Religious Moderation and the Struggle for Identity Through New Media: Study of the Indonesian Ahmadiyya Congregation

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the religious moderation promoted by Ahmadiyah through the website. The Ahmadiyah religious moderation discourse is related to the struggle for identity in the public sphere. This study is qualitative with documentation data collection techniques, namely digging documents containing religious moderation texts found on the Ahmadiyah website. The data are analyzed using a new media approach, which is an approach that sees a text that appears on a new media website as connected to the traditional text of the Holy Book. However, because website media texts relate to the offline world, external factors from social complexity also affect website text building. The results of the study indicate that internally the religious moderation text constructed by Ahmadiyah online comes from its ideology which is indeed fighting for peace and non-violence *jihad.* Meanwhile, externally, complex social realities in the midst of mainstream authorities and the state also contribute to the moderation text of the Ahmadiyya religion. The values of moderation promoted by Ahmadiyah are, first, supporting the strengthening of nationality by developing the concept of a spiritual and moral caliphate, not a political and militaristic caliphate. Second, strengthening peace and non-violence by encouraging *jihad* with a pen *(jihad bi al-qalam)* in response to various emerging social issues. Third, strengthening religious tolerance and freedom by emphasizing openness, not coercion in religion. Fourth, strengthening the existence of local culture by optimizing universal Islamic teachings. In the context of the Ahmadiyya as a minority, the discourse on religious moderation can be said to be an effort to struggle for Ahmadiyya identity in the public sphere in the midst of the mainstream and state authorities. However, this identity struggle seems to be hampered by the problem of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's (MGA) prophetic position. Therefore, a more massive dialogue is needed with the local Muslim mainstream.

Keywords: Identity Struggle; Indonesian Ahmadiyya Congregation (JAI); New Media; Religious Moderation.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji moderasi beragama yang dipromosikan oleh Ahmadiyah melalui website. Diskursus moderasi beragama Ahmadiyah berkaitan dengan usaha perjuangan identitas di ruang publik. Studi ini merupakan studi kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data dokumentasi, yaitu menggali dokumen yang memuat teks moderasi beragama yang terdapat di website Ahmadiyah. Data dianalisis dengan pendekatan media baru *(new media),* yaitu pendekatan yang melihat bahwa sebuah teks yang muncul di media baru website terhubung dengan teks tradisional kitab suci. Namun, karena teks media website berhubungan dengan dunia offline, maka faktor-faktor eksternal dari kompleksitas sosial juga memengaruhi bangunan teks website. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan, bahwa secara internal teks moderasi beragama Ahmadiyah berasal dari ideologi Ahmadiyah yang memang memperjuangkan kedamaian dan jihad *non-violence.* Sementara itu, secara eksternal, realitas sosial yang kompleks di tengah otoritas mainstream dan negara juga

turut membentuk teks moderasi beragama Ahmadiyah. Nilai moderasi yang dipromosikan Ahmadiyah adalah *pertama,* mendukung penguatan kebangsaan dengan mengembangkan konsep *khilafah* rohaniyah dan akhlak, bukan khilafah politik dan militeristik. *Kedua,* penguatan perdamaian dan anti-kekerasan dengan mendorong *jihad* dengan pena dalam merespons berbagai isu sosial yang berkembang. *Ketiga,* penguatan toleransi dan kebebasan beragama dengan menekankan keterbukaan bukan pemaksaan dalam beragama. *Keempat,* penguatan eksistensi budaya lokal dengan optimalisasi ajaran Islam universal. Dalam konteks Ahmadiyah sebagai minoritas, diskursus moderasi beragama dapat dikatakan sebagai upaya perjuangan identitas Ahmadiyah di ruang publik di tengah mainstream dan otoritas negara. Namun, perjuangan identitas ini tampak masih terkendala oleh persoalan posisi kenabian Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (MGA). Karena itu, diperlukan dialog yang lebih massif dengan mainstream Muslim lokal.

Kata Kunci: Perjuangan Identitas; Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI); Media Baru; Moderasi Beragama.

1. Introduction

The Indonesian Ahmadiyya Congregation (JAI) is still considered a controversial minority-splinter Muslim group (Bakti, 2000; Bruinessen, 1992). However, in the midst of various discriminations, persecutions, and restrictions they experienced, Ahmadiyah presented itself as a moderate religious movement that emphasizing *jihad* with a pen *(jihad bi al-qalam)* to spread peace and fighting *jihad* with physical violence (Hanson, 2007). Ahmadiyah does this through texts that are constructed through a new media website which is located at https://ahmadiyah.id/ and is connected to YouTube and social media Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Ahmadiyah's promotion of moderate Islam through new media is something interesting to discuss for two reasons. First, externally Ahmadiyah is still often persecuted by other different groups (Mariani, 2013; Crouch, 2011; Anshori, 2012). Second, internally, the statute of Ahmadiyah state that the foundation of Indonesian Ahmadiyya is Pancasila (JAI, 2021). These two things indicate that the discourse on religious moderation via the website is not solely due to ideological impulses, but is also tied to the complex external social background surrounding it, starting from traditional values, prevailing norms, life experiences and certain tendencies, socio-cultural, to socio-political and legal.

The external social background that surrounds the building of the Ahmadiyah religious moderation text can be seen in the anti-Ahmadiyah narrative voiced by other groups. The narrative not only concerns the issue of 'aqidah, which questions the Ahmadiyya's revelation and prophethood but also concerns the Ahmadiyya's right to freedom of religion. Socially, Ahmadiyah always faces the power of mainstream Muslim authority represented by the largest Islamic organizations such as NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) and Muhammadiyah (Pamungkas, 2017), and MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) through fatwas which are considered as a tool to support the orthodoxy of the majority of the people (Burhani, 2013). On the other hand, the massive movement of salafism-wahabism groups is also a challenge for Ahmadiyah.

The rejection of Ahmadiyah has made the online space important for the Ahmadiyya struggle. The online world for a religious community is a new space that cannot be separated from the offline social context in which the community grows and develops. Steewart Hoover calls it "digital religion", a space where online religious discourse is integrated with offline religion (Hoover, 2012). That is, the problem of religious identity struggle experienced by a community in the offline world affects religious texts that are constructed in the online world.

In this context, the online space with its openness, according to Campbell, serves as a space that guarantees freedom of expression to show identity and develop community (H. Campbell, 2010), and this is very relevant to minority groups such as the Ahmadiyah (Mursyidi, 2020). Thus, for the minority, the use of new media becomes a new defense strategy in the midst of the majority public. Pamungkas sees that the social resilience of the Ahmadiyya minority group is shaped by various aspects such as government policies in religious life, the history of group formation, social

relationships and networks, understanding of religious values and spirituality, and cultural ties within the community (Pamungkas, 2015). The use of new media with soft (moderate) religious narratives can be considered as a way of defending the Ahmadiyah in the form of adjustment to "government policies in the form of religious moderation programs." This method seems to be quite successful in making the official Ahmadiyah website not blocked by the state even though the Ministerial Decree still limits the movement of the community. It seems that Ahmadiyah's moderate religious discourse is in line with the religious moderation program promoted by the government.

Based on the academic facts above, this study places the Ahmadiyya movement as a material object of study, and formally seeks to explore the discourse on religious moderation developed by Ahmadiyah through new media in a complex social context. The researchers assume that the religious moderation discourse built by JAI through its website, apart from being based on the ideological doctrine of this community, is also related to complex social contexts or external conditions outside JAI. In the context of religious moderation developed by Ahmadiyah through the website, online texts and offline contexts will be tested in an integrated manner to see the goals that Ahmadiyah wants to achieve from the texts created.

This study uses a qualitative type of study with a new media approach that is conducted using netnographic method. The primary data source is the official Ahmadiyah website at https://ahmadiyah.id/, which contains documents that are the main source. The data collection process is done by searching by keywords, reading, asking, responding, listening, recording, and taking notes. The steps taken are *first*, visiting the official Ahmadiyah website, and following each other's YouTube and Facebook. *Second,* entering keywords that reflect "religious moderation" in the search field on the Ahmadiyah website. Keywords include "moderate, religious moderation, peace, peace, jihad, violence, terrorism, universal Islam, nationality, caliphate, and local culture." Third, listening and reading carefully every narrative built on the site, whether in text, audio, or video. Fourth, noting matters relating to the narrative of religious moderation developed by Ahmadiyah. Fifth, engaging in discussions, questions and answers, and online comments in the comments space provided by the website. All stages of these activities can be regarded as an online interaction-observation and interview process that involves the researcher directly into the Ahmadiyya online space (Lindlof & Taylor, 2001). Online engagement is also supported by Kozinets (Kozinets, 2010) through what he calls netnographic study. After the data is collected, the researcher conducts an analysis of textual media from Campbell (H. Campbell, 2010). Textual media contains the relationship between traditional classical texts (the Holy Scriptures) and texts built on website media. Texts that are constructed on online websites do not stand alone but are determined by the dynamics of identity struggles that occur offline (H. A. Campbell, 2013).

2. Literature Review

New Media and Religion

New media is a phase of media development after the old media era although new media cannot simply shift old media (Branston & Stafford, 2010). According to Campbell (H. Campbell, 2010),new media is the generation of media emerging in the contemporary landscape that offers new opportunities for social interaction, information exchange, and mediated communication. In addition, new media is different from old media that emphasize one-way communication (Adeni, Karim, & Koroglu, 2021). The new media emphasizes two-way communication that provides space for freedom for perpetrators.

The presence of new media is to some extent a criticism of the old media. According to the perspective of the new media era, the tyranny associated with broadcast (old media) lies in its hegemonic role in the determination of culture (cultural industry) as well as individual consciousness (hegemony theory) derived from its vertically dominated structure (Holmes, 2005). These structures are structures in which individuals are forced to look to images and means of electronic

communication to acquire a sense of common assembly and culture. The second media era passed through this type of 'institutional' communication and facilitated instant, two-way communication.

Meanwhile, religion is a belief system that contains rules and norms about various human problems in everyday life that must be accounted for at the end of the day. According to Paul & Peter (2010), religion is a kind of ultimacy and transcendence that provides norms and power for the rest of life. In traditional contexts, faith is considered a source of religious belief (Swindal, 2001). The important thing is that religion encompasses two important things, namely ideas and practices. Ideas concern the deepest core beliefs of believers, while practices are oriented towards the way religion is practiced by its adherents. Geertz (1985) defines religion as a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. This suggests that religion involves a system of cultural practices demonstrated by a typical model of reality. Religion has the ability to change people's conceptions of the everyday world and provide a basis for justifying actions and understanding of reality.

The confluence of religion and new media created a new term called online religion. Discussions about religion and new media begin with the term cyber religion (Hojsgaard, 2005). Furthermore, the term online religion emerged, which has two concepts: religion online and online religion. This term was first introduced by Christopher Helland (Helland, 2000). Religion Online encourages adherents of a religion to reshape rituals by bypassing traditional legitimacy systems or recognized authorities beyond the normal boundaries of time, space, and geography. Pembahasan mengenai agama dan media baru diawali dengan istilah *cyber religion* (Hojsgaard, 2005). While online religion describes how the fluid and flexible nature of the internet allows the emergence of new forms of religiosity and religious practices that live online. Online religion shows how the Internet offers a new social landscape for depicting the spirituality of contemporary society.

In simple terms, according to Dawson, religion online is a space that provides information about or services related to various religious groups and traditions. It includes thousands of websites set up by congregations, mosques, temples, synagogues, and other religious institutions. Also commercial sites sell a wide variety of amazing products, religious books, and so on. Meanwhile, online religion invites Internet visitors to participate in religious practices. This practice can range from online prayer, meditation, Catholic mass, Hindu puja, and Wiccan Sabbat, to spiritual counselling, online Tarot reading, and so on (Dawson & Cowan, 2004). However, the difference between online religion and online religion is not absolute.

Recently, the term digital religion emerged. The term appears in several religious conferences and symposiums and digital spaces. Stewart Hoover views that the study of religion and new media is not just adapting to changing ideas about tradition, authority, or religious purity but concerning the actual contribution of digital to religion (Hoover, 2012).

"Digital religion" describes how the online and offline religious realms become unified or integrated. Digital religion can be a bridge that connects and expands online religious practices and spaces into offline religious contexts and vice versa. Digital religion is shaped by online cultural traits (such as interactivity, convergence, and audience-generated content), and traditional religious traits (such as belief patterns and rituals linked to a community's historical foundation). This supports Hoover and Echchaibi's statement that the discussion of digital religion requires our attention back to the form of religion in a digital context (Hoover & Echchaibi, 2012).

Digital religion recognizes how the unique character of digital technology and culture shapes religious practices and beliefs and how religion seeks to civilize new media contexts with established ways and beliefs related to a larger orientation.

In the context of Islam, online religion appears in the form of online Islam, digital ummah, and virtual ummah. Its existence is a means for Islamic da'wah activities (G. Bunt & R., 2009). This innovation becomes a new challenge for Islamic teachings, which are considered very closely related to authority figures (G. R. Bunt, 2005). However, the most important thing is that online Islamic

media can be a means for strengthening Islamic identity in the online space, as is the focus of this study.

Religious Moderation

The events of September 11, 2021, attacks at the World Trade Center in the United States caused Islam to be the group accused of being the perpetrators (Abdulla, 2007), and in the Indonesian context, the excesses of this act of extremism became a crucial problem (Hefner, 2004). Following the tragedy of the American WTC, several bombings took place in Indonesia, such as the Bali I and II bombings, JW Mariot Cirebon. The above conditions make the term religious moderation a necessity, either directly or indirectly (Azra, 2006). It is said to be a necessity because Islam must be returned to its original position as a religion that loves peace and is non-violent.

Religious moderation has grown and developed as a character that is inherent in Islam since Islam was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Allah has chosen the name of this religion with the name "Islam" which means peace (Al-Din, 1983). That is, Islam has been moderate since it was revealed as a religion without being labelled with the term moderate or moderate. Religious moderation is a term that was then deliberately coined as an effort to answer the challenge of extremism in the name of religion.

Religious moderation, when referred to in the Qur'an itself is in line with the concept of Ummatan Wasthan (middle people), which is middle in thoughts, attitudes, and actions. In the Indonesian context, the Ministry of Religion refers to religious moderation as a perspective, attitude, and behavior that always takes a middle position, always acts fairly, and is not extreme in religion, with four indicators, namely: 1) national commitment; 2) tolerance; 3) non-violence; and 4) accommodating to local culture (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). Research conducted by Subhan Hi. Ali Dodego and Doli Witro mention that the estuary of religious moderation is to create a tolerant, peaceful and harmonious atmosphere in the midst of a multi-religious and multicultural life (Dodego & Witro, 2020). Syamsun Ni'am's study shows that moderate Islam in Indonesia has found its momentum to find the basis for its development in pesantren (Syamsun Ni'am, 2015). This means that the pesantren tradition is a tradition of religious moderation, as developed by Nahdlatul Ulama.

In addition to the understanding of religious moderation based on the pesantren tradition as developed by NU, there are also thoughts of religious moderation from Muhammadiyah, as noted by Alexander R. Arifianto: "Muslims should not only promote good words among their fellow men but also should match those words with good deeds, especially through the development of socioeconomic infrastructure. Radical groups are not interested in building such infrastructure; they are only interested in promoting violence. As a result, the real essence of Islam in society is undermined by these radical actors' actions. Instead, one must interpret Islam through reason and promote socioeconomic development in order to eliminate 'triggering' factors for a few Muslims to engage in radical actions, such as poverty and socioeconomic inequities"(Arifianto, 2017).

The approach of religious moderation with socioeconomic development is a new approach that can go hand in hand with Islamic boarding school moderation. Omid Safi considers that Islam which is always present to meet the needs of the community (such as being involved in social actions) shows a tolerant and peaceful Islam (Safi, 2003).

On a practical level, Islamic groups that are considered representatives of moderate Islam are NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) and Muhammadiyah) although both have to contest in the public sphere with new Islamic groups, including the salafi group (Akmaliah, 2020; Wahid, 2012). In addition to the Salafis, there are two other groups that also belong to splinter groups, namely the Shia and the Ahmadiyya. However, recently there are indications that the three splinter groups are trying to fight for their existence through new media by promoting issues of religious moderation based on their respective approaches.

3. Results and Discussions

Religious texts displayed through websites are referred to as new religious texts, because according to Campbell, media texts are new formulations of (traditional) scriptures in the form of printed or written texts) (H. Campbell, 2010). The religious text that will be the focus of this section is the Ahmadiyya religious moderation text posted on the website. The researcher uses four indicators of religious moderation from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, namely (1) national commitment; (2) tolerance; (3) non-violence; (4) accommodating to local culture. The four indicators will be seen in the context of religious posts on the Ahmadiyah website

National Commitment (Komitmen Kebangsaan)

In the context of Ahmadiyah, national commitment can be seen from several posts about the caliphate. Ahmadiyah emphasizes the importance of the caliphate, but the caliphate in question is not a political caliphate in the form of the establishment of a new state to fight the nation state. The caliphate that Ahmadiyah is fighting for is spiritual and cultural. This seems to refer to the concept of the succession of Rasulullah by the Rasyidah caliph (four companions), and the succession of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad by the Ahmadiyya caliph (M. G. Ahmad, 2017), who has now entered the fifth caliphate.

The Ahmadiyah website states:

…We will distinguish between 'khalifah' and 'caliphate' for the etymological development of the words. In Arabic 'caliphate' means successor, representative or ruler. And the 'khilafah' is the dominion of the 'caliphate', or an institution that runs under the leadership of the caliph. In English 'Caliph' is a Muslim civil ruler and political leader who is considered the successor of the Prophet Muhammad. But in the Qur'an the words caliph (in the singular) and *khulafa or khalaa'if* (in the plural) have a broader meaning than the words 'Caliph' and 'Caliphs' in English.
For example, the Qur'an uses the title "Caliph on earth" for Adam as "God's representative on earth" (2:31). In Arabic we can call him *Khalifatullah*, but (in English) we cannot call him "God's Caliph". Similarly, Prophet David (Daud) is called as 'caliph', namely the representative of God (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2022c).

To emphasize the position of Ahmadiyah in understanding the caliphate, it is further said:
God's promise to establish a caliphate as a gift to mankind is deeply rooted in true believers' moral and spiritual condition. In this more specific understanding, we can distinguish between caliphate and caliphate. Caliphate in English relates to the political and social spheres of leaders in Islamic history, but khalifah relates to moral, religious, spiritual leadership of mankind. The Khilafah seeks to cultivate *Divine Tawhid* so that humans can become people who always worship, do good deeds, live freely, and create peace. Therefore, a political leader who may be called a 'Caliph' is not necessarily the khalifah referred to by the Qur'an (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2022c).

Thus it is clear that the Ahmadiyya does not emphasize the caliphate in the sense of an Islamic government or taking the form of an Islamic state. It says:
The Ahmadiyya Caliphate is very different from the dreams of some Islamic groups who understand the Khilafah as a political and military power throughout the world. The Ahmadiyya Caliphate is not political; but spiritual and religious. Thus, Ahmadiyah supports the concept of "separation between state and religion". While respecting the wishes of some parties to adopt various types of political systems that are suitable for them which is good for their public administration, the Ahmadiyya does not expect political power. Although the ideal Islamic state requires a head of government to exercise secular and religious power, the Khilafah institutions can and must remain focused on moral and spiritual issues only, providing the necessary

guidance for political leaders in order to create justice and social harmony (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2022c).

Then the Ahmadiyah website displayed an article with the title "Love the Motherland, which shows their commitment to the nation and the homeland. It is said that:

…Prophet Muhammad SAW. teaches that "Love for the homeland is part of faith". Hence, sincere patriotism is a must in Islam. True love for God and for Islam requires that one must love his own nation and country. So it is very clear that there is no conflict of interest of a person's love for Allah and his love for his homeland. Since love for the homeland has become part of Islamic teachings, it is clear that a Muslim must achieve the highest standards of loyalty to his homeland, because that is the way to reach Allah and become closer to Him… (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2022b).

On a practical level, Jamaah Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) is actively involved in activities to support Pancasila. It is disclosed that:

It is becoming very clear that the aim of the Islamic Khilafat is to practice the spiritual, moral, social and intellectual development of human beings – it will continue to be the main goal of those who are pious, and Allah-guided caliphs who follow in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad by becoming a true Muslim in an attitude of, behavior and actions are actually in line with the goals of Indonesian people who are Pancasilais (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2018).

As evidence, on the day of the sacred Pancasila, the West Jakarta Ahmadiyya Congregation held a social service program by providing assistance packages to the Tresna Werdha Jelambar Social Institution which is located not far from the Baiturrahim Mosque belonging to JAI West Jakarta (Web Admin, https://ahmadiyah.id/peringati-hari-kesaktian-pancasila-jai-jakbar-gelar-bakti-sosial.html). This reflects the attitude of mujahadah in Ahmadiyah who surrenders body, heart and mind to the way of Allah Ta'ala for social benefit (M. G. Ahmad, 2016). In addition, JAI's commitment to nationality is proven by its involvement in helping the government succeed in the pandemic vaccination program. Uniquely, JAI connects the necessity of religious moderation and obedience to the government as a solution to get out of the Pandemic disaster. In the article entitled "Vaksin dan Moderasi Beragama Kunci Indonesia Keluar dari s.

It seems that for Ahmadiyah there is a connection between moderate behavior in religion and obedience to the government. Obeying government rules and not going to extremes with religious beliefs related to Covid-19 is part of a moderate attitude that can get the nation and country out of the Pandemic outbreak.

This latter attitude is not without reason. Ahmadiyah introduces itself as a group supporting the separation between state and religion. The purpose of this separation is so that religion can only become a moral support in life, and not be polluted by political interests. That means Ahmadiyah is not involved in practical politics. However, through religious moral values, Ahmadiyah can remain loyal to be good citizens. According to Mirza Tahir Ahmad, there is no conflict between loyalty to the state and to religion (M. T. Ahmad, 2007).

Tolerance and Religious Freedom (Toleransi dan Kebebasan Beragama)

In the context of Indonesian Ahmadiyya, tolerance is associated with religious freedom. On the Ahmadiyah website, several posts contain insights into tolerance and religious freedom.

There is an article post titled "Did Prophet Muhammad Force People to Convert to Islam?" It is emphasized that the Prophet never forced people to embrace Islam. In fact, the Prophet's scribe left Islam and was allowed to return to Mecca without being hurt or hindered. This incident illustrates

that no one was terrorized to accept Islam by the Prophet (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2019b). This post describes the tolerance of the Prophet to followers of other religions.

This is reinforced by a post about "Did Prophet Muhammad Order the Killing of Eight Men for Apostasy?" It is said, that according to "the hadith of Bukhari, eight men from the tribe of *'Ukl* were not sentenced to death because they were apostates but because they had committed murder, theft, treason, did not repent, so they were held accountable for their criminal acts. They have joined the "Islamic land". Their apostasy has nothing to do with the punishment they receive" (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2019c). Therefore, in a post titled, "Does Islam Forbid Protecting Non-Muslims?" it is said that "the Messenger of Allah established a sovereign and united government based on freedom of religion, mutual respect and mutual trust by implementing the Medina Charter" (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2019a).

Based on the concept of tolerance above, furthermore, JAI through its website displays the problems of tolerance practices towards their communities in Indonesia. *First* JAI posted about "President Sukarno, Ahmadiyah, and Tolerance." The article stated that, "However, even though President Sukarno openly rejected the part of Ahmadiyah and what followers of the Ahmadiyya group believe, President Sukarno still respected them (Ahmadiyah). Not only that, President Sukarno also appreciated and thanked the Ahmadiyya, which he said provided scientific benefits. One thing that is rarely done by today's leaders: rejecting the idea of a group, but still respecting the opinion of the group. A form of tolerance that should be imitated" (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2021d).

Besides Soekarno, JAI also displayed an example of Gus Dur's tolerance (the fourth President of Indonesia) through the post, "Gusdur the Tolerance Fighter." It is said that:

> Gus Dur also protects minority groups who adhere to a religion or belief outside the mainstream groups of major religions. Not surprisingly, Gus Dur protected the Ahmadiyah, who were often chased and not given space to live and develop by a certain group of people who wanted what they called 'religious purification'. In many ways, sometimes Gus Dur chose to be opposite other Muslims. For example, when there was a proposal for a regulation requiring the death penalty for apostate Muslims, Gus Dur opposed it. He reasoned that this would only tarnish the name of Islam (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2021a).

Bringing up two figures of the President of Indonesia in terms of tolerance related to the Ahmadiyah community illustrates a big narrative that Ahmadiyah is fighting for. The president is a symbol of a country responsible for its people's security and comfort. In this context, it seems that Ahmadiyah wants to encourage the existence of a state policy that is able to provide full tolerance for Ahmadiyya diversity in Indonesia. Therefore, to encourage tolerance in society, in a post entitled "Peace in Divesity, Diversity in Peace," JAI emphasized:

> When being different and being a minority is a wound" at least a piece of the sentence is a picture of an Ahmadi Muslim who is often injured because of the shallow interpretation and understanding of a person or group of people towards Ahmadiyya. There needs to be a lot of discussion and participation in activities related to pluralism or interfaith groups so that ordinary people know what Ahmadiyah really is? And the answers that other people get are direct from the source, not from the opinion of people who only know a little about Ahmadiyah itself (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2015).

This means that discussion and dialogue between groups becomes a solution that can foster tolerance.

Peace and Non-Violence (Kedamaian dan Anti Kekerasan)

The creation of peace is related to non-violence, an indicator of religious moderation. Ahmadiyah Indonesia builds an anti-violence discourse through its website with posts containing the keywords, "peace, jihad, and terrorism."

We start from the construction of *jihad* carried out by JAI. Terrorism and violence in the name of Islam are often associated with *jihad*, whereas jihad and terrorism are two different things. In the post entitled "What is the Meaning of Jihad (Types of Jihad)," it is said that: "the word Jihad comes from the verb *jahada*– meaning to strive or struggle. In Islamic terminology the meaning of jihad is to strive for a noble cause. This word is usually used to describe all kinds of struggles in the way of Allah" (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2020).

It further emphasized, "According to Islamic teachings, there are three types of Jihad, all of which aim to build and enforce social peace, namely the akbar jihad (highest jihad), jihad against lust; jihad kabir (great jihad), jihad to spread the truth of the messages of the Qur'an, by means of wisdom, tolerance, and respect for others and their beliefs; and jihad asghar (little jihad), which is a defensive fighting jihad. The Qur'an has clearly set limits on this type of jihad under certain conditions, as well as forbids other forms of offense, namely (1) fighting is only allowed for self-defense, not offensive; (2) Muslims are forced to face oppression in terms of practicing their religion and things that threaten their lives, and (3) Muslims are forced to leave their homes" (Web Admin, https://ahmadiyah.id/apa-arti-jihad-jenis-jenis-jihad.html).

It can be seen that jihad is understood by JAI as not merely taking up arms. Moreover, acts of violence in the name of religion are firmly rejected by JAI. In an article on "Islamic Terrorism?" stressed, "As far as Islam is concerned, he firmly rejects and condemns every form of terrorism. Islam provides no protection or justification for any act of violence, whether individuals, groups or governments perpetrate it. Of course there is room for anxiety in the Islamic world, because there are groups, organizations, and sometimes governments, which appear to be carrying out acts of terrorism, violence and sabotage. Palestine, Lebanon, Libya, Syria often adorn the news" (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2021a). Therefore, JAI encourages the spread of messages of love and peace through the motto "love for all, hatred for none." It said, "Islam teaches us to live in a spirit of love, compassion, and humility. Islam teaches us that there is no difference between a Muslim and non-Muslim. My message to all of you is you must have 'Love for all, Hatred for none!" (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2022d).

This teaching of peace and love is further manifested in the form of pen jihad or intellectual *jihad* (M. G. Ahmad, 2009). Jihad through the pen refers to efforts to fight for the truth through writing that contains good thoughts and ideas that can benefit many people. Therefore, it is not surprising that Ahmadiyah figures are people who have written many works, even Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has authored more than eighty books, most of which were compiled in Urdu, Arabic and Persian (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2022e). Some of his works have also been translated into Indonesian.

If grouped, jihad through the pen can be categorized as the highest jihad, because jihad through the pen contains the ability to process and convey thoughts wisely. A person who can restrain himself and lust is a wise person. Jihad through the pen concentrates on the intellect that can be the basis for the development of civilization. According to the *al-Islam website*, the pen-jihad developed by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad from the start has become the only vehicle to usher in the revival of Islam through a peaceful intellectual process (Al Islam, 2021).

Furthermore, the Ahmadiyah website states, "Our era is an era of distributing books, magazines, newspapers and other media. This is the information age. However, ironically only a few are interested in information about religion and moral upliftment. Under these conditions, a caller for Jihad for the victory of Islam who is aware of this, must direct his struggle to where it is most needed. But it must be remembered that the power of reason and intelligence in this day and age is advancing. The culture of learning has become so widespread. The power of all information media has been amplified, with a view to influencing individuals in predetermined directions. Therefore, the

responsibility of Jihad with the pen should not be taken lightly" (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2019e)·

The above description does not mean to deny jihad in a physical sense. Jihad in the name of religion is a matter in question. Therefore, it can be said that jihad can still justify an act of defending or upholding the truth or quelling injustice. However, on another level, jihad is sometimes no longer a purely term for a holy struggle, but mingles with the interests of certain groups (Bar, 2008)**.** At the time of the Prophet, the jihad that was inflamed became sacred because religion was not as fragmented as it is today. At that time, Islam was still under one flag and one command of the Prophet. There was no particular struggle for Islamic groups or interests at that time.

Unlike the conditions at that time, jihad at this time is actually driven by certain groups. The proof is, when jihad is inflamed by one Muslim community, other Muslims do not fully support it or are not involved at all. Therefore, jihad is often biased in the current context when it is associated with religious entities (Yudhiyansyah, 2014).

Accommodating to Local Culture

In the context of the Indonesian Ahmadiyya, the accommodative attitude towards local culture is based on the universal teachings of Islam that they echo. In the post entitled "Islam the Universal Religion" it says:

> Repeatedly the Qur'an explains that Islam is a religion whose teachings are related to human nature. Islam emphasizes that a religion rooted in human nature will be able to transcend time and space. Human nature will not change. Thus, a religion that is truly rooted in human nature will not change as long as it does not interfere too much in human transient situations at any time in the history of his life. If the religion persists in principles that are rooted in human nature, then it has the potential to become a universal religion (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2019d).

The universality of Islamic teachings is related to the ability of Islam to dialogue with all entities on this earth, including local wisdom entities which are generally in line with human nature. JAI does not confront the local wisdom of the community. Some cases of conflict between the community and the Ahmadiyya are more due to the doctrine of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who is considered the Prophet or the promised Imam Mahdi and the Messiah, not because of the conflict concerning local wisdom. For Ahmadiyah, the universality of Islam is also related to Islamic teachings which are intended for all levels of society without exception (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2019d).

Real evidence of JAI's involvement in local activities can be seen from the post entitled, "Follow the Prayer (Shalawat) Contest, Lajnah Members Achieve 3rd Place for Their School." It is said that in commemoration of the 10th Muharam of PGRI at the Campaka District level, Cianjur Regency held a special "Sholawat Contest" for female teachers. On that occasion a lajnah (Ahmadi) from Neglasari participated at a direct invitation from the principal of the school where she teaches, namely SDN Sukamanah located in Cinande village, Sukajadi village. The competition committee, who is also the PAI Supervisor in Cempaka District, has determined the *shalawat* text and tone for the participants from the week before the start of the competition, so that creativity and beauty of tone are important assessments that must be considered by each participant" (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2021b).

In Indonesian society, *shalawatan and kasidah* are part of popular local Islamic traditions (Hung, 2017; Rohbiah, 2015). Shalawat is no longer just a mere worship, but also part of the art of praise to the Prophet so that *shalawat* also appears in various forms, both text and tone. The involvement of JAI residents in the tradition of *shalawat* competitions shows the tendency of the Ahmadiyah to be accommodative with the local community. This is actually not done for the sake of self-image alone, but the tradition of kasidah is inherent with Ahmadiyah itself (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, 2022a).

Judging from the data above, JAI is able to be adaptive to the local community context. However, through its website, it seems JAI has not been much involved in accommodation activities

for local wisdom. JAI is only very accommodating as far as the cultural diversity of the community itself is concerned. The openness of the Ahmadiyah provides room for other groups to express themselves.

In the Ahmadiyya's interpretation of the Qur'an, Surah Al-Anbiya 'verse 107, it is stated:
And We have not sent thee but as a mercy for all peoples" is interpreted as: "The Holy Prophet was a mercy for the whole of mankind as his Message is not confined to any particular country or people. Through him the nations of the world have been blessed as they were never blessed before (Farid, 2017).

It can be seen that Islam in Ahmadiyah's view is not only for certain people but for all circles. The Ahmadiyya principle as read from the interpretation above allows it to be accommodative with local culture anywhere.

4.   Struggle for Ahmadiyya Identity

The study of the text of religious moderation on the Ahmadiyah website as described above still leaves one issue worthy of discussion, namely the relationship between religious moderation and the struggle for identity. As a minority community in Indonesia, religious moderation is one of the narrative strategies for the Ahmadiyah to survive in the midst of all threats and persecution from other parties.

The Position of the Ahmadiyya Community

Reading the position of Ahmadiyah in the context of state policy and mainstream religion (Islam) in Indonesia is not easy. The government's decisions are also full of political orientation and are considered not based on legality, and tend to aim at maintaining mainstream religious authority and strengthening radical movements (As'ad, 2009). In addition, Ahmadiyah is still considered a community that deviates from Islamic teachings as stated by the MUI through its fatwa (Asrawijaya, 2022).

Responding to this, Ahmadiyah has often made clarifications and even improvements to aspects of beliefs considered heretical by MUI (Budiana, 2021) continuing to strengthen Ahmadiyah's contribution to the nation's development and state (JAI, 2021). However, this effort has not completely solved the problem. The problem is not simple: legal issues that are always related to socio-political interests that do not support Ahmadiyah da'wah in Indonesia. The fact shows that when the President structurally asked the relevant ministries to review the 2008 SKB, it appears that its execution in the field is still experiencing problems (Sabandi, Personal Communication, December 12, 2021). This obstacle certainly arises from the mainstream of Islam which more or less influences the policy of decision makers. If the existence of Ahmadiyah is fully recognized and freed by the state to practice their beliefs, then sociologically the position of Ahmadiyah is still considered a threat by mainstream Muslim authorities in Indonesia (Hitipeuw, 2011). So there are always political interests that interfere in legal decisions related to Ahmadiyah. Ahmadiyah as a religious movement proceeds in people's lives, and Indonesian society is a Sunni Muslim community who is anti-Ahmadiyah (Burhani, 2013; Pamungkas, 2017). Moreover, the strengthening of the radical Islamic movement has further narrowed the path of Ahmadiyya independence in the social sphere. Therefore, a different strategy is needed that can make Ahmadiyah recognized in the community.

From here, the choice to become a moderate-leaning community is a choice in favor of the Ahmadiyya. Not surprisingly, with religious moderation, Ahmadiyah has received appreciation from progressive and open Muslims (Connley, 2016). Even then, Ahmadiyah's efforts were considered only to carry out self-image by some circles (Fatoni, 2019).

By becoming a moderate community, Ahmadiyah tries to show itself as an identity that is not different from mainstream Muslim in Indonesia, which historically has contributed a lot to the progress of the nation and state. For this reason, on the Ahmadiyah website, social activities that can support their existence are displayed, ranging from involvement in vaccination activities, celebrating

the Republic of Indonesia's Independence Day, or celebrating the Pancasila Sakti Day, to participating in celebrating 10 Muharram. Also, through its website, Ahmadiyah mentions big names such as Soekarno and Gusdur including the name of the country of Aceh, a province called the Veranda of Mecca. This is all related to strengthening self-existence in the public sphere. However, the religious moderation promoted by the Ahmadiyah does not appear to have fully strengthened the Ahmadiyya struggle. Closing houses of worship or restrictions on Ahmadiyah worship activities is still a problem in itself and continues to happen (CNN Indonesia, 2021).

Website and the Essence of Ahmadiyya Religious Moderation

By examining the discussion above, it can be said that the moderation of the Ahmadiyya religion does not merely come from the characteristics and character of the Ahmadiyya in religion that is deliberately promoted outwardly, but is also influenced by external realities that encourage Ahmadiyah to fight for their identity in the public sphere between state authorities and mainstream Muslim authorities. Therefore, the religious moderation discoursed by Ahmadiyah through its website can be seen as:

1. Counter narrative against groups that claim to be moderate but reject the existence of Ahmadiyah. Moderate attitude is understood as an attitude that takes a middle position in religion. Meanwhile, the group that persecutes the Ahmadiyah in terms of religion is a group that is generally considered or claims to be a moderate sect. Ahmadiyah tries to emphasize that a moderate Islamic community has no right to judge other groups with extreme and intolerant views or treatment as is often experienced by Ahmadiyah. Here, the tolerance text displayed by Ahmadiyah on its website finds its momentum

2. Counter-narrative against extremist groups. Ahmadiyah became moderate because they were indirectly dealing with extremist groups who rejected the presence of Ahmadiyah. Because of this, the Ahmadiyya condemns the acts of terrorist jihadists in the form of bloodshed wars. Ahmadiyah also criticizes puritan Muslims who are anti-religious

3. Strengthening the identity and indigenization of Ahmadiyah. The discourse on the moderation of the Ahmadiyya religion seems to be related to efforts to cultivate Ahmadiyah teachings in the local context. To borrow Gusdur's term, the indigenization of Ahmadiyah is a long-term goal of the Ahmadiyya movement. Indigenization of Islam in the archipelago is characterized by religious moderation which puts forward methods of da'wah that are soft and based on locality so that Islam then becomes the religion of the majority of the population. The Ahmadiyya took this moderate method of indigenization to establish the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia.

These three aspects cannot be separated from each other. The first two aspects actually support the last aspect or thesis, that the religious moderation voiced by the Ahmadiyah is related to the struggle for identity in the context of the public sphere. The three things above are related to internal and external factors. Internally, the identity of the Ahmadiyya community is indeed based on the teachings of peace that were taught by its founder. The books that become Ahmadiyya's authoritative references always use a universal Islamic framework or point of view. Also since the beginning, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has promoted pen jihad which shows his side for a peaceful and progressive Islam. From the moment they were born, Ahmadiyya has had a da'wah identity that loves peace. Meanwhile, there are external factors in the form of a socio-political context, which requires Ahmadiyah to demonstrate the principles of its peaceful teachings as a defense approach in order to remain sustainable in the community. In this last aspect, the influence of other communities and the state has contributed to the formation of the Ahmadiyya religious moderation.

5. Conclusion

From this study, it is concluded that the religious moderation discoursed by Ahmadiyah through the website is one of the communication strategies in strengthening their existence in the pluralistic context of Indonesia. Some things that can be emphasized are that the Ahmadiyya website supports

nationalism. The caliphate teachings they are fighting for refers to a spiritual and moral caliphate, not a political and militaristic caliphate. Beside, Ahmadiyya promotes peace and non-violence by encouraging *jihad* with a pen in response to various emerging social issues. It does not support violence in the name of religion (terrorism). Ahmadiyya also strengthens tolerance and religious freedom by emphasizing tolerance not just a discourse but can be practiced in the context of a pluralistic Indonesia. Ahmadiyya recognizes the existence of local culture by encouraging the existence of local culture through the concept of universal Islam that it develops. For Ahmadiyah, universal Islamic teachings are in line with human nature wherever they are. Globally Ahmadiyya caliphate system which must be an authoritative reference in theological-normative matters can be strengthened by an Ahmadiyya interpretation based on local Indonesian realities.

The findings of this study have the distinction of exploring the religious moderation of the Ahmadiyya in new media (websites). Ahmadiyah studies have been mostly focused on the rejection of Ahmadiyah ideology, or the reality of the attraction between Ahmadiyya and other communities, or about its social conflicts, meanwhile its movement with new approaches through new media (websites) is something new in the context of Ahmadiyya studies. However, this study has limitations in the aspect of the study of offline and online space relations presented by Ahmadiyah. Future researchers can examine whether the reality of religious moderation displayed in the online space is indeed based on the offline context of this movement.

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