

# The existence of the Ahmadiyya in Indonesian democracy: a struggle for survival in the midst of the Islamic-movement competition

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## Abstract

This article attempts to portray the competition of forces in the Indonesian democratic system, with the Ahmadiyya movement as the test case for the “contestation”. This article takes into account the reformation era as the landscape of the study, since this era opens a relatively wider opportunity for many entities to freely express their ideas and actions. Exploring the socio-political approach, this study comes up with the following findings: first, in the sociological domain, as predicted by Dawam Rahardjo, moderates defeat radical Indonesian Islam as the former outnumber the latter. However, in the political domain, as pointed out by Martin van Bruinessen, since the moderate Islam is just a silent majority, then the radical Islam wins the competition - marked by the issuance of the SKB Tiga Menteri, because the factor at work in the winning of this political competition is more on the “logic of power”, rather than the “power of logic”. The victory of the radical Islam in the political domain in turn implies at the failure of the Ahmadiyya movement in its struggle for survival in Indonesia.

Artikel ini mengungkap persaingan antar kekuatan ideologi pada sistem demokrasi Indonesia dengan gerakan Ahmadiyah sebagai studi kasus dalam “pertarungan” ini. Artikel ini bertitik tolak pada gerakan reformasi karena sejak era reformasi, terbukalah kesempatan yang lebih luas bagi seluruh entitas untuk mengungkapkan gagasan dan tindakannya secara bebas. Menggunakan pendekatan sosial politik, penelitian ini menemukan hal-hal sebagai berikut: pertama, pada ranah sosiologi, sebagaimana telah diprediksi oleh Dawam Rahardjo, kelompok moderat mengalahkan kelompok Islam radikal meskipun jumlah konstituennya melebihi kelompok moderat. Namun demikian, pada ranah politis, sebagaimana diungkap oleh Martin van Bruinessen, karena Islam moderat merupakan mayoritas pasif, maka kelompok radikal memenangkan pertarungan ini - ditandai dengan diterbitkannya SKB tiga Menteri, sebab faktor kemenangan politis lebih berada pada “logika kekuasaan” daripada “kekuasaan logika”. Kemenangan kelompok Islam radikal pada ranah politik sebaliknya menunjukkan kegagalan gerakan Ahmadiyah dalam perjuangannya agar eksistensinya tetap ada di Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Ideological competition, Ahmadiyah, The logic of power, Islamic moderatism, Islamic radicalism.*

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**Introduction**

Indonesia has embraced democracy as its political system. That is the reason why since its inception, this nation-state has recognized and celebrated the plurality of many entities, including political parties and mass organizations, to participate in the development and welfare of this country. The existence of many entities in this country sometimes results the competition—which is also accepted in a democratic system as long as it is performed in a constitutional way—among them. Therefore, some political parties and mass organizations celebrate the Indonesian democratic system by competing to be the leading one. This is also the case with the Islamic movements.

Dawam Rahardjo, a prominent Indonesian Muslim intellectual as well as an analyst on Indonesian Islam, once stated that there has been a prolonged competition between the radical and the moderate Islam in Indonesia, in which, he further predicted, "...ultimately, the moderates will win" (Chew, 2008). His statement and prediction are based on the fact that while radical Islam may have increased in number, moderate Islam also develops in the State Universities of Islamic Studies throughout the country (Chew, 2008). This current paper will attempt to thoroughly scrutinize this interesting statement and prediction, by unraveling the contestation between radical and moderate Indonesian Islam, with special reference to the Ahmadiyya movement as the test case for the "battle."

The Ahmadiyya movement is used as the test case, since this movement is highly controversial in Islam as its tenets include, among others, the belief in the prophethood of its founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908). The claim of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's prophethood is for sure challenging the faith of the Muslim majority, in which the prophethood is believed to have been closed since the demise of the prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the existence of the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia sparks pros and cons, involving as well the two opposing standpoints: radical and moderate Indonesian Islam.

This study will shed light on the arguments and the actions of the two opposing standpoints in winning the "heart" of Indonesian society and Indonesian policymakers regarding the existence of the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia. The focus of this study will be directed upon this issue during the Indonesian reformation era, with the limit of up to the issuance of the decree "*SKB Tiga Menteri*," since this decree is not amended up to now. This new era is used as a landscape, because the reformation era, compared with the New Order era, offers a relatively wider opportunity for many entities, including the radical and the moderate, to freely express their ideas. Hence, any positive or

negative response towards the Ahmadiyya movement appears more obvious in the reformation era.

Apart from coping with the competition between the two opposing standpoints, this paper will surely also unfold the axis upon which the competition revolves around, that is, in this case, the struggle of the Ahmadiyya movement itself to survive in Indonesia. This movement has to exert itself to survive in Indonesia as its controversial tenets challenge the faith of the mainstream in Indonesian Islam, as in the world of Islam in general. So, the present study will depict an overall picture of the Ahmadiyya movements amidst the harsh competition between radical and moderate Islam in the Indonesian reformation era.

The present study uses sociological as well as political approaches. While the sociological approach explores horizontal interactions among elements in a society, the political approach deals with the vertical relationship between the society and the government which holds the power to make decisions (Kartodirdjo, 1992: 4). In this regard, this study will benefit from a sociological approach to comprehend the horizontal interactions between three elements: the Ahmadiyya movement, the proponents of the movement, and the opponents of it. In the political approach, this study will portray the three elements in their effort to lobby the government as the decision-maker. Following Robert K. Merton's principle of "detachment" in scientific study (Wilardjo, 2010), this socio-political account will attempt to portray the issue at stake an objective portrait as possible.

After this Introduction, the following paragraphs will be divided into three main sections. The first section will deal with a description of the Ahmadiyya movement in general to get a sense of the highly controversial nature of this movement. The second section will include an exposition of the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia which has been put in trouble as a result of its controversial nature. The third section will proceed to the portrait of the

struggle for survival of the Ahmadiyya movement in the midst of the competition of Islamic movements in the Indonesian reformation era. This third section will start with a description of the spring and the competition of many movements and groups in the reformation era, followed by a portrait of the struggle for survival of the Ahmadiyya movement in the midst of the competition of the Islamic movements, which will include as well the “end” of the struggle, signified by the issuance of the decree “*SKB Tiga Menteri*,” and the competition. After these three main sections, the final remark will be given in the Conclusion.

Some current studies have touched upon this issue, yet the research gap still managed to be spelled out: none of the following studies address the Ahmadiyya movement in its relation to the competition of radical and moderate wings of Islam, with the issuance of “*SKB Tiga Menteri*” as the vocal point. Budiman (2020), copes with the Ahmadiyya movement in the context of secularization in symbolic contestation. Wahyudi (2020) addresses the Ahmadiyya movement in the context of social adjustment. Fatoni (2019), touches upon the Ahmadiyya movement in the context of propagation strategy. Khoiron (2019), addresses Ahmadiyya in the context of local relations. Nawawi (2018), studies the Ahmadiyya movement from the perspective of Basic Human Rights. Sari (2018), studies the violent attack on the Ahmadiyya movement in Cikeusik from critical discourse.

### **Ahmadiyya: the emergence of a controversial movement in Islam**

The emergence of the Ahmadiyya movement was surrounded, at least, by two circumstances: political and religious. In the political dimension, it was in the context of the struggle of India to get Independence from British colonialism. In the 1840’s, the British ruler regained power when it took virtual control over the sub-continent, and in 1857, the Indian struggle for Independence from the ruler ended in vain (Lavan, 1974: 1, 5). The response from Muslims was divided

into two groups: those who took a cooperative attitude towards the British government, and those who continued to revolt against it. The former position was taken by, for example, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan; and the latter standpoint was taken by, for example, the followers of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, who had launched their *jihad*, in the sense of “holy war,” since the 1820s. On the one hand, Sayyid Ahmad Khan contended that it was better to take a cooperative attitude towards the British rulers, as they had made a positive contribution to the life of the Muslim community in India. On the other hand, Sayyid Ahmad Shahid opined that a revolt against the non-Muslim ruler in the form of *jihad* must be continued (Lavan, 1974: 5, 6, 9). This was the situation when Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, with his Ahmadiyya movement, appeared on the scene in 1889.

The second circumstance surrounding the emergence of the Ahmadiyya movement was the popularity of religious debates and controversies among the religious communities in India. These polemics often took place between the communities of Hindus, Christians, and Muslims (Nadwi, 1974: 4). Faced with this condition, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad held the opinion that taking a cooperative attitude towards the British government was the right decision, as it could create conducive conditions for the spread of the true message of Islam to other religions peacefully (Lavan, 1974: 8). Just as Sayyid Ahmad Khan questioned the relevance of *jihad* in that time, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad went even further, stating that the obligation of *jihad* had, in his time, ceased. Instead, following the footsteps of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, he advanced the need for *ijtihad*, or the effort, to present the correct re-interpretation of Islamic teachings (Nadwi, 1974: 25). With these ideals in mind, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad started to set forth the teachings of Islam while, at the same time, challenging the truth of other religions.

Mirza’s effort to challenge the missionaries of other religions certainly won the attention of the Muslim community. This happened especially after he

published his voluminous works, *Barabih-i-Ahmadiyyah*. These works, which comprise four volumes with one additional volume appearing after a long gap of twenty years, were warmly welcomed by Muslims (Nadwi, 1974: 25, 29). However, this enthusiasm did not endure for long after he started to make many extravagant claims. The Muslim community could tolerate him when he claimed that he was a *mujaddid* (reformer) of that era. Yet, his later claims to being the Promised Messiah (*al-Masih al-Maw'ud*), a Mahdi, and even a prophet (Ali, 1918: 11-13), provoked the sensibility of the Muslim community. This sparked polemics and controversies surrounding him.

### **Controversies and negative responses**

The polemics on Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claims emerged even among his own followers. In 1914, six years after his death, his followers split into two factions, known as the Qadiani, referring to Qadian, a location in India, as its first headquarters (Press and Publication Desk of Ahmadiyya, 2000: 3), headed by Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud; and the Lahori, pointing to Lahore, Pakistan, as its headquarter, led by Muhammad Ali (Ghazi, 1991: 67). The former hold the belief that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is, apart from the Promised Messiah and a Mahdi, also a prophet in the full sense of the word. The latter has the same opinion as the former except where the status of "prophet" for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is concerned. The Lahori contended that Mirza is a prophet only in a metaphorical sense.<sup>1</sup> In Indonesia, while the Qadiani gather in *Jema'at Ahmadiyah Indonesia* (JAI), the Lahore gather in *Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia* (GAI). The present article addresses more on the JAI more since this movement provokes more controversies than the GAI.

Although the Ahmadiyya movement is divided into these two slightly different groups, the two groups are very often considered the same by Muslim

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<sup>1</sup> The opinion of Qadianis on the issue of "prophethood" of Mirza, can be read, for example, in Ahmad (1980: 38-45). For the opinion of Lahoris, see Ali (1918: 25, 46,48).

outsiders such as Iqbal (1976), Ghazi (1991), Nadwi (1974), Maududi (1956), and Qaradhawi (1999). All of the Muslim scholars express their opposition to the Ahmadiyya movement, both the Qadiani and the Lahori. This opposition appeared more clearly when a conference of many Islamic Organizations was held in Mecca on 6-10 April 1974. This conference, which was held by the World Muslim League (*Rabi'at al-'Alam al-Islami*), issued many crucial points and recommendations, such as that “Qadianism or Ahmadiyya is a subversive movement against Islam and the Muslim world, as they declare that their founder is a prophet, and they abolish the obligation of *jihad*.” Therefore, “they must be declared as non-Muslims and ousted from the fold of Islam.” Consequently, “they must be banned from entering the Holy lands.” Moreover, “there must be no dealings with them; they must be boycotted socially, economically and culturally; nor should they be married with or to, nor should they be allowed to be buried in the Muslims graveyards.” And, “Muslim countries must also prohibit the spread of the mission of Ahmadiyya in their countries” (Hasan & Muhammad, 1986: 66-68).

### **The Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia: “caught in the fire”**

Following the above recommendation, many Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan declare Ahmadiyya as a movement outside the fold of Islam and its adherents as non-Muslims (Ghazi, 1991: 61). Indonesia, a majority Muslim country, takes a relatively the same line. Six years after the conference, in 1980 (and restated 25 years later, in 2005), the Council of Indonesian Ulama (*Majlis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) issued a *fatwa* stating that Ahmadiyya is a group outside the pale of Islam ([www.mui.or.id](http://www.mui.or.id)). Four years later, in 1984 (and reaffirmed in 2005 by Minister Maftuh Basyuni), the Ministry of Religious Affairs issued a circular letter sent to its branches throughout Indonesia, backing up the *fatwa* (Tupai, 2005).



The impact of the *fatwa* and the circular letter was tremendous. After their issuance, the wave of the opposition of some Indonesian Muslim groups towards Ahmadiyya, which has in fact started since the very beginning of Ahmadiyya's existence in Indonesia, was getting bigger and bigger. This situation is then accompanied by the emergence of a new era in Indonesia, that is, the reformation era. The birth of the reformation era offered the opportunity for many entities, including radical movements, to emerge.

From then on, the opposition towards the Ahmadiyya movement often manifested not only at the theoretical level but also took radical actions. A series of violent attacks—for example in 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2008—have been directed at the Ahmadiyya movement. It is in this regard that the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia was “caught in the fire” of hatred from Muslim outsiders, so that in 2006 some members of the Ahmadiyya in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, tried to escape, but failed, from the “fire” of the hatred by seeking for asylum to Australia and Canada (Metro TV, 2006). In addition to the violent attack on the Ahmadiyya members in Cikeusik in 2011, even after the issuance of the decree “SKB Tiga Menteri” in 2008, the members of the Ahmadiyya Lombok have to live in “Wisma Transito”, a building for the transmigration in the West Nusa Tenggara (Bonasir, 2018). This condition made the Ahmadiyya movement has to struggle for its survival in the reformation era.

### **Indonesian reformation era: the spring and competition of movements**

The fall of Soeharto from the presidency on May 21, 1998, signified the end of the New Order era and, at the same time, the beginning of a new era in the Indonesian nation-state, that is, the reformation era. The emergence of this new era blows a “wind of change” for the country's dynamic life. Compared with the New Order era, when many entities and forces were pressed on behalf of “national stability”—which was actually just a strategy of the regime to maintain

the *status quo*—the reformation era offers a relatively wider opportunity for the entities and forces to show up. That is the reason why some groups that in the New Order era remained *latent* found the Reformation era an appropriate moment to *manifest*. This is apparent, for instance, in the context of Islamic movements.

The Indonesian reformation era witnessed many Islamic political parties and Islamic mass organizations. Concerning political parties, there were present, for instance, the Crescent Party (PBB), the Justice and Welfare Party (PKS), the Resurgence of Community Party (PKU, and PNU), the Islamic Community Party (PUI), the Indonesian Islamic Association Party (PSII), and the Unity and Development Party (PPP), which continued its existence since the New Order era. While in religious groups emerged, for instance, the Islamic Defender Front (FPI), the Communication Forum of *Ahlussunnah wal-Jama'ah* (FKASWJ) with its *Laskar Jihad*, the *Ikhwanul Muslimin* (IM), the Indonesian *Hizbut Tahrir* (HTI), the *Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI), the *Salafi* Propagation, the Indonesian Islamic State (NII), the Indonesian Committee for the Islamic World Solidarity (KISDI), and the Association of Indonesian Muslim Labours (PPMI)—the last two mass organizations continued its existence since the New Order era (Zada, 2002: 3-4).

Qodir (2003: 138) classifies these emerging groups, together with groups that have existed since the New Order era such as *Nabdlatul Ulama* (NU) and Muhammadiyah, into three categories: radical-fundamental Islam, moderate Islam, and political Islam. The first category is represented by, for instance, FPI, FKASWJ, IM, HTI, and MMI. The second category is represented, for example, by NU and Muhammadiyah, that have existed long before the presence of the reformation era. The third category is represented by PPP, PBB, and PKS. A slightly different typology is given by Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (2005: 488-489). They both classify the first group as “pro-syari’at” Islam, the second group as moderate Islam, and the third group,

add one different category, *Sufistic* propagation, represented, for example, by Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa' Gym) dan Arifin Ilham.

Even though the two typologies give a different name to the first groups—Qodir uses the term “radical-fundamental Islam,” Hidayat and Gaus use the term “pro-*syari'at*” Islam—they actually refer to the same category, because the latter term, “pro-*syari'at*,” is, in fact, one of the features of the “radical-fundamental” Islam. At this point, Khamadi Zada gives five items that can be used as a measure to identify whether or not a group is radical. The five items are: (1) the relationship between religion and state; (2) the Islamic state; (3) the implementation of Islamic *syari'at*; (4) Islam and democracy; and (5) a female president. Regarding these five items, a radical group will usually respond as follows: Islamic teachings, on the one hand, include the integrated relationship of religion and state (*al-Islam din wa dawlah*), so that Islamic State (*dawlah islamiyyah*) is a must since this state will guarantee the implementation of Islamic *syari'at*; on the other hand, Islamic teachings do not compatible with democracy—in Islam, sovereignty is at the “hand” of God, while in a democracy the sovereignty is at the hand of the majority in a society—and Islamic teachings also prohibit a female president (Zada, 2002: 100-144). Thus, viewed from Zada’s standard, while the former typology refers to the “whole,” the latter one refers to the “part.”

In this light, this is also understandable when Hidayat and Gaus do not explicitly mention “political Islam” in their typology, because this type of Islam can also be inserted into the first category, the “radical-fundamental” Islam as this group usually agrees upon, even struggles for, the implementation of *syari'at*. If this “political Islam” can be “deleted”—using the criteria from Zada above—from Qodir’s typology, there are then only two categories: radical-fundamental Islam, and moderate Islam. Combined together with Hidayat and Gaus typology, there are three categories: radical-fundamental Islam, moderate Islam, and *Sufistic* propagation. However, this third category, *Sufistic*

propagation, is just a peripheral group in the discourse concerning five items pointed out by Zada, as this group does not pay much attention to those items. Therefore, there are two main groups that play a pivotal role in the making of Indonesian Islam: radical and moderate Islam.

The radical and the moderate Islam in the Indonesian reformation era are, to some extent, the metamorphosis of the two types of Indonesian Islam that have, in fact, competed for a long time, even since the time when the Indonesian nation-state was in the making. This formative period of the Indonesian nation-state witnessed a hot debate, even tension, and conflict, as to the form of the nation-state: whether it would take the form of a theocratic state or a secular state. Some contend that Indonesia should take the form of a theocratic state, with an Islamic state in this case, as an ideal form. On the other side, some contend that a secular state would be an ideal form. Finally, on June 22, 1945, the Committee of the Preparation for the Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI) issued the *Piagam Jakarta* (Jakarta Charter) in which stated that Indonesia is based on “the Unity of God with an obligation to implement the Islamic *syari’at* for its adherents.” However, the phrase “with an obligation to implement the Islamic *syari’at* for its adherents” was later removed from the 1945 Constitution as there was a hard protest from the eastern part of Indonesia (Zada, 2002: 100-144).

Although the phrase “with an obligation to implement the Islamic *syari’at* for its adherents” was removed from the 1945 Constitution, the struggle to revive the “removed phrase” still continues, even to this day. Those who struggle for the revival of the “removed phrase” are then termed, in the above typology, “radical-fundamental” Islam, which is sometimes also termed “the formalistic” Islam, since they struggle for the implementation of Islamic *syari’at* in its fullest formal form. On the other side, another Islamic standpoint contends that the Indonesian nation-state surely needs to absorb the ideals from religion, but not necessarily take the form of a theocratic state. In other

words, this standpoint, which is called moderate Islam or sometimes termed substantive Islam, opines that it is enough when Indonesia is infused with the spirit of Islamic teachings, without the formal name of Islamic *syari'at*. This standpoint is advocated, for example, by Muslim intellectuals from NU and Muhammadiyah such as Abdurrahman Wahid, Nurcholish Madjid, and Syafi'i Ma'arif. Later, this moderate-substantive standpoint is developed further by younger intellectuals from NU, gathering around the Liberal Islam Network (JIL), and from Muhammadiyah, gathering around the Network of Young Intellectuals of Muhammadiyah (JIMM). The further development of JIL and JIMM eventually initiated more liberal wings in moderate Islam (Qadir, 2003: 138-139, 176).

It is these two types of Islam—the radical-formalistic Islam, and the moderate-substantive Islam with its liberal wings as well—that have been widely involved in hot debates on strategic issues concerning the ideal form of Indonesian nation-state as well as regarding the implementation of Islamic *syari'at*. Furthermore, apart from responding to the strategic issues, radical and moderate Indonesian Islam also compete in responding to “ad hoc” issues, such as the existence of the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia. This issue can be categorized as “ad hoc” as it is not present predominantly in Indonesian discourse and only erupts at some particular pointed times. Nevertheless, this issue is also of great significance as it touches upon the issue of religious freedom, which is guaranteed in the Indonesian Constitution. Therefore, the existence of the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia is then also becoming an issue worth debating for these two different types of Indonesian Islam that have actually competed for many other issues heretofore mentioned.

### **The struggle of the Ahmadiyya movement for survival in the midst of the competition of Islamic movements**

Although there have been great waves of opposition and negative responses from Muslim outsiders to the worldwide Ahmadiyya movement, this highly controversial movement managed to spread its mission to countries beyond its origin, India (Shadid & Koningsveld, 1995: 50). This movement planted its first seed in Indonesia around 1925, thus twenty years before the inception of this country. And after a relatively long struggle of 28 years since its first mission in 1925, the Ahmadiyah movement succeeded in getting its legal status in Indonesia through the decree of the Ministry of Justice in 1953 ([www.ahmadiyya.or.id](http://www.ahmadiyya.or.id)).

Even though it has got a legal status to exist in Indonesia, it does not mean that its existence in this country is not without disturbance. The opposition and negative responses of worldwide Muslim outsiders towards the Ahmadiyya movement also resonated in Indonesia, especially after the issuance of the MUI *fatwa* (1980) and the circular letter from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (1984), such as stated in section C of this paper. Therefore, the wider freedom offered by the Indonesian reformation era immediately benefited the Ahmadiyya movement to strengthen its position in Indonesia. In 2000 (in the reign of the late Abdurrahman Wahid), thus two years after the beginning of the Indonesian reformation era, the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia invited its top worldwide leader, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the fourth *Khalifah* of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, to visit this country (Tupai, 2005).

The fourth *Khalifah* then visited Indonesia on June 2000. The presence of this highest leader (*Khalifah*) of the highly controversial Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia has surely provoked pros and cons. On the positive stance, his presence was warmly welcomed by Abdurrahman Wahid (the President), Amien Rais (chief of the People's Advisory Assembly, MPR), and Dawam Rahardjo (from the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals, ICMI). Rahardjo

even chaired a seminar called *Dialog Pakar Islam*, held on June 29, 2000, in Regent Hotel. This seminar invited, in addition to the *khalifah* Tahir Ahmad, many prominent moderate Muslim intellectuals, such as Amien Rais, Bahtiar Efendi, Moeslim Abdurrahman, Nurcholish Madjid, M.M. Billah, Azyumardi Azra, and Masdar Farid Mas'udi (Jaiz, 2002: 59).

On the opposition stance, the Indonesian Council of the Propagation of Islam (DDII), represented by Wahid Alwi, and the Research Institution of Islamic Studies (LPII), represented by Umar Abduh, Hartono Ahmad Jaiz, Jajat Sudrajat, Farid Ahmad Okbah held a press conference on July 4, 2000. This press conference announced many crucial points regarding the deviancy of the Ahmadiyya movement, such as that the Ahmadiyya movement believes in the false claim of the prophethood of its founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad; that it has its own place of pilgrimage, that is, Qadian, India, not Mecca; and that the movement has its own holy book named *Tadzkirah* (Jaiz, 2002: 59).

Not long after the presence of the *khalifah* did erupt violence against the Ahmadiyya movement in 2000. This violence was, according to the “confession” of LPPI, provoked by a statement of the *Khalifah* who boasted that Indonesia will become a country with Ahmadiyya as the majority (Jaiz & Tede, 2011). This violence was followed by violent attacks on the Ahmadiyya movement in Manislor, Kuningan, West Java, and Pancor, East Lombok, as well as in Mubarak campus, Parung, Bogor, West Java in 2002. According to Rahardjo, these attacks erupted after MUI held a one-day seminar on August 11, 2002, inviting speakers opposing to the Ahmadiyya movement such as FPI and LPPI, that recommended the Ahmadiyya movement be banned in Indonesia (Rahardjo, 2005).

In response to the negative attitude and violent attacks on the Ahmadiyya movement, some younger moderate Muslim intellectuals, such as Ahmad Rais, son of Amien Rais, from the Association of Muhammadiyah Youth (*Ikatan Remaja Muhammadiyah*, IRM), Ulil Abshar Abdalla from Liberal Islam Network

(*Jaringan Islam Liberal*, JIL), and Siti Musdah Mulia from International Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP) gathered in Muhammadiyah office (Jakarta) on July 17, 2005. Together with other figures, such as Weinata Sairin from Communion of Indonesian Churches (*Persekutuan Gereja-gereja Indonesia*, PGI), and Romo Beny from Conference of Indonesian Churches (*Konferensi Wali Gereja Indonesia*, KWI), they lend their support to the existence of the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia ([www.kapanlagi.com](http://www.kapanlagi.com), July 19, 2005).

At this point, the Ahmadiyya movement becomes then the central case of the “battle” between the groups advocating the movement and those who oppose it. In this “battle,” it is very often that the Ahmadiyya movement becomes the target of the hatred of those who oppose the movement. According to the data from Setara Institute, as quoted by Jaiz and Tede, a series of violent attacks take place almost every year, with which the year 2008 being the highest in number: 238 incidents (Jaiz & Tede, 2011).

In response to the violent attacks, the Indonesian government instructed the Coordinating Institution of Schools and Beliefs Watch (BAKORPAKEM) to investigate the nature of the Ahmadiyya movement. After investigating for three months (January 15 –April 15, 2008), on April 16, 2008, the BAKORPAKEM recommended to the Indonesian government to stop the activities of the Ahmadiyya movement in propagating its teachings as these teachings have deviated from the basic tenets of Islamic teachings; and if the movement insists to promulgate its teachings, the BAKORPAKEM recommended the government to ban the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia, because the proselytizing of the movement will thus cause restlessness in Indonesian society ([www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com), April 17, 2008).

The recommendation of BAKORPAKEM provoked controversies. On the pros stance, Muslim Community Forum (FUI), consisting of many Islamic organizations such as FPI, MMI, DDII, LPPI, and HTI, held *Apel Siaga* involving about 100.000 people in front of the *Istana Negara* on April 20, 2008,



urging the Indonesian government to issue a decree containing the banning of the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia ([www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com), April 20, 2008). In addition to that, MUI also asked the government to issue the decree soon, so that the position of the Ahmadiyya movement will become clear. On the constance, Masdar Farid Mas'udi from NU reminds the government to refer to the 1945 Constitution that guarantees the freedom of belief. Mas'udi also reminds the members of NU to behave in a tolerant way (*tasamuh*) to other beliefs as this is the basis of the NU organization (*kebittah jam'iyah*) ([www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com), April 18, 2008). Meanwhile, the Ahmadiyya movement, together with the Alliance of Nationality for the Freedom of Religion and Belief (AKKBB)—an alliance consisting of many non-governmental organizations, including some moderate Islam organizations such as the Wahid Institute, Islamic Campus Network (JARIK), Liberal Islam Network (JIL), Institution of Religious and Philosophical Studies (LSaF), and *Fatayat* NU ([www.akkbb.wordpress.com](http://www.akkbb.wordpress.com))—came to the Council of Presidency's Decision (WANTIMPRES) on April 22, 2008, to request the prevention of Indonesian government from issuing the decree banning the Ahmadiyya movement. The WANTIMPRES, represented by Adnan Buyung Nasution, promised to do their utmost to prevent the issuance of the decree, which planned to be issued on April 23, 2008 ([www.republika.co.id](http://www.republika.co.id), April 22, 2008).

### **Joint ministerial decree: a “yellow card” for the Ahmadiyya movement and the “end” of the competition**

The effort of WANTIMPRES was temporarily successful: the decree containing the banning of the Ahmadiyya movement was not issued on the scheduled time, April 23, 2008. However, on June 9, 2008, after about two month's negotiation and resistance, the Indonesian government eventually issued the *SKB Tiga Menteri*, a decree jointly signed by three ministers—Minister of religious affairs (Maftuh Basyuni), General Attorney (Hendarman Supanji),

and Minister of domestic affairs (Mardiyanto). The *SKB Tiga Menteri* contains six points: one point refers to a general clause, warning Indonesian citizens not to propagate an interpretation that deviated from the teachings of certain legalized religions in Indonesia; two points refer to a particular clause, warning the adherents of *Jema'at Ahmadiyah Indonesia* (JAI) not to promulgate the prophethood of its founder, and the sanction if the movement brake this clause; two other points refer to Indonesian citizen in general not to do violence against the JAI adherents, and the sanction if they brake this clause; and one final point refers to government's apparatus to watch the execution of the above clauses ([www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com), June 9, 2008).

It is worth noting that although many criticisms have been directed upon the *SKB*, it has not been changed or removed up to now. So, *SKB Tiga Menteri* is a sort of temporary end of the competition between radical and moderate Indonesian Islam in the case of the Ahmadiyya movement. In addition to that, this issuance of the *SKB Tiga Menteri* signals at least three significant points. First, it indicates the failure of the Ahmadiyya movement in lobbying the Indonesian government as the decision maker. This implies that the struggle for survival, let alone for strengthening its position, of the Ahmadiyya movement ended in vain at this temporary point. *SKB Tiga Menteri* has given, using football language, a “yellow card” for the Ahmadiyya, since this movement is no longer permitted to propagate its teachings, and if the movement insists on promulgating them, it will get a “red card,” be banned in Indonesia.

The failure of the Ahmadiyya movement also means the second point, the advocates of the Ahmadiyya movement, in this case, the moderate Indonesian Islam, lost in competition with the opponents of the Ahmadiyya movement, the radical Islam. This could be caused by, as pointed out by Martin

van Bruinessen,<sup>2</sup> the third point, the “logic of power” speaks louder than the “power of logic”: those with the higher number of mass mobilization will win the competition. In this regard, this also means that it is the mobilization of the masses that exerts a higher impact on the government’s decision: the number of the moderate Islam could be higher than the number of radical Islam, but since the former was a silent majority, it then was not able to defeat the latter that has been actively mobilized its masses in the competition.

### Conclusion

Dawam Rahardjo’s prediction that moderate Indonesian Islam will defeat radical Islam has not, in the case of the “battle” on the Ahmadiyya movement, come true. Rahardjo’s statement that moderate Indonesian Islam grows rapidly in number through Islamic State Universities could be true, as confirmed, for example, by Zuly Qodir that there exists a sort of network of moderate Islam in two important state universities through the figures like Amin Abdullah, Abdul Munir Mul Khan, Machasin, Hamim Ilyas, Syamsul Anwar (UIN Yogyakarta); and Quraish Shihab, Komaruddin Hidayat, Azyumardi Azra, Kautsar Azhari Noer, Nasaruddin Umar (UIN Jakarta) (Qadir, 2006: 2).

However, a higher number does not guarantee winning the competition over a particular case. In the case of the Ahmadiyya movement, the factor at work in the winning of the competition is more on the active mobilization of the masses, rather than the number of the masses itself. Radical Islam wins in the competition—marked by the issuance of the *SKB Tiga Menteri* that limits the space of the movement of the Ahmadiyya—because it actively mobilized its masses, for example in the case of *Apel Siaga* involved about 100.000 people, as stated above. In this light, as pointed out by Martin van Bruinessen, the

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<sup>2</sup> In his interview with the [Radio Nederland Wereldomroep](http://www.geocities.com/lokkie2005/rn070206.htm), February 6, 2006, Martin van Bruinessen stated that Islamic hardliners gained more powerful influence on Indonesian government through the mobilization of the masses. The transcript of this interview was accessed through <http://www.geocities.com/lokkie2005/rn070206.htm> on June 17, 2011.

government as the decision maker is more inclined to those who mobilize the masses, as this is, seen from conflict theory, a sort of “safety valve” for violence.

In conclusion, moderate Indonesian Islam can be said to have won in the sociological domain as it outnumbers radical Islam, but at the political level, the former was defeated by the latter, marked by the issuance of the *SKB Tiga Menteri* undermines the Ahmadiyya movement to develop or even to exist.

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