

## **Religious Movements and the Adoption of New Media: The Internet Used by Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia After Disbanded**

**Moh. Dulkihah<sup>1\*</sup>, Paelani Setia<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Ikhlas Rosele<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia; e-mail: moh.dulkihah@uinsgd.ac.id

<sup>2</sup> UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia; e-mail: setiapaelani66@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Universiti Malaya, Malaysia; e-mail: ikhlas@um.edu.my

\* Correspondence

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to examine the religious movement of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) when adopting new media in its movement activities in Indonesia. The research in this paper uses a qualitative method with data collection through online observation of the HTI website, Media Umat [www.mediaumat.id](http://www.mediaumat.id). This research found that HTI as a religious movement also adopted the internet in its movement activities just like other religious movements, namely NU and Muhammadiyah. HTI's use of the internet also refutes the argument that the internet is incompatible with religion, which is based more on secularization arguments. The internet in fact provides new opportunities that are positively welcomed by the religious community, which makes it part of its culture according to its needs and interests. This religious response can be seen in HTI's use of the internet which can be categorized into three forms: ideological, polemical and contextual. All these forms of internet use show the positive impact of the internet for religion and the ability of religion to become part of modernity for its interests and needs by adapting the internet as a product of modernity.

**Keywords:** Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI); internet; Islamic Caliphate; religious movements.

**Abstrak:** Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji gerakan keagamaan Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) dalam mengadopsi media baru dalam aktivitas gerakannya di Indonesia. Penelitian dalam makalah ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi daring terhadap situs web HTI, Media Umat [www.mediaumat.id](http://www.mediaumat.id). Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa HTI sebagai sebuah gerakan keagamaan juga mengadopsi internet dalam aktivitas gerakannya seperti halnya gerakan keagamaan lainnya, yaitu NU dan Muhammadiyah. Penggunaan internet oleh HTI juga membantah argumen bahwa internet tidak sesuai dengan agama, yang lebih banyak didasarkan pada argumen sekularisasi. Internet justru memberikan peluang-peluang baru yang disambut positif oleh komunitas agama, yang menjadikannya sebagai bagian dari budayanya sesuai dengan kebutuhan dan kepentingannya. Respon keagamaan ini dapat dilihat pada penggunaan internet oleh HTI yang dapat dikategorikan ke dalam tiga bentuk: ideologis, polemis, dan kontekstual. Semua bentuk penggunaan internet ini menunjukkan dampak positif internet bagi agama dan kemampuan agama untuk menjadi bagian dari modernitas untuk kepentingan dan kebutuhannya dengan mengadaptasi internet sebagai produk modernitas.

**Kata Kunci:** Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI); internet; Kekhalifahan Islam; gerakan keagamaan.

### **1. Introduction**

Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) is an Islamic religious organization that is known to want to re-establish the Islamic caliphate in Indonesia (Muhtadi, 2009, p. 630). This is because, according to HTI, the Islamic Caliphate system, like in the era of Rasulullah SAW, is the ideal system of government compared to the state system widely adopted today, namely democracy (Ghifari, 2017). For HTI, the Caliphate system is a political system that directly originates from the Creator, Allah SWT, so its

implementation in society will not have the defects of a democratic system. In contrast, democracy for HTI is a state system that originates from human ideas full of flaws, so its application to society is detrimental (Zallum, 2002, p. 10). Therefore, various efforts were made by HTI to realize its desire to establish an Islamic caliphate in Indonesia.

HTI's efforts in realizing the desire to establish a Caliphate can be seen in their social activities. Examples of these efforts include demonstrations on the streets, protests at government buildings, holding religious studies at mosques, holding parades, holding seminars, holding workshops, and sermons. A series of direct efforts have been carried out by HTI, such as the 2007 Caliphate Conference at the Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta. This event was attended by tens of thousands of participants who were HTI members from all over Indonesia (Syah & Setia, 2021, p. 524). Furthermore, the 2013 International Caliphate Congress was held at the Bung Karno Stadium, Jakarta, with as many as one hundred thousand HTI members from around the world attending (Karagiannis, 2009). Then, the 2014 Islamic and Civilization Conference at the Sentul International Convention Center in Bogor (Syah & Setia, 2021, p. 527). Other efforts undertaken by HTI are demonstrations against government policies, such as the rejection of the 2014 fuel price increase (Rosyid, 2015, p. 15) and the rejection of the Miss World event in Bali in 2013 (Syukur, 2015, p. 241). Other persuasive efforts that invite the public (*da'wah*) are also carried out by HTI, such as sermons and seminars at universities (Azmy, 2020, p. 96). Meetings at tertiary institutions have been held several times on campuses such as IPB, Bogor and, UGM, Yogyakarta.

Scholars have researched HTI's efforts to realize the desire to establish a Caliphate. For example, Osman (2010a) examines the ideology of the development of the Hizb ut-Tahrir Caliphate in Indonesia and the recruitment system by utilizing a network of mosques, students, schools, and women. In addition, Azmy (2020), discusses the obligation to uphold the Caliphate for HTI because it follows the Al-Quran and the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad. Then, Zulkarnain discusses the mobilization of Caliphate's opinion by HTI so that the movement has received a lot of public sympathies. Furthermore, Mujahiduddin<sup>(2011)</sup>, who examined HTI protest actions against policies issued by the government, also encouraged the public to take the same action, such as mobilizing efforts to demand that Basuki Tjahaya Purnama (Ahok) be punished for blasphemy in 2016.

However, there are still very few studies discussing HTI on the internet. This is important because, according to Iqbal and Zulkifli (2016), fundamentalist movements such as HTI are not anti-globalization as they say in their public actions, or they are anti-Western, anti-globalization products and anti-democracy. On the contrary, this movement is a player and interpreter of globalization through their nature that crosses national and continental boundaries (transnational). The proof is that they have taken part in various parts of the world, such as Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and Southeast Asia. Ahmed and Stuart's study (2010, p. 15), states that Hizb ut-Tahrir has spread to more than 50 countries worldwide. Coupled with their use of global media, is proof that Hizb ut-Tahrir is a globalization player organization. Through international media, Hizb ut-Tahrir creates an 'imaginary' community that unites all its members in the world (Saunders, 2008). All members of Hizb ut-Tahrir the world use the internet to exchange ideas, strengthen solidarity among members, and campaign for Muslim unity through members of the global community (Jauhari, Suryandaru, & Sugihartati, 2021).

In addition, the Indonesian government officially disbanded Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) as an Islamic mass organization on July 19, 2017 (Burhani, 2017). The government formally disbanded this mass organization by revoking its organizational permit by issuing a Government Regulation instead of a Law (PERPPU) concerning Social Organization (Ormas) Number 2 of 2017. The PERPPU states that an organization with a legal entity is prohibited from standing and carrying out activities within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), when adhering to an ideology other than Pancasila. At the same time, HTI, in its organizational charters, does not include the basic idea of Pancasila but uses another principle, namely the Islamic Caliphate doctrine. For this reason, the government finally dissolved HTI and banned all of its activities in Indonesia. As a result, a ban on

him will create opportunities for other strategies to be used to maintain the presence of his movements, such as the internet, especially in spreading the idea of the Caliphate.

This research is also essential because there has been a phenomenon of changing religious ways in Indonesia by using the internet (Saat & Burhani, 2020, p. 2). This phenomenon includes changes in teaching, from teaching in mosques to lectures by popular preachers on YouTube, the use of Instagram social media for short courses by preachers, and the use of online media in collecting zakat and alms (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2019). This phenomenon is also supported by nearly 220 million internet users in Indonesia (Zuraya, 2022), making it an excellent opportunity for all religious movements to transform their movements through technological advances and expand their influence on the internet (Ahyar & Alfitri, 2019). For example, the religious organizations Nahdlatul Ulama (Setia & Iqbal, 2021) and Muhammadiyah (Akmaliah, 2020) also use the internet to expand their influence. NU, the largest religious organization in Indonesia, is currently known for its existence because it is actively involved with its congregation on the internet, such as using NU Online media on various social media platforms (Iqbal, 2020). In line with NU, Muhammadiyah also actively utilizes the internet as a means of expanding influence (Barton, 2014), such as using Muhammadiyah TV (Ni'mah et al., 2021) and social media (Adeni & Hasanah, 2021; Akmaliah, 2020; Suherdiana & Muhaemin, 2018).

Changes in religious procedures and the use of internet media by the NU and Muhammadiyah movements in Indonesia have become the fact that the internet can be in line with religion. In fact, many observers and scholars considered religion incompatible with the internet in the previous decade. The secularization thesis's strength influenced these observers' opinions at that time. They think the internet is a product of modernity harmful to religion, and its acceptance will eliminate traditional religious authority. Armfield and Holbert (2003) for example, the more religious a person is, the more he does not use the internet because the product is a secular product, which will prevent religious people from using and utilizing the internet. In line with that, several other observers also argue that the internet is a potential threat to religion because it is not neutral, carries specific values-especially capitalism, and American values-which are foreign and dangerous for religious adherents in the East (Adamu, 2002; Bockover, 2003), can weaken traditional authority with its ability to provide alternative information and create new leaders who are critical and challenge the legitimacy of traditional religious leaders in religious teaching (Barker, 2005); and online spiritual experiences lead to the uprooting of religion from its natural place, genuine adherents, real shared feelings and harmony, and collective consciousness (Schroeder et al., 1998).

Although the above studies, at a certain level, provide essential explanations for the relationship between religion and the internet, the assumptions conveyed are influenced by secularization theory; of course, they cannot be fully defended. The development of the contemporary era shows religion's ability to adopt and adapt modern technology as part of their efforts to survive, even to revive during contemporary society.

Unlike the studies above, this paper argues that the internet benefits religion with its ability to become a new facility and tool for the interests of religion and its adherents. The internet has opened up new opportunities welcomed by the religious community and used as an essential facility and resource to meet their interests and needs. To support this argument, this paper examines religious movements and their response to the internet by focusing their analysis on the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) movement in Indonesia. He intends to reveal how the HTI movement responds to the internet, which can be seen in how they use this new media. The choice of this movement has a vital significance given that HTI is an ideologically ultra-conservative contemporary Islamic movement. Still, it has unhesitatingly welcomed the internet with enthusiasm and used it for the interests and needs of its religion. In other words, the fact that even the most conservative religious groups respond favorably to the internet shows that the internet is a modern technology that positively impacts religions and religious communities. Although ideologically an ultra-conservative movement, HTI is a technologically modern movement. Another reason supporting it is the dissolution of HTI so that the use of social media as a new movement arena is adapted. With this

effort, this paper can contribute to the literature that supports good relations and interactions between the internet and religious groups where there is a mutually influencing relationship between the two, for example, writings from (Ahyyar & Alfitri, 2019; Barzilai-Nahon & Barzilai, 2005; Campbell, 2005; Kluver & Cheong, 2007; Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2019).

## 2. Method

Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) is an Islamic religious organization that is known to want to re-establish the Islamic caliphate in Indonesia (Muhtadi, 2009, p. 630). This is because, according to HTI, the Islamic Caliphate system, like in the era of Rasulullah SAW, is the ideal system of government compared to the state system widely adopted today, namely democracy (Ghifari, 2017). For HTI, the Caliphate system is a political system that directly originates from the Creator, Allah SWT, so its implementation in society will not have the defects of a democratic system. In contrast, democracy for HTI is a state system that originates from human ideas full of flaws, so its application to society is detrimental (Zallum, 2002, p. 10). Therefore, various efforts were made by HTI to realize its desire to establish an Islamic caliphate in Indonesia.

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### 3. Result and Discussion

#### *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and the Adoption of New Media*

HTI is a branch of Hizb ut Tahrir (international). It is a transnational political movement that aims to restore the Caliphate to the entire Muslim world. Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in East Jerusalem, Palestine, in early 1952 by a Palestinian scholar and judge, Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani (Commins, 1991, p. 194), who became the first leader or emir. Hizbut Tahrir arrived in Indonesia in the early 1980s. The pioneers of HT in Indonesia were Abdullah bin Nuh, a cleric who ran an Islamic boarding school in Bogor, West Java, namely Al-Ghazali, and a son who had joined Hizb ut Tahrir as a student in Jordan. Abdullah bin Nuh became acquainted with a former Lebanese Hizb ut-Tahrir member who had moved to Australia, Abdurrahman al-Baghdadi, and invited him to move to his pesantren (Rahmat, 2005, pp. 97–98). They gradually attracted HTI members at several universities, especially at the Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB).

The pioneers of HTI operated clandestinely because, at that time, the regime in power was known as Suharto. The lack of official recognition from the state meant that the option to move clandestinely had to be exercised. In addition, the existence of a regime that was not supportive of Islamist movements meant that they operated behind closed doors. Therefore, they trained their recruits through a “cell” system (*halaqah*) and avoided mentioning Hizbut Tahrir in their documents, waiting for Soeharto to fall from power (Hairgrove & Mcleod, 2008, p. 403). HTI was only able to hold its first major public event in May 2000 through the Caliphate conference, which they organized in Jakarta to promote the goal of a caliphate. In 2001, they added ‘Indonesia’ to the name of their movement, so since then, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) was officially born. HTI is one of the strongest and largest branches in HT. Following the organizational structure of HT, which divides the Muslim world into provinces, reflecting the geographical division intended for the future Caliphate, HTI is the leader and overseer of HT development in the Asia-Pacific Region, including Singapore and Malaysia (Osman, 2010, p. 735). Therefore, the development of HTI impacts its dominance in the region and the world.

HT's hallmark is its persistence in promoting a global Islamic caliphate. This movement believes that the absence of a Caliphate has made Muslims weak, divided, and marginalized in international competition. The way to solve this problem is to revive the caliphate system. The legislative process must be based on the Qur'an and Sunnah (Al-Nabhani, 1953, pp. 57–61). Meanwhile, the democratic system is seen by this movement as a system of government that is kufr (*thoghut*), which must be rejected and destroyed. Apart from that, HT also considers nationalism as tribal fanaticism (*ashabiyah*) and is contrary to Islam (Khaldun, 2009). There should be no dual allegiance because the only commitment allowed in Islam is to religion (Zaim, 2019).

In the Indonesian context, HTI has been influential in the landscape of life. This is because HTI's approach is always based on the orientation of public awareness about injustice and other social

pathologies. HTI is also active in making approaches to various social layers, such as government officials, business people, political officials, heads of ministries, and converts to civil society (Osman, 2010, p. 617). Apart from that, their presence in conventional public spaces and virtual public spaces is also believed to make HTI a mass organization sensitive to society's social conditions. At this point, the presence of HTI in Indonesia is considered to have influenced the lives of Muslims, especially in their views on sharia and political concepts in Islam.

HTI's presence in the virtual public sphere is demonstrated through its media page, Media Umat (<https://mediaumat.id/>). Media Umat belongs to HTI and is managed by its followers under the supervision of their leaders and seniors. This can be seen from the composition of the site's supervisors and contributors from HTI figures, such as Ismail Yusanto and Farid Wajdi. This site is a form of media transformation carried out by HTI. It is known that Media Umat is an official newspaper owned by HTI, which was previously disseminated only through print. However, in response to the development of internet technology, this site was finally created to spread this media's influence. Therefore, based on the author's research, this site posted articles in 2016, while the presence of the Media Umat newspaper has existed since 2010 (Media Umat, 2016).

The site is designed as an easy-to-use text and video-based place. The site uses red as its base color as a symbol of the struggle of Muslims. The site's main page displays the site's name, "Media Umat," with the tagline "Fighting for Islamic Life" (*Memperjuangkan Kehidupan Islam*). Using Indonesian as its language of instruction. The site has the following structure: First, the main menu consists of "Home" (*Beranda*), "National" (*Nasional*), "International" (*Internasional*), "Christology" (*Kristologi*), "Lighthouse" (*Mercusuar*), "Print," "Ustadz," and "Your Opinion" (*Opini Anda*). Second, site information or "About Us" (*Tentang Kami*) contains brief details on the site. Third, information about the site manager consists of "Editorial" (*Editorial*), "Advertising" (*Iklan*), and "Contact Us" (*Kontak Kami*). Fourth, links and affiliations that connect the site with social media are used as Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, and Youtube. Finally, rubrics or posts consisting of "Umat Agenda" (*Agenda Umat*), "Print," "Editorial" (*Editorial*), "Economy" (*Ekonomi*), "Feature" (*Fitur*), "Headline" (*Judul*), "International" (*Internasional*), "Family" (*Keluarga*), "Christology" (*Kristologi*), "Lighthouse" (*Mercusuar*), "National" (*Nasional*), "Your Opinion" (*Opini Anda*), "Siyasah," "Figure" (*Figur*), "Ustadz Answering" (*Ustadz Menjawab*), and "Video."

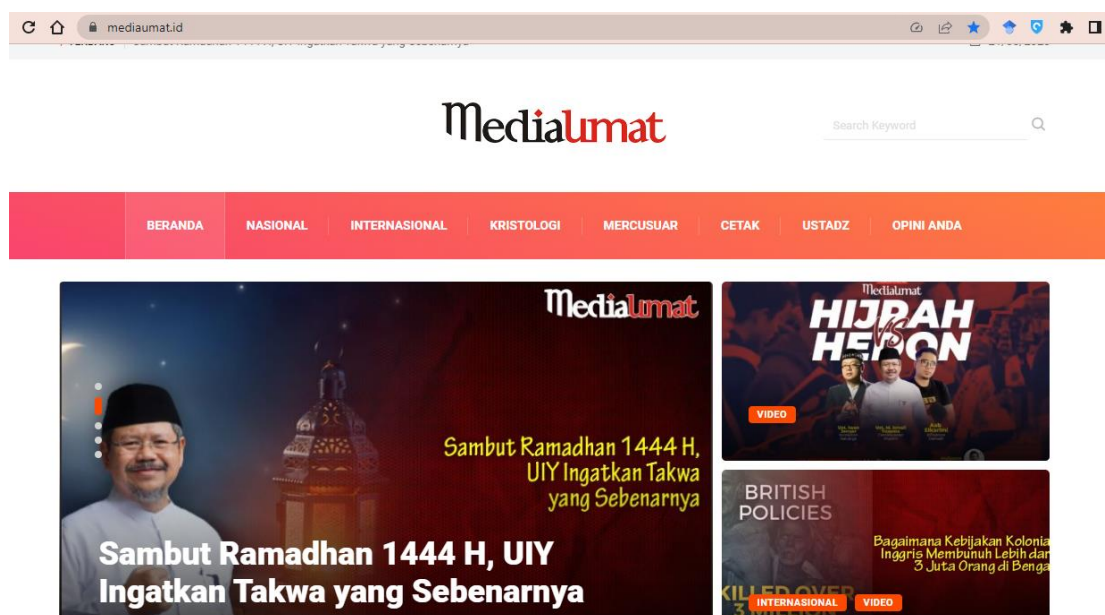


Figure 1. Front page of Media Umat site

Source: <https://mediaumat.id/>

Articles and videos published on this site are written in Indonesian, written and delivered by HTI figures such as Hafiz Abdurahman, Moeflich Hasbullah, Rokhmat S. Labib, Felix Siauw, M. Siddiq Al-Jawi, and Fahmi Amhar. These names are known to be popular preachers and HTI members in Indonesia (Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, 2010). The site also contains news about events that have been and are happening both in Indonesia and internationally. The information is then responded to through comments or writings of HTI figures and disseminated through this site.

### *HTI's Use of the Internet*

The results of the author's investigation show that HTI responded to the arrival of the internet in Indonesia by using it as a medium to promote its ideas, attitudes, and identity. A statement on the site emphasizes that this site is present amid the frenzy of extraordinary information disclosure. The "About Us" menu clearly states that: "Following our motto, "Continuing the Life of Islam" appears with a different news color and looks at various events with a uniquely Islamic perspective and sides with Muslims" (Media Umat, 2016). The use of the term "Continuing Islamic Life" shows the position of this site on the ideological identity they espouse, namely the Caliphate (*Khilafah*). This follows my previous writing that in the public sphere, HTI often uses terms with connotations of hope, struggle, and ideals for establishing an Islamic state (Setia, 2021). The use of the internet to articulate the spread of the Caliphate idea on this site can be seen from the conclusions of each article and video, which boils down to the importance of implementing Islamic Sharia and enforcing Islamic Sharia through the institution of the Islamic Caliphate. The author's findings show that HTI utilizes the internet to increase its existence in the public eye by using it as part of its religious agenda, which can be divided into three usage models: ideological, polemical, and contextual. The groupings are listed in table 1.

**Table 1.** HTI using the Internet through the Media Umat site

| No. | Use of Media Umat | Categories    | Link  |
|-----|-------------------|---------------|---|
| 1.  | Ideology          | Kristologi    | <a href="https://mediaumat.id/category/kristologi/">https://mediaumat.id/category/kristologi/</a>           |
|     |                   | Mercusuar     | <a href="https://mediaumat.id/category/mercusuar/">https://mediaumat.id/category/mercusuar/</a>             |
| 2.  | Polemic           | Uztadz        | <a href="https://mediaumat.id/category/ustadz-menjawab/">https://mediaumat.id/category/ustadz-menjawab/</a> |
|     |                   | Opini Anda    | <a href="https://mediaumat.id/category/opini-anda/">https://mediaumat.id/category/opini-anda/</a>           |
| 3.  | Contextual        | Nasional      | <a href="https://mediaumat.id/category/nasional/">https://mediaumat.id/category/nasional/</a>               |
|     |                   | Internasional | <a href="https://mediaumat.id/category/internasional/">https://mediaumat.id/category/internasional/</a>     |
|     |                   | Cetak         | <a href="https://mediaumat.id/category/cetak/">https://mediaumat.id/category/cetak/</a>                     |

**Source:** Media Umat Website (<https://mediaumat.id/>)

### *Ideological Internet Usage: Promoting the Idea of Caliphate*

Through its website, HTI promotes the idea of the caliphate by publishing articles and videos on the caliphate doctrine found in the Christology and Lighthouse categories (table 1.). HTI figures in Indonesia wrote the promotion of the caliphate idea with references to HTI books such as the works of Taqiyudin An-Nabhani and Abdul Qadim Zallum. This type of post mainly promotes the idea of an Islamic Caliphate that HTI believes will be re-established after the 1924 collapse in Turkey. The Islamic Caliphate is believed to be the only comprehensive solution to the current problems of Muslims, such as violence, oppression, discrimination, corruption, and poverty (Zallum, 2002). Through the Islamic Caliphate, Muslims will be united around the world and will become a single



state that is strong and fair to all Muslims. The Islamic Caliphate is believed to have been modeled by the Prophet Muhammad and the companions of the Prophet as a legitimate form of state and leadership.

On their website, HTI emphasizes that the Caliphate is an Islamic teaching that Muslims must implement. According to HTI, the Caliphate or other similar terms, namely *Darul Islam* or *Imaratul Mukminin*, are widely rejected by most Muslims because Muslims equate Islam and Christianity, which are considered both mere spiritual religions that do not regulate the affairs of society and the state. The teachings of Islam and Christianity are very different in terms of their relationship with the state or politics. Christianity, being only a spiritual religion, does not regulate all aspects of life. Therefore, Christianity's primary character (nature) is secular; that is, it does not have state teachings. Therefore, as a logical consequence, it is only natural that Islam needs a state institution so that Muslims can practice its teachings (*kaffah*) (QS Al-Baqarah: 208). And it is also natural that the Prophet Muhammad Saw not only served as a prophet but also as head of state, especially after emigrating to Medina in 622 AD (Jawi, 2022b).

HTI also asserts that the Caliphate has a clear foundation as described by scholars, which is summarized in three substances: first, the Caliphate is a system of government that replaces or succeeds the leadership function of the Prophet. The evidence used by HTI, in this case, is the narration of Imam Mawardi in *Al-Ahkamus Al-Sulthaniyyah*, "Imamah (Caliphate) was established as a substitute for prophethood ..." (Jawi, 2022c). Second, the Caliphate applies the laws of Islamic Sharia in all aspects of life, both domestically and abroad. Usually, scholars express this substance with the wording that Islamic Sharia regulates religious and world affairs. The argument used by HTI is the narration of Imam Al-Juwaini in *Ghiyatsul Umam*, "Imamah (Caliphate) is a comprehensive leadership and an arrangement related to special and general affairs in the interests of religion and the world." Third, the Caliphate is a single system for all Muslims; there cannot be more than one Caliphate for all Muslims. Ulama usually expresses this with the wording that the Caliphate is "general leadership" (*ri'asah 'ammah*) or "general power for the entire *ummah*" (*al-wilayah al-'ammah 'ala kaffat al-ummah*). One of the arguments used is the narration of Al-Qalqasyandi, in *Ma'atsirul Inâfah fî Ma'âlim Al-Khilâfah*, "Imamah (Caliphate) is the general authority over all Muslims, the implementation of all the affairs of the people, and the carrying out of all their responsibilities." In addition, HTI also uses several Quranic arguments to strengthen its statement about the Caliphate, such as QS. Al-Baqarah verse 30, "Remember when your Lord said to the Angels, "Verily, I want to make a caliph on earth." Other arguments in the Quran, such as QS An-Nisa verse 59, "O you who believe, obey Allah and obey His Messenger, and *ulil amri* among you" (Jawi, 2022a).

On their website, HTI also explains issues related to the Caliphate that people in Indonesia always debate, such as the behavior of people who underestimate the Caliphate. The behavior of people who underestimate the idea of Caliphate, according to HTI, is a sin. For example, Fathy Syamsudin Ramadhan an-Nawy (2022) writing states that sneering and denouncing the Caliphate system is a sin because the Caliphate is an excellent matter in Islam and is a significant obligation. People who criticize the Caliphate are people who criminalize the teachings of Islam and are against the law (Irawan, 2022). Then another issue is the relevance of the Caliphate in the present day. According to HTI, the Caliphate is an Islamic teaching whose law of upholding it is *fardu kifayah* so it will remain relevant in all times and conditions. As Muslims, when the Caliphate is not established, there is an obligation to enforce it (Labib, 2022). In addition, many issues that doubt the Caliphate, according to HTI, stem from Western hatred of Islam. For example, in the writing of Siddiq Al-Jawi (2022), who quoted the book *Mafahim Siyasiyah* by Imam Taqiyuddin an-Nabhani (2001), said that the hostility of Western countries, especially to the Caliphate and jihad, began in the 16th century because of the conquests of the Ottoman army to European countries. After the wins, Western countries hated Islam by gathering in large communities to overthrow the Ottoman Caliphate. This hatred has been passed on to modern society so that Western hostility to Islam remains the same.

HTI also uses its website to spread the idea of the Caliphate. The spread of HTI's Caliphate ideas can be seen in the articles, news, and videos published on this site. Every article, news, and video

always ends with a campaign of Caliphate ideas. The campaign pattern of the built Caliphate idea always begins with information that surprises readers. For example, the news headline on October 7, 2022, raised about the Economic Recession in 2023, with the title "Economic Experts: Global Recession in 2023 is an inevitability" (2022); this article reveals the opinion of one of the economic experts from HTI, Arim Nasim, about the occurrence of an economic recession in 2023. The information about this economic recession is accurate, but HTI, through this site, makes other facts that are by the actual data. As stated by Sri Mulyani, the economic downturn occurred due to inflation due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict (CNN Indonesia, 2022). Still, according to HTI, this recession happened because the capitalist system controlled the world. Therefore, the solution to overcome this recession is implementing the Caliphate system. That is one example of the campaign of the Caliphate idea through actual issues in society.

#### *Polemical Uses of the Internet: Counter-Narratives of Radicalism and Religious Moderation Ideas*

Supporters of the caliphate also use the internet to counter-narratives that demonize their group and ideas, as in the Ustadz and Your Opinion menu (table 1.). In this case, cyberspace becomes a new venue for cyberwar, extending hostilities from the real world to cyberspace. Therefore, the context of hate is not using weapons but using narratives that put each other down. Through their website, HTI criticizes and even condemns any actions of Muslims who denigrate their records and ideas of the Caliphate, considering them to violate Islamic law (Yusanto, 2022). They also criticize groups that consider HTI as a radical movement and make religious moderation a solution to counteract them. Their attacks are directed at the government, often accusing them of being revolutionary, un-Pancasila, and treasonous. In addition, attacks are also directed at groups and figures who consider them an illusory and dangerous movement in Indonesia.

Through their website, HTI countered the narrative of radicalism addressed to them. HTI presents various arguments regarding their views and attitudes towards radicalism on its website. First, it considers radicalism inappropriate for Islamic groups such as HTI. According to HTI, the words radical and radicalism are always negatively associated with Islam and Muslims. Meanwhile, the intended meaning of radicalism is never straightforward and stigmatizing (Januar, 2022). According to HTI, radicalism is a political category, not a religious category. Therefore, those who try to associate radicalism with religion, especially Islam, have made a colossal mistake that should be suspected of having certain motives. These motives include dividing the unity of the country with terminology that targets some groups of people or some groups that may not be liked. Therefore, radicalism that targets HTI is part of a systematic effort to divide the nation's unity. Supposedly, every element of the country provides constructive solutions to make this nation more advanced and escape the multidimensional crisis with clear thoughts without any disputes among the nation's children (Lukman, 2022).

Second, HTI said that the government uses radicalism to tackle groups that often disagree with the government (Almaroky, 2021). They feel that it is natural for the government to label HTI as radical because they always disagree with the government. This is unfair, he said, because differences with the government are part of legitimate criticism, especially since the criticism conveyed is to find solutions to problems in Indonesia. HTI even considers that the radical label pinned on HTI is similar to the new order policy. Those with other views and innovations or who disagree with government policies are accused of being extreme. Therefore, the radical label is not suitable to be pinned on HTI because the efforts made by HTI are only part of the criticism and contribution to the country. If so, HTI added that the state, not only HTI, should also give people who criticize the government a radical label.

Third, the label of radicalism is pinned by Islamophobic people. According to HTI on their website, people who call HTI radical are anti-Islam (*islamophobia*) (Riyan, 2022). The person in question is the Chief of Staff of the Army (KSAD) General Dudung Abdurachman, who once said that radicalism had entered students, one of whose actors is HTI. People who have Islamophobia, according to HTI, are individuals who harbor hatred and dislike for Islam and always give a bad

stigma to Islam. For HTI, people like General Dudung could have Islamophobia. The danger, said HTI, is that as the leader of an organization, let alone the TNI, this behavior can endanger the soldiers as if Islam is wrong in their eyes. Islam essentially guides for the good of this country, do not let Islam and Muslims be terrorized with the terms “radicalism,” “extremism,” and “fundamentalism” (Wisnuwardana, 2022b).

HTI, through its website, also rejects and contrasts the idea of religious moderation. Later, the government socialized the concept to stem radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. According to HTI, the idea is aimed at movements at odds with the government, especially HTI. Therefore, through the site, HTI counter-narrates the concept of religious moderation. Religious moderation, according to HTI, is an understanding that has the nature of theological propaganda and also carries the political interests of neoimperialism (Media Umat, 2022b). The reason is that the mission of the moderation project and its secularism is to prevent the revival of Islamic ideology, which historically united Muslim countries under the auspices of the Islamic *Dawlah*. HTI asserts that Islam is the truth epistemologically, while religious moderation is a disorder of thought. “It is not the same between the meaning of *washatiyah* Islam and moderate Islam. Meanwhile, the propaganda of religious moderation is the poison of faith” (Agustini, 2022). Mainstreaming religious moderation is futile because it is a product of failed understanding and will undoubtedly fail. The ummah must speak out to silence this misguided thinking until at least. Another indicator is still related to the narrative of religious moderation regarding national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of tradition. Islam teaches its people to love the country because of Allah by managing it based on the laws that Allah has revealed. In addition to being a religion of peace, tolerance, justice, and spreading kindness to the entire universe, Islam is also a religion that can provide space for the adherents of other faiths without any moderate frills.

In rejecting the idea of religious moderation, HTI, through the organization of the Media Umat website, implemented the Forum Doktor Muslim Peduli Bangsa (FDMPB) program with the theme Quo Vadis Moderation of Islamic Teachings, Whose Agenda? This agenda is an open discussion organized through Zoom Meetings and broadcast on the Youtube channel of the Forum Doktor Muslim Peduli Bangsa. According to the forum's secretary general, Faqih Syarief, the religious moderation mainstreamed by the government is an attempt to reduce the teachings of Islam to radicalize the teachings of Islam and Muslims, as is intensively campaigned by the West against Islam. In addition, he added that all Islamic teachings are good because they come from the Best Essence, namely Allah SWT, and Islamic teachings are a way of life and, at the same time, a solution (problem-solving) for all human problems, both Muslims and non-Muslims, as Allah SWT's affirmation that Islam is a teaching that is *rahmatan lil 'alamiin* (Media Umat, 2022a).

This forum also calls on fellow Muslim intellectuals to raise awareness of the fundamental things of Islamic teachings that have been misunderstood by the people, as well as advocating the importance of returning to the *kaffah* teachings of Islam. The forum, which is part of HTI, also calls on the government to return to the rules of Allah and His Messenger and stop any persecution or criminalization efforts against intellectuals, scholars, and Islamic activists, who have critical thoughts and voice the faithful Islam (Media Umat, 2022b).

#### *Contextualized Internet Use: Responding to Contemporary Issues*

HTI uses the internet not only as a tool to promote the idea of Caliphate and counter-narratives on discourses that undermine it. Furthermore, the internet is also used to convey their concerns and views on contemporary issues in a local and global society. For example, on the national, international and print menus (table 1). The author's investigation into the content of the HTI website shows that HTI uses the internet to direct their attention to contemporary socio-religious issues in Indonesia. For example, in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred in Indonesia. Despite being a global outbreak, HTI focused on the local Covid-19 pandemic. They published fatwas related to ways of worship during the pandemic; how to perform Friday prayers during the attack; the law for people

exposed to the virus; the law of implementing social restrictions; and the law of carrying out crowds in worship (Tresna, 2020).

In addition, HTI uses cyberspace to respond to international issues. Their posts show that they know global issues and events, especially those related to Islam and the Islamic world. To respond to crises in the Muslim world, such as in Rohingya, Palestine, India, Sri Lanka, and Uighur (Khan, 2022; Komara, 2022; Mantasari, 2022; Syarifudin, 2022; Wisnuwardana, 2022a), HTI uses the internet as a tool to communicate their belief that these crises occur because Muslims have ignored the teachings of "true Islam," so they are not under the guidance of Allah. As a result, Muslims are weak and provide opportunities for enemies to control and destroy Muslim countries. In Palestine, according to HTI, Muslims were massacred by the Zionist Israelis because of the Jewish hatred of Islam there. This is part of Israel's colonization of Palestine (Mantasari, 2022). In Rohingya, indigenous Muslims of the Rakhine tribe were massacred by the Buddhist majority group because the Rakhine tribe was considered an immigrant. HTI added that the Rohingya massacre was also caused by the United States and China (Khan, 2022). Muslim groups have been proven to have been persecuted by other religious groups, and they do not have suitable protectors, even though, as fellow Muslims, the bond should be *Ukhuwah Islamiyyah*. The reason for all this is that there is no Islamic authority to protect them, so the Islamic Caliphate is the right solution.

The pattern used in responding to contemporary issues in the global world is to use internal HTI experts who comment on current topics whose opinion conclusion is to provide a solution to the Islamic Caliphate. Even if they do not use the opinions of internal HTI experts, they always quote the views of non-HTI figures whose arguments support their movement. For example, they cited the statement of legal expert Refly Harun when he rejected the passing of the Perppu Ormas in 2017 (Media Umat, 2017). The argument aligns with HTI's view that Perppu Ormas 2017 has the potential to dissolve their organization.

#### 4. Conclusion

Exploring the use of the internet by the HTI movement in Indonesia, the community of this movement responds very positively to the presence of the internet. They use the internet to communicate, promote, and reinforce their collective identity as fighters for the Islamic Caliphate. In addition, the penal status that ensnared HTI has caused them to adopt new systems and strategies for maintaining the flow of movement. Therefore, HTI uses the internet for its movement activities. More specifically, the use of the internet is realized as follows:

First, HTI uses the internet as an ideological tool. They communicate the idea of their Caliphate state system through the internet and spread it widely. Second, it seems that HTI is using the internet as a controversial tool to conduct a counter-narrative of the radical allegations and labels that the government has aimed at it. The counter-narrative focused on HTI on two significant themes related to their organization, namely, the theme of radicalism and the idea of religious moderation. This indicates that the world of cyberspace has become a new place in cyberwar (war in cyberspace) where hostilities and conflicts can be brought from the offline world to the online world. Third, for HTI, the internet has played a role as a medium to respond to contemporary issues that arise in society both regionally and globally. Through their website, HTI expresses their views and concerns for global issues, such as conflicts and political instability in the Islamic world, and local issues, such as the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. This reflects the paradox of transnational movements such as HTI; it operates across the national boundaries of a country and challenges the existence of nation-states territorially and ideologically, but it cannot ignore new issues that arise in the countries where they operate to increase its influence or at least maintain its presence in the local arena- national.

The findings in this article prove that even the most conservative religious groups, such as the Hizb ut-Tahrir community, have not only survived in the face of modernization. They can also transform the realities of modernity, such as the internet, into a new modern product that serves their needs and interests well. Ideologically, the HTI community is ultra-orthodox, but they are technologically modern.

The HTI and internet cases also show that religion always seeks to adapt and reconcile with modernity by reading the values of modernity in its religious sources. He tries to respond to the modernization process by adopting and adapting the internet and other modern technologies according to his communal context, needs, and interests. In other words, HTI's response to the internet is part of an interaction process between religion and technology in which religious communities make technology part of their culture (Barzilai-Nahon & Barzilai, 2005). In addition, the loss of organizational legality for HTI so that it becomes a banned organization in Indonesia has forced them to adopt a new strategy using the internet. At this point, HTI looks very good at using this new medium. So, it can be concluded that the religious movement, as shown by the HTI movement, is not a reality that is separated from or contrary to modernity and the process of globalization but rather is an integral part of modernity and globalization itself. In addition, the challenges after HTI's dissolution from the government further strengthened their argument to use the internet to spread their ideas, the Caliphate.

However, our findings in this study are still limited to Hizbut Tahrir's presence in Indonesia. As a transnational organization, this research should have also captured Hizbut Tahrir's use of the internet globally, but the difficulty in obtaining global Hizbut Tahrir information sites was an obstacle. This is part of the consequences of banning their movement in many countries. Therefore, we hope that future scholars of Islamist movements will be able to prove Hizbut Tahrir's response to the internet and their strategies for using it in other countries with traces of the movement's presence, such as Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Western Europe, which are known as regions with a significant presence of Hizbut Tahrir members.

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