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Digital Hermeneutics and the Politics of Exclusion: Deconstructing Salafi Interpretations of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* on Indonesian YouTube

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Abstract

The article investigates the digital contestation of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* (loyalty and disavowal) by Indonesian Salafi networks, focusing on YouTube channel of Rodja TV. This qualitative study employs Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine selected *da'wah* (lecture) videos on Rodja TV's YouTube channel through three analytical dimensions: textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. The study demonstrates how digital platforms transform complex Islamic theology into a rigid, binary ideological instrument. The findings reveal that digital exegesis systematically simplifies authoritative *tafsīr* (exegesis), leveraging pejorative labeling and algorithmic enclaves to construct an exclusive identity while marginalizing

the “others”. By contrasting these digital narratives with the *maqāsidī* (objectives) interpretations of Ibn Āshūr and Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī, this study reveals a profound deculturation and mediatization of religion. This article contributes to Islamic studies and digital sociology by illuminating how online Salafi discourse facilitates “cognitive radicalization” and affective polarization, threatening multiculturalism in a democratic society. Ultimately, it underscores the critical need to disseminate *maqāsidī* (objective)-oriented counter-narratives to dismantle the exclusivist echo chamber and restore religion’s role in fostering inclusive social cohesion.

Keywords: *Al-Walā’ wa al-Barā’*, digital Salafism, Indonesian Salafism, mediatization of religion, Critical Discourse Analysis.

A. Introduction

The development of digital technology has significantly transformed the landscape of religious authority and interpretive practices in contemporary Islam. Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, in addition to serving as vehicles for religious outreach, have also become spaces for the production, distribution, and contestation of increasingly open and decentralized religious interpretations.¹ This phenomenon has given rise to what some researchers refer to as “digital hermeneutics”, a new framework for interpretive practice that enables broad public participation in interpretive discourse previously dominated by traditional religious authorities.² On the one hand, the digitization of Islamic exegesis provides broad access to Islamic sources, thereby increasing public engagement in religious discourse. On the other hand, this transformation also

¹ Ibrahim N. Abusharif, “Religious Authority, Digitality, and Islam: The Stakes and Background,” *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 8, no. 1 (2023): 109–19, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/3/article/916565>.

² Fadhi Lukman, “Digital Hermeneutics and A New Face of The Qur’an Commentary: The Qur’an in Indonesian’s Facebook,” *Al-Jami’ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 56, no. 1 (June 2018): 95–120, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2018.561.95-120>.

raises issues of authority, methodological standardization, and increasingly complex fragmentation of interpretations in the digital public sphere.³ Therefore, the digital space is not merely a medium for conveying religious messages, but rather a new epistemological arena where the meanings of religious texts are intensively negotiated.

One theological concept that has sparked intense debate in the digital sphere is *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* (loyalty and disavowal), the doctrine of loyalty to the community of believers and rejection of unbelief and all that is deemed contrary to Islamic teachings. In both classical and contemporary literature, this concept plays a crucial role in defining social relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, across theological, social, and political dimensions.⁴ However, this concept has also become a source of controversy because its interpretation often falls between two extremes. On the one hand, it is used by *jihadist* (extremist) groups to justify exclusivism and violence; on the other hand, it is exploited by Islamophobic narratives to portray Islam as a religion incompatible with pluralism.⁵ This debate becomes even more complex when considered in light of differing approaches among contemporary *ulama* (Muslim scholars), such as the debate between Salafi and Wasati scholars regarding the limits of loyalty toward non-Muslims in a pluralistic society, particularly for Muslim minorities in the West.⁶ Thus, *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* began

³ Ali Sati et al., "The Digital Transformation of Tafsir and Its Implications for Islamic Legal Derivation in the Contemporary Era," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 4, no. 1 (June 2025): 389–415, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v4i1.10425>; Yusrina Salma et al., "Narrative Hermeneutics as Digital Tafsīr: Reconstructing Qur'anic Meaning and Religious Authority on Instagram @NadirsyahHosen_Official," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 23, no. 2 (December 2025): 733–72, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v23i2.1492>.

⁴ Iman Kanani et al., "The Relationship of Muslims with Non-Muslims Based on the Concept of Muwālāt (Loyalty) in the Qur'ān: A Contextual Analytical Study," *Humanomics* 33, no. 3 (August 2017): 258–73, <https://doi.org/10.1108/H-12-2016-0096>.

⁵ Zouhir Gabsi, "Al-Walā' Wal-Barā' (Allegiance and Disassociation) in Islam: A Source of Islamophobic Narratives?," *Intellectual Discourse* 33 (2025): 7–31.

⁶ Uriya Shavit, "Can Muslims Befriend Non-Muslims? Debating al-Walā' Wa-al-Barā' (Loyalty and Disavowal) in Theory and Practice," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25, no. 1 (2014): 67–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2013.851329>.

as a theological concept that later functioned as an ideological construct to define the boundaries of a collective identity fraught with interpretive tensions.

Within the spectrum of Salafism, the concept of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* has even become one of the main foundations for the formation of collective identity, social boundaries, and religious orientation. Several studies indicate that interpretations of this concept vary widely within the Salafi community itself, ranging from a quietist approach that emphasizes internal social loyalty⁷ to more political or exclusive interpretations.⁸ Ethnographic studies of Salafi communities in Europe also show that these principles of loyalty and disavowal are not merely doctrinal but also influence everyday social practices, including identity formation, social relations, and even the boundaries of the community.⁹ In the Indonesian context, these dynamics are further complicated by the fact that the spread of Salafism is taking place not only within formal religious institutions but also through a highly active and organized digital ecosystem.¹⁰ Through an intensive content production strategy grounded in textual evidence, the Salafi network has succeeded in widely disseminating its ideological identity in the online space.

In the Indonesian context, digital media, particularly YouTube, has become a strategic platform for disseminating Salafi discourse and shaping public religious opinion. Various studies

⁷ Ade Putra Hayat Jafar Ahmada, "Pragmatism of Doctrine: Salafi Political Discourse in Digital Spaces," *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 46, no. 3 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2025.46.3.36>.

⁸ Joas Wagemakers, "The Enduring Legacy of the Second Saudi State: Quietist and Radical Wahhabi Contestations Of Al-Walā' Wa-L-Barā'," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 1 (February 2012): 93–110, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743811001267>.

⁹ Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Mira Menzfeld, and Yasmina Hedider, "Interpretations of Al-Wala' Wa-l-Bara' in Everyday Lives of Salafis in Germany," *Religions* 10, no. 2 (February 2019), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10020124>.

¹⁰ Mahmud Hibatul Wafi, Mega Hidayati, and Sunyoto Usman, "The Reproduction of Salafism in the Online Ecosystem: Strengthening of Indonesian Salafi Groups," *Multidisciplinary Science Journal* 8, no. 2 (2026): 2026128–2026128, <https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2026128>.

indicate that the Salafi movement leverages new media to expand the reach of its missionary work, particularly among urban youth who are seeking new forms of religiosity amid a crisis of trust in religious authorities.¹¹ Through YouTube channels, online lectures, and other social media platforms, religious discourse is produced extensively and distributed to a wide audience. In fact, these sermons have reached even rural communities that were previously relatively isolated from Salafi networks.¹² This process not only expands the reach of Islamic outreach but also creates a new ideological contestation within Indonesian Muslim society, particularly between Salafi interpretations and more pluralistic and accommodating local Islamic traditions.

Nevertheless, most studies on *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* still focus on the doctrinal dimension, particularly in relation to Salafi-jihadist groups, as evidenced in Joas Wagemakers' study on the construction of loyalty and disavowal within global Salafi ideology.¹³ Meanwhile, other studies have highlighted the social practices of Muslim communities within specific geographical contexts, both in the Middle East and among Muslim minority communities in the West. In the Indonesian context, Noorhaidi Hasan has extensively examined the dynamics of Salafi authority expansion and post-Reformation of Islamic conservatism,¹⁴ while

¹¹ F. Aidulsyah, "The Rise of Urban Salafism in Indonesia: The Social-Media and Pop Culture of New Indonesian Islamic Youth," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 51, no. 4 (December 2023): 252–59, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajss.2023.07.003>.

¹² Syarif Syarif, Saifuddin Herlambang, and Bayu Suratman, "Quran Interpretation Methodology, New Media, and Ideological Contestation of Salafi in Sambas," *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (September 2023): 7, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8814>; Ibnu Burdah, "Growing Exclusion Of The Majority: The 'Triumph of Wahhabism' and Its Threat to Indonesian Islam in the Democratic Society," *Journal Of Indonesian Islam* 17, no. 1 (June 2023): 54–75, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2023.17.1.54-75>.

¹³ Joas Wagemakers, "The Transformation of a Radical Concept: Al-Wala' Wa-l-Bara' in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (Oxford University Press, 2014), 0, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199333431.003.0004>.

¹⁴ Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Failure of the Wahhabi Campaign Transnational Islam and the Salafi Madrasa in Post-9/11 Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010): 675–705, <https://doi.org/10.5367/sear.2010.0015>.

Merlyna Lim demonstrates how digital media shapes algorithmic enclaves and ideological polarization in contemporary society.¹⁵ Fadhli Lukman's study on digital hermeneutics, meanwhile, highlights the transformation of Qur'anic exegesis practices in the digital sphere.¹⁶ Nevertheless, research specifically analyzing how the verses of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* are reproduced, negotiated, and disseminated via YouTube remains relatively limited. In fact, several studies indicate that the digitization of doctrinal discourse often fosters conceptual simplification and more populist ideological framing, where terms such as *bid'ah* (heresy), *hijrah* (spiritual migration), and *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* are intensively reproduced to establish clear boundaries of religious identity.¹⁷

Furthermore, most studies have not adequately considered the context of Muslim communities living in a pluralistic country like Indonesia, where relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are governed within the framework of a secular state. Consequently, social interactions and religious practices are shaped by the dynamics of pluralism and more complex forms of tolerance. Consequently, research on the reproduction of the interpretation of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* in the digital sphere is crucial for understanding how the dynamics of authority, identity, and religious ideology are constructed within the contemporary Islamic landscape. This risks reducing the complexity of Islamic intellectual traditions to a simplistic, exclusive narrative.

Against this backdrop, this article aims to analyze how the concept of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* is produced, interpreted, and debated in the digital sphere through YouTube channels, particularly Rodja. Specifically, this study seeks to answer two

¹⁵ Merlyna Lim, "Freedom to Hate: Social Media, Algorithmic Enclaves, and the Rise of Tribal Nationalism in Indonesia," *Critical Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (July 2017): 411–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2017.1341188>.

¹⁶ Lukman, "Digital Hermeneutics and A New Face of The Qur'an Commentary: The Qur'an in Indonesian's Facebook."

¹⁷ H. Zuhri and Mustaqim Pabbajah, "The Distortions of Aqidah on Digital Platforms to Raise the Islamic Populism," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 13, no. 1 (December 2025): 2609316, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2609316>.

main questions: how the verses serving as the foundation for *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* are interpreted and constructed within Salafi digital *da'wah* (lecture) content; and how these interpretations reflect ideological contestation within the digital religious discourse in Indonesia. By analyzing YouTube content as an arena for the production of digital interpretation, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the study of digital interpretation and contemporary Salafism, while enriching our understanding of how classical theological concepts are renegotiated within a highly dynamic digital media ecosystem.

This study employs Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model to analyze the discursive construction of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* in the digital *da'wah* content on Rodja TV's YouTube channel. This approach views language as a social practice, not neutral but laden with power relations and ideology. It encompasses three main dimensions of discourse: text (vocabulary, sentence structure), discursive practices (production, distribution, consumption), and social practices.¹⁸ CDA enables an in-depth analysis of how language is used to maintain or shift power, reinforce or challenge ideologies, and influence public opinion. The research data was obtained through purposive sampling of a number of lecture videos on the Rodja TV YouTube channel that explicitly discuss the concept of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'*, religious loyalty, relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as themes of leadership and Islamic identity. Data selection was based on thematic relevance, the intensity of the discourse on exclusivism, and audience engagement as evidenced by view counts, comments, and other digital interactions. In addition to video content, this study also considers audience comments as part of discursive practices that reflect the reception, reproduction, and negotiation of meaning in the digital space.

¹⁸ Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse Textual Analysis for Social Research* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003).

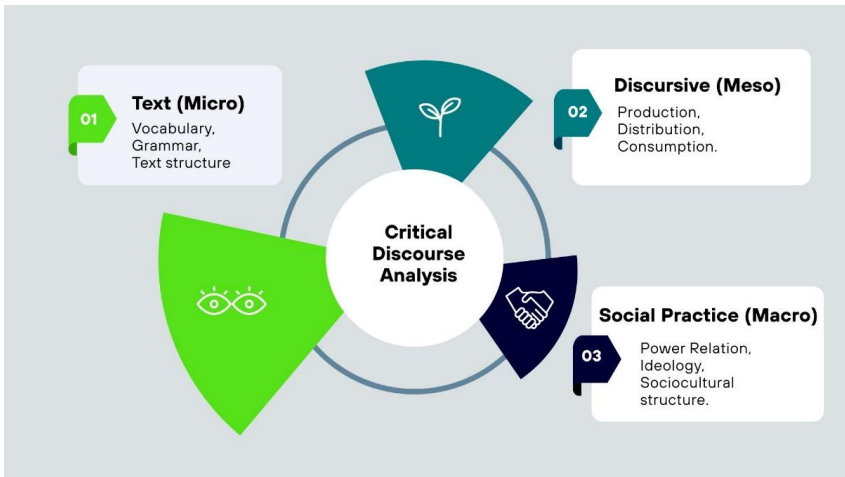


Figure 1. How Norman Fairclough's Model of Critical Discourse Analysis Works

The analysis process consists of three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. In the description stage, the study identifies and analyzes the linguistic features of the text, including word choice, sentence structure, and the use of religious arguments in the sermons. The interpretation stage focuses on the processes of production, distribution, and consumption of discourse within the digital ecosystem, including the role of the YouTube channel as a medium and the audience's role in understanding the message. Meanwhile, the explanatory stage aims to examine the relationship between discourse and the broader social context, particularly in reflecting and shaping ideological relations and the dynamics of religious diversity within Indonesia's pluralistic Muslim society. Through this approach, the study seeks to uncover how religious discourse is produced, negotiated, and contributes to the formation of social reality.

B. YouTube Channel Profile: Rodja TV

The rise of digital media has encouraged various Islamic outreach communities to use online platforms to disseminate

religious discourse. Among the available platforms, YouTube has proven to be the most effective medium for distributing Islamic outreach content widely and sustainably.¹⁹ In the context of Salafi *da'wah* in Indonesia, one digital *da'wah* platform that has had a significant impact on the ecosystem is the Rodja TV YouTube channel. Before utilizing social media platforms such as YouTube, Rodja TV was first known through its radio and satellite television network, which promoted Islamic Puritanism, encouraging Muslims to return to a way of life that strictly follows the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and the first three generations of Muslims.²⁰ As social media has grown, Rodja TV has expanded its outreach through platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram.

As a non-commercial Islamic outreach channel, Rodja TV has, since joining YouTube on January 11, 2012, successfully garnered 571,000 subscribers and approximately 48 million views. Based on our research, the Rodja TV channel has published approximately 5,977 videos featuring various Islamic study content to date. The channel positions itself as a channel for Quran recitation and Islamic studies, with the motto “spreading the light of the Sunnah.”²¹

¹⁹ Muhammad Anshar, Asni Djamereng, and Muh. Ilham, “Content Analysis and Audience Receptions of Online Da’wah on YouTube Social Media,” *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 40, no. 1 (2024): 173–87, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2024-4001-10>.

²⁰ Ayang Utriza Yakin, “Salafi Dakwah and the Dissemination of Islamic Puritanism in Indonesia: A Case Study Of The Radio Of Rodja,” *Ulumuna: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 22, no. 2 (2018), <http://dx.doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v22i2.335>.

²¹ “Rodja TV,” accessed March 14, 2026, UCP-tWGFUAmVWFz4XyHDz07A.



Figure 2 Rodja TV YouTube Channel Profile

The content presented by the Rodja TV channel generally takes the form of thematic lectures on Islam, including studies of Qur’anic *tafsir* (exegesis), *fiqh ibadah* (the jurisprudence of worship), and *aqidah* (creed) based on the comprehension of the Salaf. Additionally, the channel features religious Q&A sessions led by several Salafi-affiliated preachers. The text-based approach to presenting material indicates an effort to foster a religious understanding that emphasizes the purification of Islam in accordance with Salafi tradition. Interestingly, alongside religious content, the channel also publishes several health-related videos. This content is compiled into several playlists, such as “Rodja’s Healthy Kitchen” and “Classical Health Science”, indicating that Rodja TV serves not only as a medium for religious preaching but also as a platform for disseminating practical knowledge deemed relevant to the daily lives of its audience.

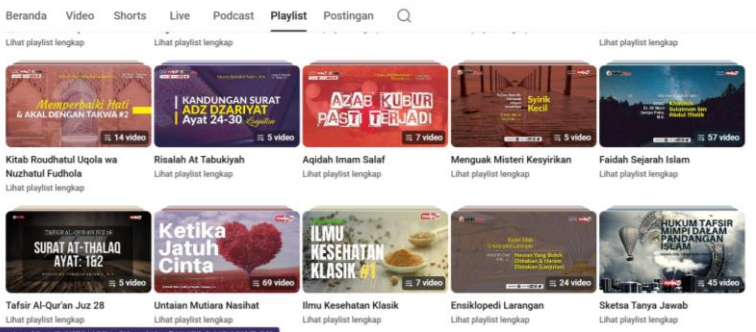


Figure 3 Video Posts on the Rodja TV YouTube Channel

Various programs broadcast by Rodja TV feature several speakers well-known within the Salafi *da'wah* network, such as Yazid ibn Abdul Qadir al-Jawas, Firanda Andirja, Abu Yahya Badrus Salam, Syafiq Riza Basalamah, and Abdulllah Roy. These speakers often present material on strengthening faith, purifying religious practices, and providing religious explanations that reference the Qur'an and Hadith. The presence of these figures indicates that Rodja TV is not merely a medium for distributing religious sermons, but rather a means of reproducing religious authority within the Salafi network on social media.

A lecture on the purification of *Tauhid* (monotheism) delivered by Firanda Andirja and Maududi Abdulllah, titled "*Ceramah: Kitab Tauhid* (Lecture: The Book of Monotheism)," has become a fairly popular video. Uploaded about 9 years ago, the video is a study of "*Kitab Tauhid*" by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab, a classic text that emphasizes purifying the Muslim's faith and worship practices from all forms of polytheism. In this study, the explanations are presented by referring to evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith as the foundation for theological arguments. The high level of audience engagement with this video is evident from several indicators, including 16,000 likes, 2.4 million views, and 1,216 comments.²² This indicates that Rodja TV has become a highly effective medium for expanding the reach of Salafi *da'wah* to broader audiences. Through consistent distribution, the Rodja TV YouTube channel shapes its audience's religious preferences and reinforces the authority of the preachers involved.

²² "Ceramah: Kitab Tauhid (Ustadz Dr. Firanda Andirja, M.A. dan Ustadz Maududi Abdulllah, Lc.)," accessed March 15, 2026, <https://youtu.be/LH-ElXUNnzs?si=EUVauFgzjF86KnAo>.



Figure 4. One of the most popular videos on the Rodja TV YouTube channel

Rodja TV's influence in spreading Salafi ideology extends beyond social media into broader broadcasting. A study indicates that the Rodja TV *da'wah* network is linked to the production of *da'wah* programs on national television stations, such as Trans7. This connection is evident in several *da'wah* programs on these television stations, such as the shows *Khazanah* and *Khilafah*, which frequently feature preachers from the Rodja TV network, including Badrussalam, Syafiq Riza Basalamah, Budi Ashari, and others. The appearance of these Rodja TV preachers in such programs indicates that the dissemination of Salafi *da'wah* extends beyond digital platforms. The study also reveals that the appearance of Rodja TV preachers on Trans7 is due to one of the station's deputy producers for its *da'wah* programs adopting the Salafi methodology. This idea stems from his interest in watching and listening to Rodja TV's *da'wah* programs since 2009.²³ These findings indicate that, in addition to serving as a platform for digital *da'wah*, Rodja TV also plays a role in expanding the

²³ Ahmad Subakir, "Challenging the Mainstreams: Broadcasting Salafi Da'wah on Indonesian TV Channels," *Ulumuna* 28, no. 2 (December 2024): 681-709, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i2.1115>.

dissemination of Salafi ideology into mainstream media through its *da'wah* networks and the production of religious programs on national television. Consequently, Rodja TV has become one of the most critical nodes in the network of production and dissemination of Salafi *da'wah* authority in Indonesia.

As a popular medium for spreading Salafi *da'wah*, Rodja TV plays a significant role in producing and disseminating various theological concepts that characterize Salafi ideology. One concept that stands out in this discourse is *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'*. This concept relates to religious loyalty, faith identity, and the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. Therefore, an analysis of how the concept of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* is produced, interpreted, and represented in the *da'wah* content on the Rodja TV channel is essential for understanding the dynamics of interpretive contestation within the digital *da'wah* space.

C. Content Analysis of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* on the Rodja TV YouTube Channel

Al-Walā' wa al-Barā' is one of the key theological doctrines in Islamic doctrinal discourse, about *al-Walā'* (loyalty toward fellow Muslims) and *al-Barā'* (disavowal from those outside the community of faith).²⁴ Within the tradition of Islamic thought, this concept is not only understood as a normative principle but also serves as an ideological tool in shaping the boundaries of the Muslim community's collective identity. In the digital age, debates regarding *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* are no longer confined to traditional scholarly spaces such as religious study circles but have transformed across various social media platforms, particularly YouTube. This medium enables the production and distribution of religious interpretations on a broader, faster, and

²⁴ Wagemakers, "The Transformation of a Radical Concept: Al-Wala' Wa-l-Bara' in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi."

more decentralized scale.²⁵ Furthermore, because of its more flexible nature, it allows room for new actors outside of conventional scholarly authority. Consequently, religious authority is not entirely concentrated in specific institutions or figures, but is shifting toward a more distributed model.

In the Indonesian context, the Rodja TV YouTube channel has become one of the most active platforms for disseminating religious discourse based on the Salafi methodology. One piece of content relevant for analysis is the “*Syarah Aqidah* (Islamic creed exegesis)” lecture video presented by Abdul Qadir bin Jawaz. The lecture consists of several segments, but this study specifically focuses on one video published on July 29, 2024, which explicitly elaborates on the aspect of *al-Bara’* within the conceptual framework of *al-Walā’ wa al-Barā’*.²⁶ This video was selected for its more focused discussion and its more explicit normative articulation compared to other segments. Additionally, the video has been viewed 2,127 times, received approximately 111 likes, and garnered 9 comments, indicating audience engagement with the content and their responses. Although audience engagement in the video does not indicate a high level of intensity, this does not necessarily negate the influence of the discourse presented. On the contrary, this situation may indicate a pattern of passive consumption common in digital *da’wah*. In the context of digital media, this phenomenon can be explained by the presence of lurkers or passive audiences, users who consume content without active engagement, according to various studies, actually constitute the majority within the social media ecosystem.²⁷ In

²⁵ Muhammad Anshar, Asni Djamereng, and Muh Ilham, “Content Analysis and Audience Receptions of Online Da’wah on YouTube Social Media,” *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 40, no. 1 (March 2024), <http://ejournal.ukm.my/mjc/article/view/57867>.

²⁶ “Syarah Aqidah: Bab VI 65 Al Wala Wal Bara Bag 3 - Ustadz Yazid Bin Abdul Qodir Jawas - YouTube,” accessed March 19, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSVBuFBfxjQ>.

²⁷ Anees Baqir *et al.*, “Unveiling the Drivers of Active Participation in Social Media Discourse,” *Scientific Reports* 15, no. 1 (February 2025): 4906, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-88117-x>; Jiawen Zhu and Kara Dawson, “Differences in Sense of Community and Participation between Lurkers and Posters in Informal Online

certain contexts, the audience even finds itself in a position of hegemony, accepting the message as absolute truth without further critical verification.



Syarah Aqidah: Bab VI 65 Al Wala Wal Bara bag 3 - Ustadz Yazid bin Abdul Qodir Jawas



RodjaTV
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Figure 5. Video of a Lecture by Abdul Qadir ibn Jawaz on *al-Walā'* and *al-Barā'*

Substantively, the video presents the concepts of *al-Walā'* and *al-Barā'* as an integral to obligatory doctrine and views them as direct consequences of reciting the *shahadah* (declaration). The interpretation presented in the video does not stop at rejecting *kufr* (infidel) as a belief system, but extends to encompass relations with non-Muslim individuals themselves. Therefore, *al-Barā'* is not merely understood in a theological dimension but is also extended to the social and relational spheres, thereby fostering an attitude of exclusivity in interactions between religious communities. Within this framework, several doctrinal consequences must be fulfilled in implementing *al-Barā'*. Among these is the obligation to hate *shirk* (idolatry) and *kufr* along with their adherents, which is understood as a divine command.

The normative justification for this stance is reinforced by the story of Prophet Ibrahim, who serves as an ideal model of resolute detachment, even toward his own father and people, as described in Surah al-Zukhruf, verses 26–28. Furthermore, Quranic Surah al-Taubah, verses 113–114, is interpreted as a prohibition against seeking forgiveness for relatives who remain in disbelief, and Quranic Surah al-Mumtahanah, verse 4, is positioned as the theological basis that there exists a fundamental enmity and hatred between believers and non-Muslims until they believe in Allah.²⁸ These verses are understood as a normative foundation that establishes a clear dividing line between Muslims and non-Muslims. In this narrative, any attempt to bridge or unify the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is viewed as a form of theological error. Involvement with or closeness to non-Muslims is even understood as an indication of doctrinal deviation, thereby reinforcing the demand not only to reject unbelief as a system but also to maintain social distance from its adherents.

This interpretation is then elaborated upon through the practical consequences that must be implemented by a Muslim, particularly regarding the prohibition against appointing non-Muslims as leaders and the prohibition against loving them, even within family relationships. This is emphasized through references to Qur’anic verses such as Surah al-Imran (verse 28), Surah al-Ma’idah (verse 51), Surah al-Nisā’ (verses 138–139), and Surah al-Mujadilah (verse 22), which are used to clarify the boundaries of loyalty within the framework of *al-Walā’ wa al-Barā’*.²⁹ In this framework, loyalty is understood not only as internal solidarity among Muslims but also as a mechanism for excluding those outside the faith community. Consequently, social relations are reduced to a dichotomy between Muslim and non-

²⁸ RodjaTV, Syarah Aqidah: Bab VI 65 Al Wala Wal Bara, Bag 1 - Ustadz Yazid Bin Abdul Qodir Jawas, 2024, 01:10:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QL32xrAoOdU>.

²⁹ "Syarah Aqidah: Bab VI 65 Al Wala Wal Bara Bag 3 - Ustadz Yazid Bin Abdul Qodir Jawas - YouTube."

Muslim communities, which in turn reinforces the formation of collective identity and limits the scope for interfaith interaction in social life.

When analyzed within the framework of the digital space, the presentation of the concepts of *al-Walā'* and *al-Barā'* in this content reveals a tendency toward conceptual simplification and strong normative assertions. The actual complexity of the diverse scholarly disagreements is not fully represented, narrowing the space for interpretive contestation to a single, authoritative formulation. Furthermore, in the context of Indonesia as a pluralistic and multicultural nation, the tendency toward interpretations that emphasize a strict separation between Muslim and non-Muslim communities has the potential to trigger broader social implications, particularly regarding patterns of interfaith relations in the public sphere. Therefore, the existence and strengthening of more moderate interpretations are crucial to minimize the potential narrowing of social interaction spaces and to maintain social cohesion within a diverse society. Thus, digital *da'wah* content does not merely reproduce theological doctrines but also serves as an arena for the contestation of meaning that can shape exclusive perspectives on socio-religious relations, particularly amidst the dominance of a passive audience that tends to accept messages without engaging in critical negotiation of meaning.

D. A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Concept of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* on the Rodja TV YouTube Channel

The phenomenon of religious expression in digital media, particularly through the Rodja TV channel, demonstrates the construction of a strong collective identity through the discourse of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* (loyalty and disavowal). This phenomenon cannot be separated from the process of the mediatization of religion, in which media institutions such as YouTube and TV stations do not merely serve as passive transmission channels but actively shape the format, substance, and interaction of the

religious messages themselves.³⁰ Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) developed by Norman Fairclough, texts are not understood as neutral representations of reality, but rather as social practices laden with ideological content and power relations.³¹ Through three dimensions of analysis, text, discursive practices, and social practices—posts related to *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* on Rodja TV are relevant for revealing how language is used not only to convey theological teachings, but also to shape meaning, construct collective identities, and produce and reproduce certain social boundaries.

1. *Dimensions of Textuality*

On a textual level, the discourse produced employs polarizing language that draws a clear distinction between “believers” and “unbelievers.” Terms such as “unbeliever,” “polytheist,” “disassociation,” “hostility,” and “eternal hatred” serve as linguistic instruments to construct social dividing lines, thereby undermining the concept of equal citizenship within a nation and state. From a CDA perspective, such strategies constitute a form of construction that reinforces identity differentiation.³² This polarizing pattern is fully consistent with Teun A. Van Dijk’s concept of the Ideological Square, in which discourse is systematically engineered to highlight the virtues of one’s own group (the in-group) while exaggerating the flaws of other groups (the out-group).³³ Furthermore, statements such as “all religions are the same” or “we each have our own religion” are classified as acts that

³⁰ Stig Hjarvard, “The Mediatisation of Religion: Theorising Religion, Media and Social Change,” *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (June 2011): 119–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2011.579719>.

³¹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315838250>.

³² Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

³³ Teun A. Van Dijk, “Ideology and Discourse Analysis,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 2 (June 2006): 115–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310600687908>.

nullify one's Islam. This insight naturally fosters an exclusivist mindset that leaves no room for the recognition of religious pluralism.

The use of labels such as “stupid,” “foolish,” or “hypocritical” against individuals or groups who support harmonious relations between Muslims and non-Muslims functions as a discursive mechanism of social control. Such labeling not only delegitimizes alternative viewpoints but also limits the possibility of more moderate or inclusive interpretations emerging. This kind of verbal aggression functions as character assassination designed to secure ideological homogeneity and assert the speaker's epistemic superiority in the eyes of their audience.³⁴ Thus, language is used as a tool to shape ways of thinking and maintain the group's ideological homogeneity.

Table 1. Presentation in a lecture on al-Walā' and al-Barā' on the Rodja TV YouTube channel

Category	Word/Phrase	Representation
Religious identity	<i>Kufr</i> (Infidel)	Portrayed as a group outside the realm of religious identity, they have become the target of rejection and exclusion.
	<i>Musyrik</i> (Idolatry)	Portrayed as a deviation from monotheism.
Social relationships	Hostility	Used as a theologically legitimized stance toward groups outside the faith.
	Eternal hatred	Negative emotions toward groups outside one's faith are constantly being reinforced. This narrative can certainly fuel ongoing conflict.
	To distance oneself	It represents a normative act of severing ties with outside groups, even on an emotional level. It serves as a

³⁴ Wodak Ruth, Michael Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, 3rd ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2014).

Category	Word/Phrase	Representation
Labeling	Stupid/Idiotic	means of forming a collective identity. Used to delegitimize individuals or groups with differing views, and to assert the epistemic superiority of one's own group.
	Hypocrite	Used as a moral-religious label to discredit those considered deviant.

Rhetorically, this discourse is characterized by the use of highly deontic terms such as “must,” “must not,” “forbidden,” and “ought to.” This high level of modality creates an authoritative impression that positions truth as singular and indisputable (regime of truth). The argumentative structure employed tends to be deductive, beginning with absolute theological claims and proceeding to normative consequences that often take the form of threats. For example, the statement that “those who make unbelievers their leaders will surely be humiliated by Allah” establishes a deterministic cause-and-effect relationship while simultaneously inducing a psychological effect of fear in the audience.

The strategy for legitimizing authority in this text is achieved by integrating of verses from the Qur’an and hadith as the basis for argumentation. These references serve as a source of transcendental legitimacy, lending absolute weight to the claims presented. From the CDA perspective, language is a form of social practice that is dialectical in nature—that is, it is both influenced by and influences social structures.³⁵ Consequently, this practice demonstrates how religious authority is used to naturalize certain ideological positions, so that inherently interpretive views appear as unquestionable truths. Thus, this discourse not only

³⁵ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 64.

represents religious teachings but also functions as an ideological instrument in shaping the structure of consciousness and social relations among its audience.

2. *Discourse Practice Analysis: The Production, Distribution, and Consumption of Discourse on Rodja TV*

In the realm of discursive practice, the text cannot be understood as an autonomous entity, but rather as a product of a discourse-production process institutionalized within the Salafi ideological framework. In this context, Rodja TV functions as a gatekeeper that selectively constructs and filters narratives regarding “pure Islam.” This process is underpinned by an intense mechanism of intertextuality, in which the historical story of Prophet Ibrahim is not merely reproduced but decontextualized from its original setting and rearticulated within contemporary social reality. Through this strategy, the text produces concrete normative prescriptions, such as a ban on pluralistic expressions, for example, “all religions are the same.” It also leads to the delegitimization of certain political choices, including support for non-Muslim leaders.

At the level of text production, this discourse emerged within the context of *majelis taklim* (religious study group) broadcasts by Rodja TV, a *da'wah* medium affiliated with the Salafi movement. This production aims to uphold the puritanism of the teachings through a strategy of intertextuality based on literal textual references. Quranic verses, such as Surah al-Mumtahanah and Surah al-Maidah, as well as hadith, are used as authoritative sources for theological legitimation and as instruments for framing social and political stances. This strategy of returning to the pure text—which sets aside rationality—is effectively employed by

Salafis to seize religious authority from traditional Islamic institutions in Indonesia.³⁶

In terms of distribution, the shift from private spaces (religious study groups at mosques) to the digital public sphere via YouTube has significantly expanded the reach of these discourses. This platform enables content that was originally local and limited in scope to be disseminated globally, transcending geographical and social boundaries. As a result, exclusive doctrines gain broader visibility and may enter a more heterogeneous national discourse. Furthermore, distribution via YouTube also facilitates the formation of what is known in media studies as an “echo chamber”, a space that reinforces the internal and homogeneous reproduction of discourse.³⁷ In addition, social media algorithms facilitate the formation of “algorithmic enclaves,” which systematically shield these exclusive discourses from opposing viewpoints and isolate their followers within a binary sociopolitical reality.³⁸ Repeated consumption of similar content not only strengthens the group’s internal cohesion but also simultaneously constructs and sharpens symbolic boundaries with outsiders.

Regarding the dimension of text consumption, the audience or congregation is constructed as a subject subordinate to the speaker’s authority. Power relations are established asymmetrically, with the speaker positioned as the holder of unchallengeable epistemic authority. Strategies to delegitimize alternative viewpoints are evident in negative labeling, such as “out of his mind” or “has lost his faith,” which serve to shut down dialogue, reinforce the dominance of a

³⁶ Sunarwoto, “Salafi Dakwah Radio: A Contest for Religious Authority,” *Archipel* 91 (2016).

³⁷ Takuya Nagura and Eizo Akiyama, “The Effect of Agenda-Setting on Occurrence of Echo Chamber on Social Media,” *Transactions of the Japanese Society for Artificial Intelligence* 39, no. 6 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1527/tjsai.39-6-AG24-A>.

³⁸ Lim, “Freedom to Hate: Social Media, Algorithmic Enclaves, and the Rise of Tribal Nationalism in Indonesia.”

single discourse, and create the congregation's epistemic dependence on the speaker's authority. This matter is reflected in the response of the majority of the audience, who tend to agree with Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas's statements regarding the concept of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'*, as seen in user comments such as @AbuFadh47, who not only affirms the study material but also hopes for systematic archiving through the creation of a special playlist, indicating full acceptance of the exclusive identity narrative presented.³⁹

3. *Macro Dimensions: Sociocultural Practices and Power Relations*

At the level of social practice (macro), this discourse reflects the dynamics of ideological contestation unfolding in Indonesia's public sphere, which scholars often identify as part of the "conservative turn" following the reformation.⁴⁰ The video analyzed above serves not only as a medium for conveying religious teachings but also as a polemical tool that explicitly rejects the idea of religious pluralism, which is often promoted by the state and moderate Islamic groups.⁴¹ Statements that characterize efforts to foster harmonious relations between Muslims and non-Muslims as a form of "ignorance" reveal a strategy to delegitimize the discourse on social harmony.

Furthermore, this discourse involves a project to establish identity hegemony by symbolically prohibiting interfaith social relations. The text systematically constructs exclusive identity boundaries that function as "dividing walls" in social life. In the context of Indonesia's multicultural

³⁹ RodjaTV, *Syarah Aqidah: Bab VI 65 Al Wala Wal Bara Bag 3 - Ustadz Yazid Bin Abdul Qadir Jawas*, 2024, 01:27:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSVBuFBfXjQ>.

⁴⁰ Martin Van Bruinessen, ed., *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

⁴¹ Lene Pedersen, "Religious Pluralism in Indonesia," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 17, no. 5 (October 2016): 387–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2016.1218534>.

society, this effort can be interpreted as a process of redefining social relations—shifting from those originally grounded in the principle of harmony to relations framed within the logic of normative antagonism. Thus, the discourse not only reflects social reality but also seeks to intervene and reshape patterns of interaction between individuals and groups.

On a more political level, the articulation of leadership discourse reveals an orientation toward identity politics. The emphasis on the community's success being achieved only through pious Muslim leadership demonstrates how religious discourse is instrumentalized for practical political purposes. In this regard, the discourse functions as a mechanism of symbolic mobilization that seeks to influence the political preferences of the audience, particularly in the context of general elections. This statement demonstrates that Salafi discourse, although often claimed by its adherents to be apolitical, in fact possesses strong material power to reconfigure formal power structures and intervene in the reality of citizenship.⁴²

From a sociopolitical perspective, the perpetuation of such discourse has the potential to deepen social fragmentation and hinder integration in a multicultural society. By framing religious differences as the basis for permanent antagonism, the text contributes to the construction of an exclusive social imagination resistant to pluralism.⁴³ Ultimately, the normalization of exclusionary discourse in the digital public sphere directly contributes to the narrowing of civil liberties and democratic regression in

⁴² Hasan, "The Failure of the Wahhabi Campaign Transnational Islam and the Salafi Madrasa in Post-9/11 Indonesia."

⁴³ Adam J. Fenton, "Faith, Intolerance, Violence And Bigotry: Legal and Constitutional Issues of Freedom of Religion in Indonesia," *JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAM* 10, no. 2 (December 2016): 181-212, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2016.10.2.181-212>.

Indonesia. Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, this situation indicates that discourse operates not only as a reflection of ideology but also as a social practice with material power to shape power relations, collective identities, and the trajectory of democratic development in the public sphere.

E. A Critical Examination of the Ideology and Genealogy of the Interpretation of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'*

In contemporary discourse, *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* has undergone a shift in function, evolving from a mere theological principle into a criterion for distinguishing “true” Muslims as well as a rigid mechanism for establishing boundaries. This matter has given rise to a sharp dichotomy that divides social reality into two opposing entities.⁴⁴ First, the in-group, represented as “pure” Muslims—that is, those who follow the Salafi methodology. Second, the out-group, which includes non-Muslims as well as fellow Muslims deemed “deviant.” Ultimately, these concepts of loyalty and disavowal have transformed into tools for social classification and instruments for determining the legitimacy of one’s faith. This idea, of course, has profound social implications. This process is no longer merely a reflection of belief but a discursive strategy to erect a dividing wall separating “us”—the saved—from “them”—those deemed a threat to the purity of the religion. Sociologically, this shift represents a mechanism of “othering,” in which the orthodoxy of identity is constructed not only through doctrinal affirmation but exclusively through negation of groups outside their boundaries. As analyzed by Noorhadi Hasan in the discourse of the puritan movement, such doctrines function as “ideological weapons” to mobilize followers

⁴⁴ Joas Wagemakers, “Framing the ‘Threat to Islam’: *Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara'* in Salafi Discourse,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2008): 1–22, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41858559>.

within the landscape of contestation over modern religious authority, transforming theology into a sharp identity politics.⁴⁵

Genealogically, *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* has its roots in pre-Islamic Arab tribal traditions through the mechanisms of *hilf* (alliance) and severance of *khal'* (ties) for the survival of the tribe. This concept was later also adopted by “heterodox” groups such as the Khawarij and the Shia as a theological instrument to affirm group identity and create a demarcation line between ‘insiders’ and “outsiders.”⁴⁶ Initially, early Sunni scholars, including Ahmad ibn Hanbal, rejected formalizing this concept due to its association with deviant groups. Several centuries later, the concept was revitalized by Ibn Taymiyyah. Although he never used the phrase *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* directly, his ideas were clearly aligned with it. Ibn Taymiyyah viewed this concept as a means to combat *bid'ah* (heresy) and to protect the community from non-Islamic practices.⁴⁷

Over time, *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* evolved into a standard term in the 20th century through the work of Saudi scholars. These scholars contextualized texts from the Qur'an, hadith, as well as the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. This transformation cannot be separated from the sociopolitical context of state formation, in which theological doctrine was instrumentalized to foster social cohesion. In Bernard Haykel's view, the purification of creed through this doctrine of separation is a methodological hallmark of Salafi groups to rigidly define the boundaries of their “imagined community” and distinguish themselves from mainstream

⁴⁵ Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia* (New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2006), 154.

⁴⁶ Wagemakers, “The Transformation of a Radical Concept: Al-Wala' Wa-l-Bara' in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.”

⁴⁷ Damir-Geiltsdorf, Menzfeld, and Hedider, “Interpretations of Al-Wala' Wa-l-Bara' in Everyday Lives of Salafis in Germany.”

Muslims.⁴⁸ One of the most influential major milestones was the work by Muhammad ibn Said al-Qahtani in 1984, which was subsequently translated into various languages and disseminated across global Salafi websites.⁴⁹ Overall, the concept of *al-Wala' wa al-Bara'* has undergone significant transformations throughout its history, evolving from a tribal concept into a strict religious doctrine, and subsequently into a revolutionary ideology within the context of modern Salafism. This concept, initially rejected by the Sunnis, was later integrated and reformed into a fundamental principle of Islam by Hanbali scholars, which subsequently gave rise to political and radical interpretations, particularly by figures such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.⁵⁰

The process of recontextualizing the doctrine of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* within digital platforms such as YouTube has led to a simplification of meaning that reduces the complexity of the Qur'an and Hadith to rigid binary narratives. Furthermore, the open nature of social media provides a space for preachers to gain and establish religious authority.⁵¹ Furthermore, according to sociologist Oliver Roy, this phenomenon reflects the "deculturation of Islam" in the era of digital globalization. Religion is stripped of its cultural and historical context and its discursive complexity, and presented as a universal dogma that is binary, instant, and easily consumed.⁵² The framing of the concepts of *Walā'* (loyalty) and *Barā'* (disavowal) as instantaneous tools of social classification inevitably eliminates the nuances of

⁴⁸ Bernard Haykel, *On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action.* In *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, Edited by Roel Meijer (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 45.

⁴⁹ Damir-Geilsdorf, Menzfeld, and Hedider, "Interpretations of Al-Wala' Wa-l-Bara' in Everyday Lives of Salafis in Germany."

⁵⁰ Wagemakers, "The Transformation of a Radical Concept," ed. Meijer (Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵¹ Amamur Rohman Hamdani, "Fatwa in the Digital Age: Online Mufti, Social Media, and Alternative Religious Authority," *Hikmatuna: Journal for Integrative Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (June 2023): 53–63, <https://doi.org/10.28918/hikmatuna.v9i1.966>.

⁵² Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Umma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 168.

interpretation and *ikhtilāf* (the diversity of opinion) that should accompany such discourse. This phenomenon systematically reinforces identity polarization by asserting exclusive social boundaries, while simultaneously giving rise to deep affective polarization, which, in turn, fosters hostile attitudes and negative attributions toward out-groups.⁵³ The crucial impact of this digitalization has led to a shift in values, whereby theological depth—rich in meaning and interpretive nuance—has been reduced to an ideological commodity.

F. A Critical Interpretation of the Verses on al-Walā' and al-Barā' on the Rodja TV YouTube Channel

The concept of al-Bara' in the video uploaded by the YouTube channel Rodja TV undergoes a significant narrowing of meaning, whereby this theological principle is reduced to an obligation to hate and oppose non-Muslims both physically and socially. The narrative uses the story of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and the Quranic Surah al-Zukhruf, verses 26–28, as a normative foundation to legitimize the creation of rigid social distancing within society. In fact, when examined through various authoritative interpretations, this concept possesses a theological dimension that is far more specific and profound than mere sentiments of hatred between people. Al-Ṭabari's commentary explains that Prophet Ibrahim's act of Bara' was actually a manifestation of the firmness of *tauhid*—that is, the act of dissociating oneself from all forms of worship other than Allah.⁵⁴ Ibn 'Āshūr, in *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, emphasizes that Ibrahim's actions were intended to purify the religion of polytheism without immediately severing family ties. The mention of the figure of "father" in the verse serves as an affirmation that in the realm of

⁵³ Robin L. Wakefield and Kirk Wakefield, "The Antecedents and Consequences of Intergroup Affective Polarisation on Social Media," *Information Systems Journal* 33, no. 3 (2023): 640–68, <https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12419>.

⁵⁴ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jā Mi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'Wīl Āy al-Qur'an*, vol. 21 (Makkah al-Mukarramah: Dār al-Tarbiyah wa al-Turast, n.d.), 588-590.

faith, there is no room for tolerance of idolatry, even toward one's closest relatives; yet this does not automatically negate the ethics of interpersonal relationships.⁵⁵

Wahbah al-Zuhailī, in *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*, asserts that Prophet Abraham's actions were, in fact, an intellectual critique of the blind imitation of idol worship. He abandoned his ancestors' traditions to follow true guidance.⁵⁶ Thus, the essence of *al-Barā'* is not a form of social hostility, but rather an affirmation of the principle of the purity of *tauhid*. This concept should not be understood as creating sociological barriers, but rather functions as an ideological filter that safeguards faith without negating the obligation to act justly toward others.

Regarding Surah al-Taubah, verses 113–114, and Surah al-Mumtahanah, verse 4, Wahbah al-Zuhailī explains that the prohibition against seeking forgiveness for polytheists applies only if they have died in a state of disbelief, while praying for guidance for those who are still alive remains permissible.⁵⁷ In the context of Surah al-Mumtahanah, verse 4, Muslims are commanded to emulate Prophet Ibrahim's detachment from disbelief, a principle that specifically rebukes misplaced loyalty, as in the case of Hatib ibn Abi Balta'ah. However, this principle must be in harmony with Surah al-Mumtahanah verse 8, in which Allah still commands Muslims to do good and act justly toward non-Muslims who do not fight against them.⁵⁸ Thus, religious loyalty does not automatically negate the moral obligation to interact with kindness and fairness within the framework of universal humanity.

⁵⁵ Muḥammad al-Ṭahir ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr Wa al-Tanwīr*, vol. 25 (Tunisia: Dār al-Tunisiyah li al-Nasyr, 1984), 191.

⁵⁶ Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah Wa al-Manhaj*, vol. 25 (Bairut: Dār al-Fikr, 1991), 142-151.

⁵⁷ Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah Wa al-Manhaj*, vol. 11.

⁵⁸ Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah Wa al-Manhaj*, vol. 28, 127-137.

Rodja TV's narrative, which cites Surah Al-Imran, verse 28, and Surah al-Nisā' verses 138–139 as the normative basis for an absolute prohibition on non-Muslim leadership, can be critiqued through the thought of Ibn 'Āshūr and Wahbah al-Zuhailī, who explain that the prohibition in QS. Ali Imran, verse 28, actually targets the practice of taking outsiders as protectors while neglecting the believers. They even detail the categories of *muwālah* (continuity), ranging from the prohibition of inner loyalty to disbelief to the permissibility of worldly cooperation and good *muamalah* (interaction).⁵⁹ Ibn 'Ashur's approach represents a holistic interpretation grounded in *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (the objectives of Islamic law), which stands in stark contrast to the literalist-scripturalist interpretation characteristic of the Salafi movement. As Jasser Auda emphasizes, a *Maqāṣid*-based interpretation always requires integrating the text with its systemic context and the universal human good, so that the sacred text is not used as an instrument of repression or social segregation.⁶⁰ In line with this, Wahbah al-Zuhailī emphasizes that the essence of forbidden loyalty lies in prioritizing the interests of non-Muslim groups over the common good of the Muslim community. Relations with external parties are permitted as long as they are oriented toward the welfare of the Muslim community.⁶¹

Regarding Quran 4:138–139, Ibn 'Āshūr explains that Allah's rebuke in these verses is directed at the inferior mentality of the hypocrites, who seek "support" from powerful non-Muslims in order to pursue positions of power, security, or personal influence.⁶² Al-Zuhaili emphasizes that this verse refers to those

⁵⁹ Muḥammad al-Ṭahir ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr Wa al-Tanwīr*, vol. 3, 215-222.

⁶⁰ Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 2008), 24.

⁶¹ Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah Wa al-Manhaj*, vol. 3, 198-205.

⁶² Muḥammad al-Ṭahir ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr Wa al-Tanwīr*, vol. 5, 233-238.

who repeatedly apostatize and mistakenly believe that victory lies with the unbelievers.⁶³

The interpretation of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* disseminated through the Rodja TV YouTube channel systematically shifts the paradigm of social ethics from inclusivity toward an exclusive religious identity, framing the practice of self-restriction from cross-group interaction as a manifestation of pure piety and absolute loyalty to religious doctrine. In fact, religious exclusivism adopted with excessive self-confidence and without intellectual humility deserves criticism, especially given the inherent ambiguity in interpreting religious matters.⁶⁴ This shift ultimately alters public standards of morality, where adherence to the doctrine of separation from non-Muslims is regarded as an indicator of faith. In the long term, the instrumentalization of unchecked, exclusive interpretations in the digital sphere has the potential to facilitate what sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar calls “cognitive radicalization.” Although this type of radicalization does not always lead to physical violence, it systematically undermines the foundations of social cohesion, inclusive citizenship, and public deliberative spaces within a multicultural society.⁶⁵

G. Conclusion

A critical discourse analysis of the *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* (loyalty and disavowal) narrative on the Rodja TV YouTube channel reveals that the digitization of exegesis has become a medium that facilitates both the reduction and simplification of theological doctrines into rigid, closed ideological instruments.

⁶³ Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah Wa al-Manhaj*, vol. 5, 319-325.

⁶⁴ Dirk-Martin Grube, “What Is Wrong with Exclusivism? Religious Exclusivism between Epistemic Overconfidence and Epistemic Humility,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 96, no. 2 (October 2024): 109–23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-024-09917-1>.

⁶⁵ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Radicalization. Translated by Jane Marie Todd* (New York: The New Press, 2015), 82.

Through structured linguistic mechanisms of exclusion and systematic pejorative labeling, the concepts of loyalty and disassociation are constructed in a binary manner to assert an absolute social dichotomy between the in-group (the Salafi community) and the out-group (non-Muslims and mainstream Muslims). Such discursive practices are supported by the authority of preachers who naturalize claims of singular truth, reduce the space for public deliberation, and foster epistemic dependence among audiences segregated into algorithmic enclaves.

Epistemologically, the construction of an exclusive interpretation in the digital sphere has been shown to deviate from the depth of analysis offered by authoritative exegetes, including Ibn 'Āshūr and Wahbah al-Zuhāilī. While authoritative exegesis positions *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* solely as a filter for affirming *tauḥīd* (monotheism) that continues to guarantee the public interest, justice, and universal human ethics, Salafi digital *da'wah* (lecture) shifts this paradigm into a justification for social antagonism and identity politics. This phenomenon confirms the occurrence of a process of religious deculturation and mediatization—a condition in which sacred texts are detached from hermeneutic rationality and their original historical context, only to be subsequently modified into instant, consumable populist dogma.

At the macro-sociopolitical level, the normalization of this binary discourse poses a significant systemic challenge to Indonesia's multicultural social order. The transformation of *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* from a principle of doctrinal purification into an instrument of social antagonism reflects the escalation of broader conservative tendencies within the contemporary religious landscape. In the digital space, the reproduction of exclusionary narratives through algorithmically mediated religious content contributes to affective polarization, narrows the space for civic deliberation, and reinforces segmented forms of religious identity. These findings indicate that the mediatization of religious discourse in the contemporary digital environment has significant

implications for the configuration of authority, social cohesion, and democratic culture in pluralistic societies.

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