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### Involvement of The Jemaah Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) In Promoting “Peaceful Islam” Through The Website

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**Abstract:** The existence of Jemaah Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) is still considered controversial in Indonesia. However, this community seems to be voicing peaceful Islam through their official website media. By using a qualitative method based on a netnographic approach (online observation), several steps are taken, namely visiting the Ahmadiyah website at <https://ahmadiyah.id/>, entering the keyword “peaceful Islam (Islam Damai)” to select related articles, then classifying and analyzing the data. This paper concludes that Ahmadiyah is involved in promoting harmony in Indonesia amidst the issue of radicalism. What they do is adjust their views and movements to the principles of the state within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). The peaceful Islam they promote can be seen from the narratives of the articles they post, such as Universal Islam, Islam and equality of human rights, Islam and the reinterpretation of jihad, Islam is not a religion of war (taking up arms, relations between Islam and non-Muslims, Islam and Europe civilization, Islam and love for all, hatred for none. The involvement of JAI in promoting harmony has become a counter-narrative against other communities that have cornered Ahmadiyah.

**Keywords:** *jemaah ahmadiyah indonesia; peaceful islam; online media; website*

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#### A. INTRODUCTION

Efforts to promote a peaceful Islam require the involvement of various groups. Jama'ah Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) is one of the splinter groups (Bruinessan, 1992) in Indonesia, which takes part in this effort to promote peaceful Islam. This is something unique amid the issue of discrimination against the Ahmadiyya minority (Irawan and Adnan, 2021). The existence of Ahmadiyah is still reaping controversy, especially among the mainstream Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and MUI.

The platform they use to engage in the above efforts is the website. Website is part of the new media based on the Internet. Through the website, the identity of a community can be displayed (Crispin & Mroczek, 2012; Helland, 2018). Ahmadiyah makes this platform a space to show their support for peaceful Islamic narratives. At the same time, the website has also become a counter space for Ahmadiyah narratives for other communities.

This paper is written to answer the question how is the involvement of Ahmadiyah in promoting peaceful Islam



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through the website? To answer this question, the author uses a qualitative type of research with an ethnographic approach (Kozinets, 2016). Data mining was carried out by online observation of the Ahmadiyah website, namely <https://ahmadiyah.id/>. The step taken is to enter the keyword "Islam peace" into the search column on the Ahmadiyah website, then select articles that are relevant to the theory used. Then finally, after the data is collected, it is analyzed. This paper is expected to provide an overview of the existence of the Ahmadiyah in the context of religion in Indonesia, especially amid the state's efforts to de-radicalize hard-line Islamic movements.

## **B. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **1. Website And Religion**

Website is part of new media. Pierre Levy (1997) views that the worldwide web is an open, flexible and dynamic information environment that allows people to develop new knowledge orientations, as well as engage in the world. According to Heidi Campbell, through the Internet, religious adherents can make various religious information and discussions appear online (2010). Meanwhile, Brasher (2001) argues that online religion can be a feature of religious humanism. Furthermore, the website as a media becomes a new space in spreading religious ideology and certain interests as a form of resistance against religious organizations that do not have the same understanding and also as a form of defense from their group (Muttaqin, 2012).

In the context of the relationship between religion and the website, according to Lorne L. Dawson (2001), the internet can do many things for religious purposes.

- a. Spread the message around the world. With the homepage facility provided by the Internet, we can share information about our beliefs and in an instant, the greatest information will be spread all over the world. Everyone in any part of the world will easily be able to access it.
- b. Build a new community. The internet gives us the facility to be able to stay in touch even though we are separated by distance and time. This is very beneficial for religious adherents to join together and form a new virtual community that is not even possible in the real world.
- c. Breaking the boundaries of space and time. The power of the internet which can destroy the boundaries of space and time is very useful for religious actors in opening religious discourse as widely as possible through inter-religious dialogue. Anyone from anywhere in the world, regardless of the limitations of space and time, can participate in the dialogue held in this virtual world.
- d. Carrying out rituals in the virtual world of the internet is not just a vehicle studded with numbers, letters, and pictures that can be read and viewed. With technological advances such as 3-D animation, the internet can become a medium for organizing religious rituals in cyberspace.
- e. Develop a more open understanding of religion. With the abundance of religious information sourced from

various understandings, seekers of the essence of religion can certainly compare the various information to provide and develop a more open religious awareness.

## 2. The Concept of Peaceful Islam

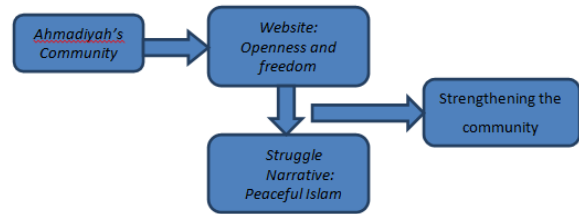
Islam teaches pleasant and peaceful ways of character to govern society and the world (Hamid-ud-Din, 1983). The most vital evidence of this religion is that Allah has chosen the name Islam for it. The Arabic word "Islam" literally means "surrender." Islam as a religion means total and sincere submission and submission to Allah so that one can live in peace and tranquility. Peace (Salam in Arabic, Shalom in Hebrew) is achieved through active obedience to God's revealed commandments (Waines, 2002).

Personal peace in the form of surrender and total submission to God must give birth to social peace in everyday life. The Messenger of Allah in a hadith stated, "A Muslim saves others from the harm of his tongue and hands." This hadith illustrates that a calm and peaceful soul (Salim) will also radiate calm (Muslim) to the world around him.

Social peace can be explained further through several points from Abu Zahra (1995). There are ten principles of muamalah or human relations, namely respect for human dignity, unity, cooperation in good deeds or humanity, tolerance, freedom (to determine destiny and religion), justice, equality in human relations, integrity, and compassion. The concept of social peace is identical to the positive peace that Galtung offers, namely the creation of social justice (Galtung & Fischer, 2013).

As an analytical tool in this paper, we formulate the concept of a website and peaceful Islam as follows:

- a. Ahmadiyah as a community
- b. A media website is an open space that guarantees freedom of expression.
- c. Peaceful Islam as part of the narrative of the struggle includes:
  - 1) Tolerance
  - 2) Freedom
  - 3) Justice
  - 4) Affection.
- d. Website is a space to strengthen self-identity.



Picture 1: Conceptual Chart of the Study

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we will first describe several aspects that confirm the involvement of the Ahmadiyya in promoting peaceful Islam through its website. Second, the peaceful Islamic thoughts of the Ahmadiyya are discussed in the context of their struggle in the public sphere, in which we want to prove that the peaceful Islamic narrative of the Ahmadiyya is based on the discrimination they have experienced as a minority group and the choice of a website as a community platform provides an easy space for them in strengthening their identity in the public sphere.

1. Universal Islam and Respect for Human Fitrah

Ahmadiyah developed the concept of universal Islam. This can be seen from the following statement:

*“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 life. If the religion persists in principles that are rooted in human nature, it has the potential to become a universal religion.”*  
(<https://ahmadiyah.id/islam-agama-universal.html>).

The universal Islamic teachings of the Ahmadiyya place the potential of human nature (*fitrah*) as its basis. Humans everywhere always live in their nature. The variety of thought patterns, habits, and cultures produced by each human comes from human nature itself. Islam as a universal religion that is relevant to all space and time respects the variety of human nature. Thus, the relationship between Islam and all cultures in the world reflects a dialogical relationship. Islamic teachings can always be communicated with any cultural expression in the world. From this, it can be said that the universality of Islam provides space for the development of local wisdom.

In addition, Ahmadiyah also emphasized the universality of the teachings of the divine religion (*agama samawi*). It is said, “Islam is even one step ahead. With a big heart, Islam states that all religions in the world more or less have the same universal character. In other words, in every divine religion, one can find the core teachings related to human nature and eternal truth. The essence of the teachings of that religion will remain unchanged unless its followers contaminate it in the future.” This quote

shows the openness of Ahmadiyah towards the existence of other religions.

## 2. Jihad and Freedom

In addition to the concept of universal Islam, efforts to promote peaceful Islam are carried out by reinterpreting the term jihad. For Ahmadiyya:

*“The word jihad, which is listed 34 times in the Quran, has the meaning of striving hard to improve oneself, improve society, or maintain freedom of belief. The Prophet Muhammad, for example, used the word jihad when referring to serving parents, perfecting morals, performing the Hajj, and defensive warfare to maintain freedom of belief. Even when returning from war, the Prophet once said that Jihad for self-improvement is superior to Jihad defends freedom of belief. In addition, the Qur'an forbids fighting peaceful groups and repeatedly emphasizes the importance of freedom of belief, and the permission to fight is only given to uphold freedom of belief and defend oneself from attackers”*  
(<https://ahmadiyah.id/bendakah-prophet-Muhammad-teach-terrorism-and-jihad-in-spreading-islam.html>).

From this quote, it can be said that the jihad developed by Ahmadiyah is contextual, not physical jihad. Contextual jihad is jihad in the sense of development. This seems to be done by Ahmadiyah in response to acts of terrorism in the name of jihad.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in this regard stated, as posted on the JAI website, that “a

person who kills others unjustly or kills people who have never rebelled or disturbed peace in society or created unrest in his country, is as if as if he had killed all mankind.” Terrorism is a destructive act, while development *jihad* seeks to empower the potential of oneself and society to the fullest to produce a civilization. As for *jihad* in the sense of physical warfare, it can be carried out in urgent conditions when oppressed or attacked.

### 3. Love and Affection

Furthermore, efforts to promote peaceful Islam are seen in the phrase “love for all, hatred for none,” which is displayed on the Ahmadiyya website. It is stated:

*“Islam teaches us to live in a spirit of love, compassion, and humility. Islam teaches us that there is no difference between a Muslim or a non-Muslim. My message to all of you is that you must have Love for all, hate for no one!, Love for all, Hatred for none*

<https://ahmadiyah.id/love-for-all-hatred-for-none>).

The love and affection developed by Ahmadiyah are not only limited to the community or brothers and sisters of the same faith but also all human beings. This attitude leads to the statement that there is no difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. However, it seems that the meaning of “no difference between Muslims and non-Muslims” concerns a purely social aspect. Because, as far as the issue of divinity is concerned, the Ahmadiyya itself rejects the concept of non-Muslim divinity. This can be seen, for example, from the title of the article, “The Trinity, Jesus and Divine Tawhid”

<https://ahmadiyah.id/islam/allah-swt/trinitas-yesus-tauhid-ilahi>).

### 4. Justice

Ahmadiyah sees that the foundation of world peace is justice. If justice is served for all people, then peace will be realized. It says:

*“Disputes can happen at any time, but the key is to resolve the dispute as fairly as possible, not prioritizing personal interests over the interests of others. To end the conflict then the condition is fair. If someone is not fair and civilized then our problems will increase. Instead of achieving peace, it increases hatred and contempt. Therefore, in many places in the Qur'an, Allah commands Muslims to be fair and treat others as well as possible”*

<https://ahmadiyah.id/keadilan-prasaat-tercepatnya-percepatan-dunia.html>).

The concept of justice developed by Ahmadiyah is based on two noble teachings of this community, namely loving and fulfilling Allah's rights and loving and fulfilling human rights. These concepts show justice in carrying out religious orders and justice in relations between humans or between nations. Ahmadiyah encourages justice to touch on the problems of conflicts that occur in social life within one nation, between nations, and across countries. Therefore, as stated on the Ahmadiyya website, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community carries out various humanitarian activities to alleviate the grief and suffering of the oppressed, without distinction of creed, social class, or skin color. They have established hospitals, schools, and



colleges that provide health care and education in some of the poorest and most remote areas of the world (<https://ahmadiyah.id/khilafat/masror-ahmad/konflik-global-perlunya-keadilan>).

Table 01: Article Title of Peaceful Islam on Ahmadiyah Website

| N O | Article Title  | Sources   |
|-----|--|---|
| 1   | Islam Agama Universal<br><br>(Islam Universal Religion)  | <a href="https://ahmadiyah.id/islam-agama-universal.html">https://ahmadiyah.id/islam-agama-universal.html</a>   |
| 2   | Love for All, Hatred for None  | <a href="https://ahmadiyah.id/love-for-all-hatred-for-none">https://ahmadiyah.id/love-for-all-hatred-for-none</a>   |
| 3   | Benarkah Nabi Muhammad Mengajarkan Terorisme dan Jihad dalam Menyebarkan Islam?<br><br>(Did Prophet Muhammad Really Teach Terrorism and Jihad in Spreading Islam?) | <a href="https://ahmadiyah.id/benarkah-nabi-muhammad-mengajarkan-terorisme-dan-jihad-dalam-menyebarkan-islam.html">https://ahmadiyah.id/benarkah-nabi-muhammad-mengajarkan-terorisme-dan-jihad-dalam-menyebarkan-islam.html</a> |
| 4   | Apa Arti Jihad (Jenis-jenis Jihad)<br><br>(What Jihad Means (Types of Jihad))  | <a href="https://ahmadiyah.id/apa-arti-jihad-jenis-jihad.html">https://ahmadiyah.id/apa-arti-jihad-jenis-jihad.html</a>   |
| 5   | Keadilan--- Prasyarat Tercapainya  | <a href="https://ahmadiyah.id/keadilan-prasyarat">https://ahmadiyah.id/keadilan-prasyarat</a>   |

| N O | Article Title  | Sources   |
|-----|--|---|
|     | Perdamaian Dunia<br><br>Justice--- Prerequisite for Achieving World Peace            | <a href="https://ahmadiyah.id/tercapainya-perdamaian-dunia.html">tercapainya-perdamaian-dunia.html</a>  |
| 6   | Konflik Global dan Perlunya Keadilan<br><br>Global Conflict and the Need for Justice | <a href="https://ahmadiyah.id/khilafat/masror-ahmad/konflik-global-perlunya-keadilan">https://ahmadiyah.id/khilafat/masror-ahmad/konflik-global-perlunya-keadilan</a> |

5. Ahmadiyah's Struggle in Public Space and the Necessity of Peaceful Islam

The peaceful Islamic narrative displayed by Ahmadiyah through its website cannot be separated from the social context in which Ahmadiyah is located. However, the harmonious narrative of the Jemaah Ahmadiyah has not been able to change the mindset of the general public to see Ahmadiyah in harmony as well. Ahmadiyah still has to struggle amid mainstream Islam, *ahl sunnah wal jama'ah*, which is represented by the largest Islamic organizations, such as NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) and Muhammadiyah (Pamungkas, 2015), including MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) also rejects the existence of Shia and Ahmadiyah (Burhani, 2015)., 2014). Fatwas against Ahmadiyah issued by clerical institutions are intended as a tool to support the orthodoxy of the (majority) ummah (Burhani, 2014). Ahmadiyah is also often confronted with right-wing Islamic groups such as Salafism-

Wahabism which has developed in Indonesia recently. Salafism itself belongs to a splinter group but is Sunni.

A study by Flavius Floris Andries, Mohtar Maso'ed, Zainal Abidin Bagir (2014) on the west Java JAI community shows that the delay in e-KTP services for the JAI community cannot be separated from the role of local politics and Islamic organizations. Negotiations of interests between the government and mass organizations to make JAI the object of power resulted in discrimination against JAI as a minority in obtaining their rights as citizens. It seems that the Ahmadiyya struggle is not only related to the cultural but also the structural realm. In fact, Muhammad As'ad (2009) views that the issuance of a Ministerial Decree related to Ahmadiyah activities is not based on need or law but is an effort to please radical groups in society.

The above conditions, pressure, or unfavorable treatment from other communities that are often experienced by the Ahmadiyya make it's narrative of peaceful Islam more understandable. This means that the peaceful Islamic narrative of the Ahmadiyya is a form of its soft strategy in taming the mainstream religious narratives which are often anti-Ahmadiyya. Website as a space that guarantees freedom and openness is the choice of Ahmadiyah to strengthen their existence. Campbell (2010) sees that the presence of religion in the media space is related to the identity of a group. Moreover, at the same time, what is promoted by Ahmadiyah finds its relevance with the intention of the ministry of religion in affirming their existence.

#### D. CONCLUSION

The involvement of the Ahmadiyya Community in promoting peaceful Islam can be a consideration in understanding the religious expression of the Ahmadiyya. This involvement is also Ahmadiyah's strategy in taming the mainstream narrative. Some things related to peaceful Islam that are displayed by Ahmadiyah through their website are the teachings of Islam as a universal teaching, the reinterpretation of *jihad* and not forcing one's will on others, the obligation to spread love and compassion, and the obligation to uphold justice as the basis for the values of peaceful Islam.

Such studies are important in the local Indonesian context. Amid the government's efforts to fight against radicalism and terrorism, the existence of Ahmadiyah can be one of the social agents that assist the government's program. An interesting point is that the narrative of peaceful Islam brought by Ahmadiyah does not present new things that are completely different from other communities. This means that Ahmadiyah is trying to become part of the grand narrative of Islam that is developing well in society.

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