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"One Human Family" and Interfaith Greetings: President Prabowo's Islamic Normativity vis a vis the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI) Edict

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Abstract

This article examines how Islamic normativity is constructed and contested through interfaith greetings in President Prabowo Subianto's address at the United Nations General Assembly and the 2024 Indonesian Ulema Council edict (*fatwa*) on relations with followers of other religions. The article analyzes them as symbolic practices located between state diplomacy and Islamic legal authority. Using a qualitative interpretive case-study design and directed qualitative content analysis, the study examines the official transcript of the presidential speech and the full text of the *fatwa* through four analytical categories: normative construction, rhetorical-diplomatic function, *fatwa* reasoning, and patterns of convergence and divergence. The findings show that Prabowo's interfaith greetings and "one human family" rhetoric function as diplomatic speech acts that present Indonesia as a plural Muslim-majority state committed to peace, recognition, and global fraternity. By contrast, the *fatwa* constructs certain interfaith greetings as potentially devotional utterances that require legal-theological evaluation to protect Islamic monotheism (*tawḥīd*), worship boundaries, and confessional clarity.

Keywords: Islamic normativity, interfaith greetings, Prabowo Subianto UN speech, MUI 2024 fatwa, Indonesian religious pluralism, diplomatic theology

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Introduction

President Prabowo Subianto's address at the United Nations General Assembly provides a striking entry point for examining the contested place of interfaith greetings in contemporary Indonesian Islam. In a global diplomatic forum, Prabowo employed an extended sequence of interfaith greetings and repeatedly invoked the language of "one human family" as part of Indonesia's moral vocabulary before an international audience [2]. Through this performance, Indonesia was presented not merely as a Muslim-majority state, but as a plural nation capable of translating its religious diversity into a diplomatic language of peace, coexistence, and shared humanity. This pattern resonates with studies of Indonesian religious diplomacy and public diplomacy, which show how religious plurality can be incorporated into a state's international repertoire and moral self-presentation [3]. Yet this diplomatic performance stands in tension with a recent domestic Islamic legal development: the 2024 Indonesian Ulema Council's (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) *fatwa* on relations with followers of other religions, which restricts and prohibits certain forms of interfaith greetings when they are understood as prayers specific to other religious traditions [4].

This tension is analytically significant because greetings are not merely linguistic ornaments. Studies of religion and diplomacy show that religious symbols, gestures, and carefully performed forms of address can function as instruments of recognition, reconciliation, and political communication in plural settings [5]. In Indonesia's multireligious public sphere, interfaith greetings operate at several overlapping levels: as everyday civility, as a ritualized expression of recognition, as a political performance of national pluralism, and, in Islamic legal discourse, as potentially normative utterances with theological consequences [6]. What

[2] Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025; United Nations 2025.
[3] Radwan and Alfani 2022; Ridwan, Hanan, and Astuti 2024.
[4] MUI 2024.
[5] Petito 2022; Piwko 2025.
[6] Dharta et al. 2025; Nasution et al. 2024.

appears in one setting as courtesy or diplomatic inclusion may be understood in another as devotional participation or doctrinal compromise, especially when greeting formulas are interpreted as prayers or religious invocations [7]. The controversy over interfaith greetings therefore reveals a broader question: how does Islamic normativity interact with the diplomatic and civic language of pluralism when both claim to regulate the ethics of public speech?

The problem becomes more acute when interfaith greetings are performed by a Muslim head of state before an international audience. Presidential speeches at the United Nations and other multilateral forums do not merely communicate policy; they also construct a moral image of the nation. Religious language, symbolic gestures, and references to shared humanity can function as tools of public diplomacy, especially for states that seek to present themselves as contributors to global peace and interreligious coexistence. Studies of religion in international mediation show that religious symbols can facilitate communication across divides, although they may also be misunderstood, contested, or politicized in conflict settings [8]. In this context, Prabowo's interfaith greetings and "one human family" narrative should be read as a diplomatic speech act: a performative attempt to position Indonesia as deeply religious, plural, and globally responsible.

Indonesia is a particularly important location for examining this issue. As the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia has long projected itself as a model of religious pluralism and democratic coexistence [9]. This image has been cultivated through state policies, interreligious forums, and public diplomacy initiatives that present Indonesian Islam as compatible with peace, democracy, and plural citizenship. Under previous administrations, especially those of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Joko Widodo, the vocabulary of "moderate

[7] MUI 2024.
[8] Posada-Téllez 2024.
[9] Bianda et al. 2025; Black 2022.

Islam" and "religious moderation" became part of Indonesia's international and domestic repertoire. In this article, however, "Indonesia's moderate Islam" is not treated as a single doctrinal school or a stable theological category. It refers instead to a state-facing and internationally projected discourse that presents Indonesian Islam as tolerant, anti-extremist, plural, and supportive of interreligious coexistence.

Prabowo's UN speech should therefore not be read as a simple continuation of the same "moderate Islam" project developed under Yudhoyono and Jokowi. Rather, it displays a rhetorical continuity with Indonesia's pluralist diplomatic tradition while articulating that tradition through a different vocabulary. Prabowo does not primarily rely on the bureaucratic language of "religious moderation"; instead, he frames Indonesia's religious plurality through the diplomatic-humanitarian language of "one human family" [10]. This distinction is important because it prevents the article from assuming that all Indonesian presidents use the same ideological grammar when speaking about Islam, pluralism, and the international order [11]. Prabowo's speech is better understood as a specific diplomatic performance that draws on Indonesia's pluralist reputation while adapting it to his own international self-presentation.

At the same time, Indonesia's domestic Islamic legal field provides a different normative grammar. The 2024 MUI *fatwa* on interreligious relations reiterates the need to distinguish between permissible social interaction and impermissible participation in the religious symbols or prayers of others [12]. In the *fatwa*'s logic, interfaith greetings are not treated merely as civic courtesy or diplomatic etiquette. They may carry a devotional dimension because greetings can function as prayers, invocations of blessing, or religiously marked utterances. The *fatwa* thus relocates the practice of greeting from the domain of public civility to the

[10] Bianda et al. 2025; Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025.
[11] Bianda et al. 2026.
[12] MUI 2024.

domain of Islamic legal-theological boundary-making. Its concern is not simply whether Muslims may respect non-Muslims, but whether such respect may be expressed through formulas that MUI understands as belonging to the devotional vocabulary of other religious traditions.

This position has generated debate in Indonesia because it intersects with state projects of religious management and civic pluralism. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has promoted religious moderation as a policy framework that seeks to balance commitment to one's own religion with respect for others in a plural nation-state [13]. Major Islamic organizations have also developed civic Islamic arguments that affirm the political equality of non-Muslim citizens. Nahdlatul Ulama, for example, has offered alternative political theologies that reject older doctrinal framings of non-Muslims as permanent outsiders and instead affirm equal citizenship within the Indonesian nation-state [14]. Muhammadiyah has likewise contributed to this civic Islamic discourse through its formulation of the state ideology of Pancasila as *Dar al-'Ahdi wa al-Syahadah*, national covenant and ethical witness. This framework affirms Indonesia as a shared political home in which Muslim citizenship is articulated not through the exclusion of non-Muslims, but through participation in a plural national agreement [15]. At the level of Islamic legal reasoning, Muhammadiyah's *Tarjih* discourse also distinguishes between theological boundaries and permissible cooperation with non-Muslims in worldly social affairs (*muamalah-dunyawiyyah*) [16].

Existing scholarship has addressed several aspects of this broader problem. One body of literature examines religion, diplomacy, and the international order, showing how religious actors and symbols may be mobilized for peacebuilding, reconciliation, and public diplomacy [17]. Another strand analyzes Indonesia's promotion of religious moderation

[13] Kaunda, Niteh, and Ahmad 2025.
[14] Ahmad 2022; Butt 2020.
[15] Muhammadiyah 2021.
[16] Muhammadiyah 2021.
[17] Petito 2022; Piwko 2025.

through initiatives such as the World Peace Forum and R-20, showing how Indonesian Islam is packaged and projected for international audiences as a resource for global peace and dialogue [18]. A further strand examines Islamic normativity, legal reasoning, and the challenge of articulating Islamic positions that remain both historically informed and normatively committed [19].

More specifically, recent studies on interfaith greetings in Indonesia have begun to highlight that the controversy is not simply about verbal etiquette. It concerns the boundary between religious purity, social tolerance, civic coexistence, communication across difference, and the risk of syncretism [20]. These studies are significant because they demonstrate that greetings are symbolically dense: they are short utterances, but they carry legal, theological, political, and social meanings. However, much of this scholarship focuses either on the *fatwa* itself, on domestic public reactions, or on general debates about religious moderation. Less attention has been paid to the way the same symbolic practice appears in a globally visible act of presidential diplomacy. The relationship between a presidential performance of interfaith recognition and a contemporaneous Islamic legal restriction on interfaith greetings remains under-explored.

This article addresses that gap by comparing two normative registers that operate around the same symbolic practice: President Prabowo's diplomatic use of interfaith greetings and "one human family" rhetoric at the United Nations, and the 2024 MUI *fatwa*'s restriction of interfaith greetings as a matter of Islamic legal-theological boundary-making. The article does not ask only whether interfaith greetings are permissible or prohibited. Instead, it asks how the meaning of greeting is constructed, authorized, and contested across different institutional settings. In doing so, the article moves beyond a binary *halal-haram*

[18] Chan 2023; Riadi et al. 2024.
[19] Coppens 2022; Koto, Malik, and Syarifudin 2025.
[20] Dharta et al. 2025; Nasution et al. 2024.

debate and examines how state diplomacy and Islamic legal authority assign different normative functions to the same verbal act.

The article advances three main arguments. First, Prabowo's interfaith greetings function as diplomatic speech acts that project Indonesia's pluralist identity before an international audience and frame religious diversity within the ethical language of shared humanity. Second, the 2024 MUI *fatwa* constructs interfaith greetings through a different normative grammar by locating them within the boundaries of prayer, worship, and protection against religious syncretism. Third, the tension between these two registers does not simply represent a contradiction between state and religion. Rather, it reveals a dual configuration of Islamic normativity in contemporary Indonesia, in which diplomatic pragmatics, civic ethics, and *fatwa* authority converge and diverge depending on audience, institutional setting, and the meaning assigned to the act of greeting.

By placing Prabowo's UN speech and the 2024 MUI *fatwa* in the same analytical frame, this article contributes to scholarship on Islamic normativity, *fatwa* studies, and religious diplomacy. It shows that interfaith greetings are not marginal ceremonial gestures, but sites where competing authorities define the limits of Muslim engagement with religious others. The case also demonstrates that Islamic normativity in Indonesia is not produced by religious authorities alone. It is negotiated across multiple arenas, including state diplomacy, public policy, Islamic organizations, and *fatwa* institutions. This layered configuration helps explain why the same greeting may be celebrated as diplomatic inclusion in one context and problematized as theological transgression in another.

Method

This study employs a qualitative interpretive case-study design using directed qualitative content analysis. This design is appropriate

because the article examines how two primary texts construct the meaning and normative force of the same symbolic practice: interfaith greetings. Directed qualitative content analysis is used because interpretation is guided by pre-established conceptual categories derived from the article's framework, namely normative construction, rhetorical-diplomatic function, *fatwa* reasoning, and convergence/divergence between state diplomacy and Islamic legal authority [21]. Rather than treating the texts as neutral repositories of information, the study analyzes how religious, legal, and diplomatic meanings are produced through language, institutional authority, and audience orientation.

The case of President Prabowo Subianto's address at the United Nations General Assembly is selected as a critical case because it brings together three analytically significant elements. First, it is a globally visible act of Indonesian presidential diplomacy. Second, it contains an extended sequence of interfaith greetings and repeated references to "one human family" as part of Indonesia's international moral vocabulary [22]. Third, it can be read alongside the 2024 MUI *fatwa* on relations with followers of other religions, particularly the provisions on interfaith greetings (*Fikih Salam Lintas Agama*) [23]. This case is therefore not chosen because it is statistically representative, but because it is theoretically revealing: it condenses the encounter between state diplomacy, public religious language, and Islamic legal authority in contemporary Indonesia.

The primary data consist of two textual corpora. The first is the official transcript of President Prabowo's UN General Assembly speech, with particular attention to the sections containing interfaith greetings, references to Indonesia's religious plurality, and the "one human family" frame. The second is the official text of the 2024 MUI *fatwa* on Guidelines for Relations with Followers of Other Religions, especially the section regulating interfaith greetings. Secondary sources are used to

[21] Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Krippendorff 2019; Schreier 2012.
[22] Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025; United Nations 2025.
[23] MUI 2024.

contextualize the analysis, not to substitute for primary textual interpretation. These sources include academic works on *fatwa* studies, Islamic normativity, Indonesian religious moderation, interfaith greetings, religious diplomacy, and political rhetoric. This distinction between primary and secondary materials is important because the article seeks to produce its own interpretation of the speech and *fatwa* rather than relying mainly on existing commentaries.

The unit of analysis is the normative construction of interfaith greetings in two institutional settings: presidential diplomacy and Islamic *fatwa* authority. The analysis is organized around four categories. The first category, normative construction, examines whether greetings are framed as prayer, worship, civic politeness, national pluralism, diplomatic recognition, or interreligious participation. The second category, rhetorical-diplomatic function, analyzes how greetings operate in the presidential speech to construct ethos, align with an international audience, project Indonesia's plural identity, and support the broader "one human family" narrative. The third category, *fatwa* reasoning, examines how the MUI *fatwa* justifies its ruling through concepts such as monotheism (*tawḥīd*), submission to God (*ubudiyyah*), tolerance, syncretism, the principles of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*), and boundary maintenance. The fourth category, convergence/divergence, compares how the presidential speech and the *fatwa* overlap, differ, or speak past each other in assigning meaning and normative authority to interfaith greetings.

The analytical procedure involved four steps. First, the relevant passages in Prabowo's speech and the MUI *fatwa* were identified and extracted. In the speech, attention was given to the sequence of greetings, the placement of those greetings within the broader structure of the address, and the connection between interfaith recognition and the "one human family" frame. In the *fatwa*, attention was given to the legal ruling, scriptural reasoning, conceptual distinctions, and the boundary drawn

between permissible social interaction and impermissible religious participation. Second, these passages were coded according to the four analytical categories described above. Third, the coded materials were compared across the two texts to identify patterns of convergence and divergence. Fourth, the results were organized into an analytical matrix that explains how state diplomacy and *fatwa* normativity assign different functions to the same verbal act.

An Islamic jurisprudential (*fiqh*)-oriented reading was used within the category of *fatwa* reasoning. This reading examined how the *fatwa* constructs the legal status of interfaith greetings by identifying the relevant object of ruling, the underlying rationale, and the relationship between doctrinal protection and social coexistence. Concepts such as *tawḥīd*, *ubudiyyah*, *muʿāmalah*, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, and *sadd al-dharīʿah* were treated not as abstract doctrinal references, but as interpretive tools through which MUI defines the limits of Muslim participation in the religious language of others. Similarly, rhetorical analysis was used within the category of diplomatic function to examine audience, context, lexical choices, sequencing, and the symbolic role of greetings in Prabowo's construction of Indonesia as a plural and globally responsible Muslim-majority state.

To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied document-based triangulation and transparent coding procedures [24]. The official speech transcript was checked against available official and media records, while the MUI *fatwa* was read alongside explanatory statements and relevant scholarly discussions. Key Arabic and Indonesian terms were examined carefully to avoid reducing them to overly simple English equivalents. The coding process was documented through an audit trail that recorded how textual segments were assigned to analytical categories and how interpretive claims were derived from the primary texts.

[24] Bowen 2009.

This study has limitations. Its reliance on textual data means that it does not examine public reception, elite interviews, or the lived experience of Muslims and non-Muslims who encounter interfaith greetings in everyday settings. Its focus on one presidential speech and one *fatwa* also prevents broad generalization across all forms of Islamic normativity in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the case is analytically valuable because it reveals how a single symbolic practice can be constructed differently across institutional arenas. By comparing presidential diplomacy and *fatwa* authority, the study shows how Islamic normativity is not merely applied to public life, but actively negotiated through competing yet overlapping forms of religious, civic, and diplomatic reasoning.

Result and Discussion: Interfaith Greetings and the "One Human Family" Frame in Presidential Diplomacy

A directed qualitative content analysis of President Prabowo Subianto's address at the United Nations General Assembly shows that interfaith greetings and the "one human family" frame are not incidental ceremonial embellishments. They form part of the rhetorical architecture through which Indonesia is presented as a plural, peace-oriented, Muslim-majority state before an international audience [25]. The speech begins and ends with a layered sequence of greetings drawn from Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and local religious-cultural vocabularies. This sequence performs two functions simultaneously. First, it acknowledges Indonesia's multireligious composition. Second, it converts that domestic plurality into a diplomatic vocabulary of recognition, coexistence, and global moral responsibility.

The use of these greetings resonates with what this article refers to as Indonesia's "moderate Islam" discourse. In this context, "moderate Islam" does not refer to a fixed doctrinal school or a unified theological

[25] Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025; United Nations 2025.

position. It refers to a state-facing and internationally projected discourse that presents Indonesian Islam as tolerant, plural, anti-extremist, and compatible with democracy, interreligious coexistence, and global peace. This discourse has appeared in initiatives such as the World Peace Forum and R-20, where religious symbols and Islamic ethical vocabularies are mobilized as instruments of public diplomacy [26]. Prabowo's speech should not be read as a simple repetition of the same moderate Islam framework developed under previous administrations. Rather, it shows rhetorical continuity with Indonesia's pluralist diplomatic tradition while articulating that tradition through the language of "one human family."

The greetings in the speech therefore serve functions that extend beyond politeness. They operate as diplomatic speech acts: short verbal performances that produce recognition, establish rapport, and position the speaker within a moral community. As shown in Table 1, the opening greetings build an inclusive communicative frame before the substantive political message begins. The closing greetings, by contrast, transform the end of the speech into a broader benediction of peace and divine blessing. The movement from "Assalamu'alaikum" to "May God bless us all, may peace be upon us" allows the speech to remain rooted in a religious register while expanding toward a universal theistic and humanitarian tone.

[26] Ridwan, Hanan, and Astuti 2024.

Table 1: Structure and rhetorical functions of interfaith greetings in President Prabowo's UN speech

Position in speech	Greeting formulae	Referenced traditions	Primary content	Rhetorical/ diplomatic function
Opening	"Assalamu'alaikum", "Shalom", "Salve", "Om Swastiastu", "Salam Kebajikan", "Rahayu"	Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, local beliefs	Respectful salutation and prayer for a diverse audience	Establishing initial rapport and projecting Indonesia's plural religious identity
Closing	"Wassalamu'alaikum", "Shalom", "Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om", "Namo Buddhaya", "Thank you", "May God bless us all, may peace be upon us"	Islam, Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, broader international–theistic register	Concluding blessing and universal benediction	Ending the speech with a religious–universal tone and a message of global unity and peace

Table 1 indicates that the greetings are carefully placed at the threshold points of the speech: the beginning and the end. This placement matters. Openings and closings are not neutral textual locations; they frame how the audience receives the speaker and how the speech's moral message is remembered. Studies of greeting practices in Turkish, Arabic, and Akan speech communities show that greetings and farewells are

embedded in cultural and religious histories and help establish a particular interactional frame [27]. In diplomatic and religious speeches, similar openings and closings often become strategic moments for signalling respect, reducing distance, and shaping interreligious relations [28]. In Prabowo's speech, this interactional function is elevated into a diplomatic performance: Indonesia's internal religious diversity is displayed as a resource for international moral authority.

The repeated invocation of "one human family" provides the ideological lens through which the greeting sequence should be interpreted. The phrase converts religious plurality into a wider moral claim: that differences of religion, race, nationality, and political interest must be subordinated to a shared human responsibility. Within the speech, the greetings do not merely acknowledge separate religious communities; they prepare the audience for a universalist claim about human solidarity. This motif aligns with broader global discourses on covenantal pluralism and shared human responsibility, which encourage communities and states to move beyond passive tolerance toward durable coexistence across deep difference [29].

In this sense, Prabowo's "one human family" rhetoric functions as both a cosmopolitan moral slogan and an interpretive key for the interfaith greetings. The greetings are not presented as isolated ritual formulas, but as performative gestures within a larger narrative of peace, unity, and mutual responsibility. Empirical studies of pluralism in Indonesia, including studies of Balun Village and Lombok, show that narratives of unity in diversity become socially meaningful when they are anchored in practices of accommodation, education, and everyday coexistence [30]. Prabowo's speech translates this domestic pluralist imagination into an international diplomatic idiom.

[27] Agyekum 2024; Dulayeva, Mamedova, and Khalel 2023.
[28] Belyakov and Maksimenko 2020.
[29] Stewart, Seiple, and Hoover 2020; Tang 2025.
[30] Mu'ti 2023; Wulandari et al. 2025.

This analysis also reveals the source of the later normative tension with the 2024 MUI *fatwa*. In the presidential speech, interfaith greetings function as diplomatic recognition and national self-presentation. They help Indonesia appear religiously rooted and globally inclusive at the same time. In the MUI *fatwa*, however, similar greeting formulas may be interpreted through a different normative lens, especially when they are understood as prayers or religious invocations belonging to other traditions [31]. The same verbal act therefore carries different meanings depending on institutional setting, audience, and normative authority. In the UN setting, the greetings perform inclusion; in the *fatwa* setting, they raise questions about devotional boundaries and the protection of *tawḥīd*.

Thus, the first major finding of this section is that Prabowo's interfaith greetings are best understood as diplomatic speech acts embedded in the "one human family" frame. They project Indonesia as a Muslim-majority country that seeks to transform religious plurality into international moral capital. However, this diplomatic function does not exhaust their meaning. Precisely because greetings may also carry prayerful and theological meanings, they become vulnerable to contestation when read through Islamic legal categories. This dual character explains why the same practice can be celebrated as a gesture of global pluralism in presidential diplomacy and problematized as a matter of religious boundary-making in *fatwa* discourse.

The Normative Construction of Interfaith Greetings in the 2024 MUI *Fatwa*

If President Prabowo's UN speech constructs interfaith greetings as diplomatic recognition, the 2024 MUI *fatwa* constructs them through a different normative grammar. The *fatwa* does not treat greetings primarily as neutral social etiquette. Instead, it evaluates them as utterances that may carry religious, devotional, and theological meanings. This shift is crucial. Once greetings are understood as prayers or invocations of

[31] MUI 2024.

blessing rooted in specific religious traditions, they are no longer located merely in the domain of civic politeness. They become objects of Islamic legal assessment, especially when they are associated with acts of worship (*ʿibādah*), doctrinal affirmation, or the symbolic vocabulary of another religion [32].

The *fatwa*'s primary concern is the protection of *tawḥīd* and the prevention of religious ambiguity. It revisits earlier MUI positions, including the 1981 cautionary note against Muslim participation in religious greetings or ceremonies that may affirm the doctrines of other traditions, but it gives the issue a more explicit typology in the context of contemporary Indonesian public life [33]. The object of regulation is not all forms of interreligious communication, nor all forms of courtesy toward non-Muslims. Rather, the *fatwa* focuses on greeting formulas that are considered religious, prayerful, or doctrinally specific in nature. This distinction allows the *fatwa* to affirm social coexistence while limiting the symbolic forms through which such coexistence may be expressed.

[32] MUI 2024.
[33] Kaunda, Niteh, and Ahmad 2025; MUI 2024.

Table 2: Typology of interfaith greeting practices and their legal status in the 2024 MUI *fatwa*

Type of greeting practice	Character of greeting	Legal status in the *fatwa*	Main normative consideration
Pronouncing a distinctive greeting of another religion as a prayer	Ritualized utterance containing specific doctrinal or devotional content	Prohibited (*ḥarām*)	Preserving the purity of *tawḥīd* and avoiding participation in the prayer or worship vocabulary of another religion
Combining multiple religious greetings in a single sequence	Symbolic public formula perceived as including cross-religious prayer elements	Not accepted as a valid form of Islamic tolerance	Risk of mixing religious symbols, producing doctrinal ambiguity (*shubuhāt*), and normalizing syncretic forms of public religiosity
Using a general, non-specific greeting	Social etiquette, theologically neutral in wording	Permitted within limits	Maintaining good relations and civic respect without obscuring confessional boundaries

Table 2 shows that the *fatwa*'s reasoning is not built on a rejection of social interaction with followers of other religions. Rather, it is built on a distinction between religiously neutral forms of greeting and devotional

formulas that the *fatwa* understands as belonging to the religious language of another community. General greetings, such as ordinary national or civic salutations, are allowed because they function as social etiquette and do not require Muslims to utter the prayer formulas of other religions. By contrast, distinctive greetings that carry the character of prayer or worship are prohibited because they are interpreted as crossing from social customs (*muʿāmalah*) into the domain of devotional participation [34].

This distinction reflects a broader juristic logic that differentiates between acts of worship and social customs. In Islamic legal reasoning, *ʿibādah* is usually governed by a stricter standard because it requires textual authorization and is closely tied to the protection of belief. Social interaction, by contrast, is generally more flexible for as long as it does not violate core religious commitments. The *fatwa* draws on this logic by treating some greetings as ordinary social speech and others as religiously consequential utterances. Concepts such as *sadd al-dharīʿah* help explain this caution: practices that may appear minor at the level of wording can be restricted if they are believed to lead to doctrinal confusion, syncretism, or the gradual erosion of religious identity [35].

The key analytical point is that the *fatwa* constructs greetings as performative utterances. They do not merely express politeness; they may also enact prayer, recognition, and symbolic alignment. When a Muslim pronounces a greeting strongly associated with another tradition's devotional vocabulary, the *fatwa* reads the act not only at the level of surface language but also at the level of implied theology. The concern is that repeated use of such formulas in public Muslim speech may blur the boundary between respecting religious others and affirming the religious meanings embedded in their rituals. This explains why the *fatwa* treats the

[34] Dharta et al. 2025; MUI 2024.
[35] Abdelnour 2025; Mustafa 2022.

issue as a matter of *tawḥīd* and religious boundary maintenance, rather than as a question of etiquette alone [36].

At the same time, the *fatwa* does not reject the principles of peaceful coexistence, justice, or cooperation with followers of other religions. Its normative logic is more specific: Muslims may maintain good relations, act fairly, cooperate in shared social interests, and use general greetings that do not carry doctrinally specific religious meanings. What the *fatwa* rejects is the assumption that tolerance must be expressed through the adoption or repetition of the prayer formulas of other religions. In this respect, the *fatwa* articulates a model of differentiated coexistence: social relations may be inclusive, but ritual and devotional vocabularies should remain confessionally distinct. This nuance is often lost in public debates, where the *fatwa* is sometimes reduced to a simple prohibition of interfaith friendliness [37].

The public debate surrounding the *fatwa* also shows how interfaith greetings have become a site for negotiating religious identity within Indonesia's multicultural environment. The Ministry of Religious Affairs promotes religious moderation as a framework in which religious commitment and civic inclusivity are expected to coexist [38]. Empirical studies suggest that interreligious interaction among Muslims and non-Muslims can increase social, religious, and political tolerance, indicating that everyday friendship and cooperation may reduce anxieties about religious difference [39]. Historical cases of peaceful coexistence, such as relations between Minang Muslims and Nias Christians, also show that communities can negotiate boundaries through mutual respect and practical accommodation [40].

[36] MUI 2024; Nasution et al. 2024.
[37] Dalimunthe, Erwani, and Syam 2025.
[38] Dharta et al. 2025.
[39] Prasetyo and Halimatusa'diyah 2024.
[40] Ashadi and Sefriyono 2023.

Thus, the second major finding of this article is that the 2024 MUI *fatwa* constructs interfaith greetings as a boundary-sensitive practice. The *fatwa* does not simply ask whether Muslims may be polite to non-Muslims. It asks which verbal forms of politeness remain compatible with Islamic monotheism and which forms risk being interpreted as participation in another religion's devotional language. This produces a normative model that differs sharply from the diplomatic logic of Prabowo's UN speech. In presidential diplomacy, interfaith greetings perform recognition and pluralist inclusion; in the *fatwa*, they are filtered through legal-theological concerns about prayer, worship, and the protection of *tawḥīd*. The same verbal act is therefore assigned different meanings depending on whether it is read through the register of state diplomacy or through the register of Islamic legal authority.

Convergences, Divergences, and the Dual-Track Configuration of Normativity

Reading President Prabowo's UN speech and the 2024 MUI *fatwa* side by side reveals what this article refers to as a dual-track configuration of Islamic normativity in contemporary Indonesia. By dual-track configuration, this article means the simultaneous operation of two institutional registers of normativity: the diplomatic-civic register of the state and the legal-theological register of *fatwa* authority. Both registers address the ethics of Muslim engagement with religious others, but they do so through different vocabularies, audiences, sources of legitimacy, and normative expectations. This distinction emerges from the comparison between Prabowo's use of interfaith greetings and "one human family" rhetoric in a global diplomatic setting and the MUI's legal-theological restriction of certain interfaith greetings in the context of Muslim religious guidance [41].

[41] MUI 2024; United Nations 2025.

The following matrix is derived from the directed qualitative content analysis described in the Method section. It operationalizes the article's conceptual framework into several comparative dimensions: the function of interfaith greetings, the framework of fraternity, the basis of legitimacy, audience orientation, boundary logic, and normative outcome. These dimensions are not intended as an abstract model detached from the data. They are constructed from the coding of the two primary texts and from the methodological logic of directed qualitative content analysis, in which pre-established analytical categories guide the interpretation of textual data [42]. The matrix therefore explains how the same symbolic practice, namely interfaith greetings, is constructed differently when read through presidential diplomacy and Islamic *fatwa* reasoning [43].

Table 3: Comparative dimensions of the presidential speech and the 2024 MUI *fatwa*

Dimension	Presidential speech	2024 MUI *fatwa*	Convergence	Divergence
Function of greetings	Diplomatic recognition and projection of plural identity	Potential prayer, worship, or creed-related utterance	Both value peaceful interreligious relations	Diplomacy reads greetings as etiquette; *fatwa* reads them as potentially devotional
Fraternity framework	"One human family" as universal-	Fraternity (*ukhuwwah*) with distinctions between	Both affirm peace, justice,	Universal fraternity versus legal-

[42] Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Krippendorff 2019; Schreier 2012.
[43] Bowen 2009; MUI 2024.

	humanitarian solidarity	creed, worship, and social interaction	cooperation, and dignity	theological fraternity
Source of legitimacy	Constitution, Pancasila, national pluralism, and diplomatic norms	Qur'an, hadith, *fiqh* principles, and MUI authority	Both appeal to justice, harmony, and public good	Political-constitutional authority versus religious-legal authority
Audience	Global diplomatic and multireligious publics	Muslim community seeking legal-ethical guidance	Both address plural social realities	International public diplomacy versus internal Muslim discipline
Boundary logic	Recognition-based pluralism	Boundary-based coexistence	Both seek to prevent hostility	Symbolic inclusion versus caution against doctrinal ambiguity
Normative outcome	Greetings are authorized as diplomatic speech acts	Certain greetings are restricted or prohibited as religious prayers	Both regulate public religious language for harmony	Different rulings on the same verbal act

As shown in Table 3, the two texts converge at the level of broad ethical aspiration. Both affirm peace, justice, cooperation, and the need to avoid hostility among religious communities. Neither text imagines

interreligious relations primarily through conflict. The presidential speech frames these values through the language of "one human family," while the *fatwa* frames them through Islamic legal-theological distinctions between permissible social interaction and impermissible religious participation [44]. This convergence also resonates with broader Islamic and interfaith discourses that identify compassion, justice, and human dignity as shared ethical commitments supporting coexistence across religious boundaries [45].

The divergence becomes clear when the function and authority of greetings are examined. In the presidential speech, greetings function as diplomatic speech acts. They produce recognition, establish rapport with a global audience, and present Indonesia as a Muslim-majority state that is comfortable with religious plurality. Their legitimacy derives from a civic and diplomatic framework: Pancasila, constitutional pluralism, and international norms of respectful address. In the MUI *fatwa*, by contrast, greetings are evaluated through the grammar of Islamic legal reasoning. Their legitimacy depends on whether they remain within the boundaries of permissible social interaction or cross into prayer, worship, and doctrinally marked religious expression [46].

This difference does not mean that the presidential speech is simply pluralist while the *fatwa* is simply anti-pluralist. Such a binary would flatten the complexity of both texts. The more precise interpretation is that they organize coexistence through different normative logics. The presidential speech advances recognition-based pluralism: it publicly acknowledges multiple religious traditions as part of Indonesia's national and diplomatic identity. The *fatwa* advances boundary-based coexistence: it accepts social relations and cooperation with followers of other religions while restricting forms of expression that may be understood as

[44] MUI 2024; Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025.
[45] Ashafa, Raimi, and Bamiro 2025.
[46] Dharta et al. 2025; MUI 2024; Posada-Téllez 2024.

participation in their devotional vocabularies [47]. In other words, both texts seek social harmony, but they disagree on the symbolic means through which harmony should be performed.

This dual-track configuration reflects a broader pattern in Indonesian public Islam. State institutions, religious authorities, and civil society actors do not always produce a single unified grammar of Islamic normativity. Instead, they operate through overlapping but distinct registers. Public diplomacy may transform religious plurality into international moral capital, while *fatwa* institutions may define the doctrinal limits of Muslim participation in plural public rituals. Public agencies such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs attempt to mediate these tensions through the discourse of religious moderation, which seeks to balance commitment to one's own religious tradition with civic inclusivity and national cohesion [48].

The significance of this finding lies in showing that interfaith greetings are not a minor ceremonial issue. They are a test case for how Islamic norms are formed, authorized, and contested at the intersection of state diplomacy, *fatwa* authority, and plural citizenship. The same greeting can be read as diplomatic civility, national pluralist performance, religious prayer, or doctrinally risky participation, depending on the institutional setting and interpretive authority involved. This explains why the controversy cannot be resolved merely by asking whether interfaith greetings are socially polite or religiously prohibited. The deeper issue is who has the authority to define the normative meaning of public religious language [49].

The dual-track configuration also helps explain the fragility of the "one human family" frame in Muslim-majority diplomacy. As a diplomatic concept, "one human family" enables Indonesia to speak in a universal moral language that resonates with global audiences. As an Islamic

[47] Kaunda, Niteh, and Ahmad 2025; MUI 2024.
[48] Bianda et al. 2025; Ridwan, Hanan, and Astuti 2024.
[49] MUI 2024; Nasution et al. 2024.

normative problem, however, such universal language must still pass through questions of *tawḥīd*, worship, and religious boundary maintenance. The tension between these two registers does not necessarily indicate institutional contradiction. Rather, it reveals the layered character of Islamic normativity in contemporary Indonesia, where state diplomacy and *fatwa* authority may converge on coexistence while diverging on the permissible symbolic forms of that coexistence [50].

Diplomatic Theology, Interfaith Salutations and "One Human Family"

In this article, diplomatic theology refers to the strategic use of religiously resonant language, symbols, and moral claims in diplomatic contexts to construct recognition, legitimacy, and a moral vision of coexistence. President Prabowo Subianto's use of interfaith salutations and the "one human family" motif can be read through this lens. The speech does not present greetings as formal acts of worship or as legal-theological commitments. Instead, it frames them as diplomatic gestures that translate Indonesia's religious plurality into a public language of peace, fraternity, and global responsibility [51].

This diplomatic theology sits uneasily beside the juridical restrictions articulated by the 2024 MUI *fatwa*. In Prabowo's speech, interfaith salutations function as civic courtesy and global moral rhetoric. In the *fatwa*, however, similar formulas are evaluated through a legal and ritual lens, especially when they are understood as prayers or invocations associated with other religious traditions [52]. The tension is not simply between pluralism and anti-pluralism. It is a tension between two ways of regulating public religious language: diplomatic recognition on the one hand and legal-theological boundary maintenance on the other. This tension resonates with covenantal pluralism, which emphasizes the

[50] Bakir 2022; MUI 2024; Zahir 2023.
[51] Posada-Téllez 2024; Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025.
[52] Dharta et al. 2025; MUI 2024.

difficulty of sustaining peaceful coexistence where deep theological differences remain real and meaningful [53].

Prabowo's decision to include a long sequence of interfaith greetings at both the beginning and the end of his United Nations address can be interpreted as a deliberate recontextualization of such greetings. In the UN setting, the greetings are not presented as confessional markers of the speaker's own worship, but as signs of national representation and inclusive recognition. This approach reflects a broader pattern in religious diplomacy, where religious symbols are incorporated into state rhetoric to project moral seriousness, harmony, and social stability [54]. Comparative studies of civil religion and presidential rhetoric similarly show that leaders often draw on religious imagery to unify diverse constituencies and articulate shared moral purposes without necessarily endorsing a single denominational position [55].

The connection between Prabowo's speech and Indonesia's earlier promotion of "moderate Islam" must therefore be formulated carefully. Indonesian initiatives such as the World Peace Forum and R-20 have presented Indonesian Islam as a resource for interfaith dialogue, religious moderation, and global peace [56]. However, Prabowo's speech should not be read as a simple continuation of the same moderate Islam discourse associated with the Yudhoyono and Jokowi administrations. It shows rhetorical continuity at the level of pluralist self-presentation, but it uses a different diplomatic idiom. Prabowo does not primarily rely on the bureaucratic vocabulary of religious moderation. He frames Indonesia's pluralism through the universal-humanitarian language of "one human family" [57].

[53] Bajpai 2022.
[54] Petito 2022; Piwko 2025.
[55] Everton 2023; Squiers and Arsenault 2022.
[56] Chan 2023; Riadi et al. 2024.
[57] Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025; United Nations 2025.

This clarification is important because "moderate Islam" in Indonesia is not a single theological doctrine. It is better understood as a state-facing and internationally projected discourse that presents Indonesian Islam as tolerant, anti-extremist, plural, and compatible with democratic citizenship and interreligious coexistence [58]. Prabowo's speech participates in this broader diplomatic environment, but it does so by emphasizing human fraternity rather than by explicitly reproducing the policy language of religious moderation. The phrase "one human family" allows the speech to move from Indonesia's domestic plurality to a global ethical claim about solidarity, mutual responsibility, and shared humanity [59].

The "one human family" framework strengthens the diplomatic theology of the speech by reinterpreting religious and ethnic difference as part of a shared moral community. This frame echoes Qur'anic and humanistic visions of common human dignity, while also resonating with multicultural accounts that encourage societies to view difference not as a threat, but as part of a shared civic horizon [60]. In Prabowo's address, this language does not erase religious difference. Rather, it places difference within a wider moral vocabulary of coexistence. The speech therefore presents Indonesia as a Muslim-majority state that remains religiously rooted while seeking to speak in a universal language intelligible to global audiences [61].

At the same time, the diplomatic usefulness of this language also explains its vulnerability to critique. A phrase such as "one human family" can generate international recognition because it sounds inclusive, moral, and non-sectarian. Yet from the perspective of *fatwa* normativity, the same public use of interfaith religious formulas may raise concerns about doctrinal ambiguity, devotional participation, and the protection of *tawḥīd*

[58] Bianda et al. 2026; Ridwan, Hanan, and Astuti 2024.
[59] Stewart, Seiple, and Hoover 2020; Tang 2025.
[60] Mahajan 2025; Mostfa 2024.
[61] Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025; United Nations 2025.

[62]. Diplomatic theology therefore has a double effect. It enables religious language to support peace and pluralist recognition, but it also exposes that language to contestation when different authorities disagree about the boundary between civic symbolism and religious participation.

Thus, Prabowo's interfaith salutations and "one human family" rhetoric should be understood as a related but distinct diplomatic idiom within Indonesia's broader tradition of religious public diplomacy. The speech draws on Indonesia's pluralist reputation and its Muslim-majority identity, but it does not simply replicate the moderate Islam framework associated with earlier administrations. Its distinctive contribution lies in translating religious plurality into a universal-humanitarian language of fraternity. This is precisely why the speech is analytically important: it shows how diplomatic theology can expand the public meaning of religious symbols, while the 2024 MUI *fatwa* shows how Islamic legal authority can restrict that expansion in order to preserve confessional boundaries [63].

Fatwa, Boundary Guarding and Social Cohesion

Against this backdrop, the 2024 MUI *fatwa* emerges as a form of boundary guarding within Indonesia's plural public sphere. Boundary guarding refers here to the normative work of distinguishing between permissible social interaction and impermissible devotional participation. The *fatwa* does not reject interreligious coexistence as such. Rather, it seeks to regulate the symbolic forms through which coexistence is expressed, especially when those forms involve religiously marked greetings that may be understood as prayers or invocations belonging to other traditions [64].

[62] MUI 2024; Nasution et al. 2024.
[63] Chan 2023; MUI 2024.
[64] Dharta et al. 2025; MUI 2024.

The *fatwa*'s central concern is the preservation of *tawḥīd* and the prevention of doctrinal ambiguity. By classifying certain interfaith greetings as potentially related to prayer, worship, or religious affirmation, the *fatwa* imposes a stricter standard of evaluation than would apply to ordinary social customs. The issue is not whether Muslims may show respect to non-Muslims, but whether respect may be expressed through formulas that the *fatwa* understands as part of another religion's devotional vocabulary. This caution reflects the Islamic legal concern with preventing practices that may blur the distinction between belief and unbelief, worship and custom, or social courtesy and religious participation [65].

The model that emerges from the *fatwa* is one of differentiated coexistence. Social harmony is affirmed, but ritual and symbolic participation are carefully bounded. General greetings and national expressions of courtesy may be used because they function as civic etiquette and do not require Muslims to utter doctrinally specific prayers of other religions. By contrast, greetings that carry explicit religious or devotional meanings are restricted because they are seen as potentially compromising confessional clarity. This distinction parallels broader Islamic legal debates over the boundary between *ʿibādah* and *ʿādah*, or worship and custom, in which worship is normally treated as less open to innovation or borrowing than ordinary social practice [66].

At the same time, the *fatwa* should not be reduced to a rejection of social cohesion. It affirms justice, cooperation, and good relations with followers of other religions, while refusing to make ritual borrowing the measure of tolerance. In this sense, the *fatwa* offers a boundary-based model of social cohesion: Muslims may live, cooperate, and interact peacefully with religious others, but they are instructed to preserve the distinctiveness of Islamic devotional language. This model differs from the diplomatic logic of Prabowo's UN speech, which treats interfaith greetings

[65] Abdelnour 2025; MUI 2024; Mustafa 2022.
[66] Kaunda, Niteh, and Ahmad 2025; Kepplinger 2025.

as symbolic recognition and public inclusion within the "one human family" frame [67].

The tension between boundary guarding and social cohesion is also visible in Indonesia's wider institutional landscape. The Ministry of Religious Affairs promotes religious moderation as a framework for balancing religious commitment with civic inclusivity, while MUI's *fatwa* discourse emphasizes the need to protect doctrinal boundaries within plural public life. These two approaches are not simply oppositional. Both seek social harmony, but they differ in how they imagine the proper public expression of religious difference. The state tends to prioritize inclusive symbols that can be shared across communities, while the *fatwa* prioritizes confessional distinction as a condition for legitimate coexistence [68].

Local cases of interfaith harmony further show that social cohesion does not always require the erasure of religious boundaries. Studies of Balun Village and relations between Minang Muslims and Nias Christians demonstrate that communities may sustain coexistence through mutual accommodation, respect for distinctive customs, and practical cooperation, even when doctrinal differences remain intact [69]. These examples suggest that the *fatwa* represents one pole within a broader Indonesian negotiation over pluralism, not the only Islamic perspective on interfaith relations. Its contribution lies in insisting that social harmony must be pursued without dissolving the symbolic boundaries that many Muslims regard as essential to religious integrity.

Thus, the fifth finding of this article is that the 2024 MUI fatwa functions both as a mechanism of doctrinal protection and as a contested contribution to social cohesion. It protects *tawḥīd* by limiting Muslim participation in the devotional language of other religions, but it also leaves room for civic respect, cooperation, and general greetings that do

[67] MUI 2024; United Nations 2025.
[68] Dharta et al. 2025; Rahman 2024.
[69] Ashadi and Sefriyono 2023; Wulandari et al. 2025.

not carry specific theological content. This makes the *fatwa* part of Indonesia's dual-track configuration of normativity. Alongside the state's diplomatic and civic language of inclusion, *fatwa* authority articulates a boundary-based grammar of coexistence that seeks to preserve Muslim identity while still recognizing the practical need for peaceful relations in a multireligious society [70].

Dual-Track Normativity, Diplomacy, and Future Directions

Read together, President Prabowo's UN speech and the 2024 MUI *fatwa* show that Islamic normativity in Indonesia is not produced through a single institutional channel. It operates through a dual-track configuration in which state diplomacy and *fatwa* authority both seek social harmony but regulate public religious language through different logics. The speech places interfaith greetings in the civic and diplomatic sphere, where they function as symbols of recognition, plural identity, and global fraternity. The *fatwa*, by contrast, pulls certain greeting formulas into the orbit of prayer, worship, and creed, where they are evaluated according to stricter legal-theological standards [71].

This finding contributes to Islamic normativity studies by showing that Islamic norms are not reducible to formal law alone, even though law remains a powerful site of normative production. In the Indonesian case, Islamic normativity is shaped by *fatwa* reasoning, state policy, diplomatic rhetoric, public ethics, Islamic organizations, and everyday interreligious practice. Some approaches in Islamic studies emphasize formal legal authority, while others call attention to ethical, spiritual, sociological, and political expressions of Islam as part of the broader normative field [72]. The controversy over interfaith greetings confirms that these registers are not

[70] MUI 2024; Nasution et al. 2024.
[71] MUI 2024; Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025.
[72] Azatyan 2022.

isolated from one another. They overlap, compete, and sometimes redefine the meaning of the same symbolic act.

The Indonesian case also reflects broader patterns in Muslim-majority societies, where the public role of Islam is often negotiated rather than fixed. Studies of the MENA region show that political elites and religious actors frequently bargain over the authority to define Islam's public function, producing arrangements that shift with institutional and political contexts [73]. Debates about governance in Muslim-majority countries likewise suggest the need for discursive models that allow democratic procedures, Islamic legal reasoning, and plural public participation to interact without making one narrative final or exclusive [74]. Indonesia's own history, from the constitutional deferral of an Islamic state to the contemporary use of religious moderation and moderate Islam in public diplomacy, shows that Islamic normativity in a plural nation-state is historically layered and institutionally negotiated [75].

The diplomatic setting of the United Nations adds another layer to this negotiation. A globally broadcast presidential speech must address multiple audiences at once: international partners, domestic citizens, Muslim constituencies, religious minorities, and global institutions. Existing *fiqh* frameworks, which often developed around more localized forms of interaction, do not always account for the symbolic weight of such transnational diplomatic performances. Studies of religion in international mediation show that religion is frequently treated in overly simplified ways, even though it can function simultaneously as identity, ethical resource, conflict marker, and instrument of reconciliation [76]. This explains why Prabowo's greetings can be interpreted as responsible diplomatic

[73] Fahmi and Lahlou 2022.
[74] Zahir 2023.
[75] Omara 2024; Siregar and Sahrul 2022.
[76] Posada-Téllez 2024.

recognition in one setting and as theologically risky symbolic participation in another [77].

This dual-track configuration has practical implications for Indonesian public diplomacy and domestic religious governance. Public officials who speak in multireligious and international settings may need a more precise vocabulary that can express respect for religious plurality without necessarily borrowing devotional formulas from different traditions. At the same time, religious authorities may need to clarify how Muslims can show civic respect, diplomatic courtesy, and social solidarity without crossing boundaries that they consider doctrinally significant. Recent work on diplomacy as relational practice and ethics in international affairs suggests that attention to relationships, narratives, and moral responsibility can help religiously informed actors participate constructively in global politics [78]. In Indonesia, educational initiatives that promote pluralistic Islamic religious education may also prepare future leaders to maintain doctrinal conviction while engaging openly with religious others [79].

Future research should move beyond textual comparison and examine how different publics receive both Prabowo's speech and the 2024 MUI *fatwa*. Survey, interview, ethnographic, and media-based studies could investigate how ordinary Muslims, non-Muslim citizens, religious leaders, public officials, and younger Indonesians interpret interfaith greetings in everyday life. Previous studies suggest that interreligious contact is associated with greater tolerance, which means that lived experience may moderate the effects of restrictive rulings or official symbolic gestures [80]. Further research could also compare Prabowo's rhetoric with that of Yudhoyono and Jokowi, examine how the Ministry of Religious Affairs operationalizes religious moderation in public

[77] MUI 2024; Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025.
[78] Calfano and Umphres 2022; Qin 2020.
[79] Matin and Millie 2022; Mu'ti 2023.
[80] Prasetyo and Halimatusa'diyah 2024.

ceremonies, or compare MUI's reasoning with *fatwa* institutions in other Muslim-majority contexts [81].

Thus, interfaith greetings in Indonesia are more than a minor point of etiquette. They are a prism through which larger questions about Islamic normativity, state diplomacy, religious authority, and global human fraternity are refracted and contested. Prabowo's UN speech and the 2024 MUI *fatwa* show that Muslim-majority democracies must continually negotiate between recognition, doctrinal integrity, civic coexistence, and international representation. This negotiation does not produce a single settled answer. Instead, it reveals the layered and dynamic character of Islamic normativity in contemporary Indonesia [82].

Conclusion

This study has examined President Prabowo Subianto's UN General Assembly speech and the 2024 MUI *fatwa* on interfaith greetings as two primary texts through which Islamic normativity is constructed and contested in contemporary Indonesia. Through directed qualitative content analysis, the article shows that Prabowo's interfaith greetings and "one human family" rhetoric function as diplomatic speech acts that translate Indonesia's religious plurality into a global language of recognition, peace, and shared humanity. By contrast, the 2024 MUI *fatwa* constructs certain interfaith greetings as potentially devotional utterances that require legal-theological evaluation, especially in relation to *tawḥīd*, *ʿibādah*, and the prevention of religious ambiguity.

The main finding is that the tension between the presidential speech and the MUI *fatwa* is not best understood as a simple conflict between pluralism and anti-pluralism. Rather, it reveals a dual-track configuration of Islamic normativity. State diplomacy and *fatwa* authority share a broad ethical horizon of peace, justice, coexistence, and public

[81] Dalimunthe, Erwani, and Syam 2025; Dharta et al. 2025.
[82] MUI 2024; Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2025; United Nations 2025.

harmony, but they assign different meanings and limits to the same symbolic practice. In the diplomatic-civic register, interfaith greetings operate as public recognition and symbolic inclusion. In the legal-theological register, they are filtered through concerns about prayer, worship, doctrinal integrity, and confessional boundaries. This finding contributes to Islamic normativity studies, *Fatwa* Studies, and religious diplomacy by showing how a single verbal practice can become a site where law, theology, diplomacy, and plural citizenship intersect.

This study is limited by its focus on two elite texts and does not examine how ordinary Muslims, non-Muslim citizens, religious leaders, or public officials interpret interfaith greetings in everyday life. Future research should investigate public reception of both Prabowo's speech and the 2024 MUI *fatwa* through interviews, surveys, ethnography, and media analysis. Comparative studies could also examine how other Muslim-majority countries, religious councils, and political leaders negotiate similar tensions between diplomatic recognition, doctrinal boundaries, and civic coexistence. Such research would further clarify how interfaith greetings operate not merely as polite formulas, but as contested sites of Islamic normativity in plural societies.

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