. Indeed, Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan (1868–1923), the founder of Muhammadiyah, articulated the spirit of *Wasatiyya* not primarily through theoretical exposition but through praxis—harmonizing religious devotion with social reform, education, and modernization. His approach to *Wasatiyya* emphasized balance between faith and rational progress, orthodoxy and inclusivity, positioning Islam as a constructive force in societal development. His legacy has been cherished by all the past and present leaders of Muhammadiyah: Kyai Haji Ibrahim, Kyai Haji Ahmad Badawi Mansur, Kyai Haji Muḥammad Sirāj al-Dīn Šams al-Dīn, Kyai Haji Haedar Naşir, to mention only few. All of them emphasize *Wasatiyya* as the cornerstone of “Islam Berkemajuan” (Progressive Islam), advocating interfaith dialogue, democracy, and peacebuilding. While Kyai Haji Dahlan embodied *Wasatiyya* through institutional reform and education in the early 20th century, his heirs have expanded it into an intellectual and diplomatic paradigm responsive to contemporary global and pluralist challenges.

If moderation was the language of ethics, mediation must become the language of education. The universities of the Muslim world, and especially Muhammadiyah University, should now assume their role as institutions of mediation — spaces where young minds learn to translate knowledge into compassion, and faith into dialogue.

With this noble vision in mind, let me conclude my presentation in a proposal of the Road Map for Renewing *Wasatiyya* as Mediation:

First, Reframe *Wasaṭiyya* as Active Mediation:

- Understand *Wasaṭiyya* not only as personal moderation, but as public responsibility to repair relationships and build trust. Teach that being *ummataṇ wasaṭaṇ* means standing between communities, not apart from them.

Second, Cultivate Mediation Skills in Muslim Leadership:

- Integrate conflict transformation, listening methodologies, restorative justice, and ethical diplomacy into imam training, Islamic studies curricula, and leadership development. Encourage youth programs that build emotional intelligence, dialogue ability, and civic empathy.

Third, Establish Institutions of Peace Stewardship:

- Create Centers for *Wasaṭi* Mediation in major Islamic universities, mosques, and community hubs. Partner with global peacebuilding organizations to formalize Muslim contributions to conflict resolution.

Fourth, Protect and Elevate Shared Sacred Spaces:

- Recognize sites of interreligious significance as zones of trust, not contest. Continue the historical Muslim role of neutral custodianship where possible, reaffirming justice, access, and dignity for all faiths.

Fifth, Move Interfaith Engagement from Dialogue to Joint Action:

- Shift from conversations about beliefs to collaborative work on humanitarian relief, ecological stewardship, care for refugees and vulnerable communities, and preservation of cultural and sacred heritage.

Sixth, Revive Civilizational Memories of Coexistence:

- Re-teach the histories of Madinah's Charter, Andalusia, Jerusalem's shared custodianship, Sarajevo and the Balkans, and Timbuktu's libraries and learning as living models for today's plural societies.

Seventh, Affirm Peacebuilding as an Act of Worship:

- Promote the understanding that peacemaking is *'ibādah* — an act done for God. Frame mediation not as political strategy, but as spiritual duty grounded in mercy, justice, and dignity.

Finally, Remember the Core Principle:

- *Wasaṭiyya* is not neutrality. It is responsible, compassionate intervention. Your mission is to stand where others divide, to heal where others harm, to offer dignity where

it has been denied because the Muslim contribution to global peace should be rooted not in identity alone, but in worship to Allah Almighty and to service to humanity.

Thank You/ Terima Kasih

خريطة طريق لتجديد الوسطية بوصفها منهجاً في التوفيق

أولاً، إعادة فهم الوسطية بوصفها وساطة فاعلة:

- فهم الوسطية لا باعتبارها اعتدالاً شخصياً فحسب، بل مسؤولية عامة لإصلاح العلاقات وبناء الثقة. تعليم أن معنى أن نكون أمة وسطاً هو الوقوف بين المجتمعات لا على هامشها.

ثانياً، تنمية مهارات الوساطة في القيادة المسلمة:

- دمج مناهج حلّ النزاعات، والإصغاء الحواري، والعدالة التصالحية، والدبلوماسية الأخلاقية في برامج إعداد الأئمة، والمناهج الشرعية، وتكوين القيادات. دعم برامج شبابية تنمي الذكاء العاطفي، والقدرة على الحوار، والوعي المدني المتعاطف.

ثالثاً، إنشاء مؤسسات لرعاية السلام:

- تأسيس مراكز للوساطة الوسطية في الجامعات الإسلامية الكبرى، والمساجد، والمراكز المجتمعية. التعاون مع المنظمات العالمية لبناء السلام من أجل تعزيز الدور الإسلامي في حلّ النزاعات.

رابعاً، حماية ورفع مكانة المقدّسات المشتركة:

- اعتبار الأماكن ذات الأهمية الدينية المشتركة مجالات ثقة لا ساحات تنافس. مواصلة الدور التاريخي للمسلمين كأمناء محايدين على المقدسات، مع تأكيد العدالة وحرية الوصول وكرامة الجميع.

خامساً، نقل العمل بين الأديان من الحوار إلى الفعل المشترك:

- التحوّل من النقاشات حول العقائد إلى مشاريع تعاون مشتركة. الإغاثة الإنسانية. رعاية البيئة. حماية اللاجئين والمجتمعات المستضعفة. صون التراث الثقافي والديني.

سادساً، إحياء الذاكرة الحضارية للتعايش:

- إعادة تدريس نماذج تاريخية للتعايش مثل صحيفة المدينة، والأندلس، والحضارة المشتركة للقدس، وسراييفو والبلقان، وتمبكتو. بوصفها نماذج حيّة لمجتمعات تعددية اليوم.

سابعاً، التأكيد على بناء السلام بوصفه عبادة:

- نشر فهم أن صنع السلام عبادة تُؤدّى لله. تقديم الوساطة لا كاستراتيجية سياسية، بل واجباً روحياً قائماً على الرحمة والعدل والكرامة.

واعلم المبدأ الجوهرية:

- الوسطية ليست حياداً، بل هي تدخّل مسؤول ورحيم. وهي الرسالة أن نقف حيث ينقسم الآخرون، وأن نُصلح حيث يجرح الآخرون، وأن نُعيد الكرامة حيث تُنتزع، وهي النتيجة المرجوة: إسهاماً لمسلمين في بناء السلام العالمي لا يستند إلى ردّ فعلٍ عابر، بل إلى الهوية، والعقيدة، والذاكرة التاريخية، والعبادة لله والخدمة الأخلاقية للإنسان.

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