

The Ahmadiyyah Movement and Its Impact on Islamic Discourse in the Modern Western World

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Abstrack

This study aims to analyze the proselytization strategy of the Ahmadiyya movement in the modern Western world and its implications for the construction of contemporary Islamic discourse. Different from previous studies that tend to focus on theological and historical aspects, this study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method, which combines the perspectives of Islamic studies, sociology of religion, and political communication. Data was obtained from various secondary sources such as books, scientific journals, reports, and documents related to the Ahmadiyah community. The research findings show that Ahmadiyya can adapt its proselytization strategy to the pluralistic and secular Western society. They utilize modern media to convey messages of peace and tolerance and build a friendly and open image of Islam. However, this approach has also led to resistance from the majority Muslim group who consider Ahmadiyya teachings to be deviant. As a result, tensions have arisen within the Muslim community. This article illustrates how different proselytization strategies can affect a group's position in society, especially amid global challenges such as Islamophobia and the changing ways of religion in the digital age. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding the role of technology and social context in delivering religious messages in an increasingly open and diverse world.

Keywords: Ahmadiyyah, proselytization, Islam in the West, digital media, religious pluralism

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi dakwah gerakan Ahmadiyah di dunia Barat modern serta implikasinya terhadap konstruksi wacana Islam kontemporer. Berbeda dari penelitian sebelumnya yang cenderung menitikberatkan pada aspek teologis dan historis, studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka, yang menggabungkan perspektif kajian Islam, sosiologi agama, dan komunikasi politik. Data diperoleh dari berbagai sumber sekunder seperti buku, jurnal ilmiah, laporan, dan dokumen terkait komunitas Ahmadiyah. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Ahmadiyah mampu menyesuaikan strategi dakwahnya dengan masyarakat Barat yang pluralistik dan sekuler. Mereka memanfaatkan media modern untuk menyampaikan pesan damai dan toleransi serta membangun citra Islam yang ramah dan terbuka. Namun, pendekatan ini juga menimbulkan resistensi dari kelompok Muslim mayoritas yang menganggap ajaran Ahmadiyah sebagai penyimpangan. Akibatnya, muncul ketegangan di tengah komunitas Muslim. Artikel ini menggambarkan bagaimana strategi dakwah yang berbeda dapat memengaruhi posisi suatu kelompok dalam masyarakat, khususnya di tengah tantangan global seperti Islamofobia dan perubahan cara beragama di era digital. Artikel ini juga menekankan pentingnya memahami peran teknologi dan konteks sosial dalam menyampaikan pesan keagamaan di dunia yang semakin terbuka dan beragam.

Kata Kunci: Ahmadiyah, dakwah, Islam di Barat, media digital, pluralisme agama

Introduction

The dynamics of Islamic da'wah in the contemporary global era face increasingly complicated complexities, especially when it intersects with the plurality of religious interpretations and diverse socio-political contexts (Al-Rasyid, 2014). The Ahmadiyah movement, as one of the religious organizations that claims to be part of Islam but has controversial theological interpretations, has become a global phenomenon that has attracted the attention of academics, proselytization practitioners, and international religious observers (Nawtika & Yuslih, 2022). The presence of Ahmadiyah in the modern Western world not only reflects the internal dynamics of Muslims, but also shows how Islamic discourse is constructed, debated, and negotiated in the context of a plural and secular society (Abubakar Bahmid et al., 2023).

This phenomenon has become increasingly relevant considering that Ahmadiyah has succeeded in building an extensive organizational network in various Western countries, ranging from the United States, Britain, Germany, to Canada (Haryono Hadi Kuswanto & Suparto, 2024). The movement not only operates as a religious community, but is also active in proselytizing activities, interfaith dialogue, and advocacy for the rights of Muslim minorities. Their presence in Western public spaces has created a new dynamic in Islamic discourse, where narratives of "peaceful" and "moderate" Islam are often promoted through the platforms they manage (Muhtador, 2017). This complexity demands an in-depth understanding of how controversial movements can influence global perceptions of Islam as a religion and belief system.

In this context, this study focuses on how the Ahmadiyah movement constructs and disseminates their proselytization narrative in the modern Western world, as well as its impact on the formation of a broader Islamic discourse. The analysis will focus on the proselytization strategies used, the mechanisms of ideological dissemination, and the responses generated from various parties, both from mainstream Muslims and non-Muslim communities. The study will also explore how the theological controversy attached to Ahmadiyah affects public perceptions of Islam in Western countries, using an interdisciplinary approach that combines the perspectives of Islamic studies, sociology of religion, and political communication.

Ahmadiyah proselytization activities in the Western world include a variety of platforms and strategies that demonstrate adaptation to secular and plural local contexts. They are active through television programs, magazine and book publications, massive social media campaigns, and extensive philanthropic and humanitarian activities (Haryono Hadi Kuswanto & Suparto, 2024). This approach not only aims to spread their teachings, but also to build a positive image of Islam in the eyes of Western society. However, their presence has also generated significant controversy, as various mainstream Islamic organizations in the West have issued statements asserting that Ahmadiyah cannot be categorized as part of orthodox Islam (Zuldin, 2016). This situation creates complex internal dynamics within Muslim communities in the West, where debates about religious authenticity and legitimacy are becoming increasingly intense.

Although the discourse on Ahmadiyah has been widely studied in a

global context, most research still focuses on theological and historical aspects, without linking it in depth with the dynamics of Islamic proselytization in the Western world. Studies on Ahmadiyya proselytization strategies, especially in the context of Western countries with diverse socio-political backgrounds, are still relatively minimal. In fact, a cross-national comparative approach is needed to understand common patterns and local specificities in the movement's response to challenges such as Islamophobia, social polarization, and the transformation of information technology that has shaped the digital da'wah space. Most existing studies tend to be descriptive and have not critically examined how the controversy over Ahmadiyyah has shaped public perceptions of Islam in pluralistic and secular Western societies (Ropi, 2010).

This research offers a new contribution with an interdisciplinary approach that combines theological, sociological, and political communication perspectives in analyzing Ahmadiyyah's proselytization strategy holistically. By integrating social construction of reality theory and discourse theory, this study will dissect how Islamic narratives are constructed and negotiated in the Western public sphere. The study also aims to build a new typology of controversial proselytization models in the digital era, which is relevant for understanding similar phenomena in the future. In addition to making theoretical contributions to the development of contemporary Islamic studies and the sociology of religion, the results of this research are expected to be a practical reference in designing inclusive and adaptive da'wah strategies in a complex global society.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with library research methods. This method is used by researchers to collect data from written sources such as scientific journal books, articles, organizational reports, online media, and official documents from the Ahmadiyyah community (Abdurrahman, 2024). According to (Zed, 2004) The literature study involves collecting, reading, recording and processing data from literature sources. Researchers collected and reviewed relevant information to understand how Ahmadiyya proselytization strategies are carried out in Western countries and how they affect Islamic discourse more broadly.

Data analysis is done by in-depth reading and interpreting the content of these sources to find patterns, themes, and dynamics related to Ahmadiyya proselytization. This research also compares Ahmadiyya proselytizing practices in several Western countries to see the different strategies used based on the social and political conditions of each country.

Results And Discussion

Ahmadiyya History and Doctrine

The Ahmadiyya Community is one of the most controversial religious movements in modern Islamic history. Founded at the end of the 19th century in colonial India, the group occupies an ambivalent position on the map of contemporary Islamic thought: on the one hand, they espouse a universal vision of Islam that is peaceful and rational; on the other hand, they are rejected by the majority of Muslims for their supposedly deviant theological views, particularly regarding prophethood (Fadli, 2007). To

understand these dynamics, it is important to trace the history of Ahmadiyya's emergence, doctrines, internal fragmentation, and worldwide reaction to it.

The Ahmadiyya movement was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) in the city of Qadian, Punjab, India, in 1889. The emergence of Ahmadiyya cannot be separated from the context of British colonialism in India and the religious crisis that engulfed Muslims after the collapse of Mughal rule. The movement was initially a response to the wave of Christian and Hindu missionaries, as well as an attempt to reform Muslims from within, through a spiritual, rational and civilized approach (Nur, Amri, & Aderus, 2024). Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be the mujaddid (religious reformer), mahdi (savior of the people), and even the promised Messiah, the metaphorical return of Jesus. Furthermore, he also declared himself to be a prophet in a non-shari'ah sense, which he said did not contradict the finality of Muhammad's prophethood. This claim became the starting point of the Ahmadiyya controversy in Islamic history (Irawan et al., 2022).

After the death of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the movement continued its existence by establishing a caliphate system as a form of spiritual and administrative leadership. The first caliph, Hakim Nuruddin (d. 1914), and his successors played an important role in the movement's expansion beyond India, including into Europe, North America and Africa (Muhtador, 2017).

Ahmadiyya teachings can generally be classified in two categories: general teachings that are in harmony with mainstream Islam, and specific doctrines that are a source of theological debate and

exclusion. In its general teachings, the Ahmadiyya accept the five pillars of Islam and the six pillars of faith. They recognize the Qur'an as the final holy book, the Prophet Muhammad as the final bearer of the Shari'a, and the obligations of worship such as prayer, fasting, zakat, and hajj. They also emphasize the importance of morality, compassion, and non-violence (Muhtador, 2018).

However, the main Ahmadiyya controversy lies in their view of prophethood. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed that prophethood could continue in the form of nubuwwah zilli (shadow prophethood), not sharia prophethood. This view contradicts the established Islamic doctrine since the classical era, namely that the Prophet Muhammad was the khatam al-nabiyyin (the Seal of the Prophets). This teaching has led the majority of Sunni and Shia scholars to declare that the Ahmadiyya have left Islam. In many Muslim countries, fatwas have been issued not to recognize them as part of the Muslim Ummah. In addition, the Ahmadiyya also reject the doctrine of the physical return of the Prophet Jesus a.s. to the world. For them, Jesus had died biologically and his reappearance was only symbolic, materializing in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the "promised Messiah." (Muhtador, 2017). This view was also strongly opposed by traditional Islamic circles.

In 1914, after the death of the first Caliph, the Ahmadiyya community experienced significant internal divisions, giving birth to two main factions: Qadian Ahmadiyya and Lahore Ahmadiyya. The Qadian Ahmadiyya group is led by Caliph II, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, the son of the founder of the Ahmadiyya. The Qadianis retain all of Mirza Ghulam

Ahmad's prophetic claims and continue the caliphate system to this day. The group is the largest in number and has its spiritual centers of power in Rabwah (Pakistan) and later in London. Meanwhile, the Lahore Ahmadiyya group, led by Maulana Muhammad Ali, rejects Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's literal prophetic claims and considers him only a reformer (*mujaddid*), not a prophet (Riski Ayu Amaliah et al., 2023). They also rejected the caliphate system and emphasized an intellectual and apologetic approach to the Ahmadiyya mission.

Ahmadiyya is a clear example of a transnational religious movement that faces a complex spectrum of acceptance and rejection in different parts of the world. On the one hand, they enjoy religious freedom and support from Western countries; on the other hand, they experience discrimination and even persecution in a few Muslim-majority countries. In Pakistan, the country with the largest Ahmadi population, they are officially declared non-Muslims through a 1974 constitutional amendment and a 1984 law that prohibits them from using Islamic symbols. Discrimination against the Ahmadis includes bans on open worship, arrests, and physical violence by mobs. Similar rejection has also occurred in other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Egypt, both through religious fatwas and social actions. In Indonesia, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has stated since the 1980s that Ahmadiyah is heretical and misleading (Budiwanti, 2009).

In contrast, in countries such as Britain, Germany, Canada and the United States, the Ahmadiyya community has found a safe space and is thriving. They build large mosques, organize annual

conferences, and are active in socio-humanitarian activities. The governments of these countries often appreciate the Ahmadiyya for their contributions to social life, anti-extremism, and interfaith dialog. However, this dichotomy of acceptance raises complex identity challenges. Ahmadiyya in the West are often positioned as the "moderate face of Islam" by the media and governments, while other Muslims question the legitimacy of this representation (Barsihannor et al., 2023). This tension shows that the acceptance of Ahmadiyya is not merely a theological issue, but also involves identity politics, symbolic representation, and power relations within the global Muslim community.

Ahmadiyya history and doctrine reflect the complexity of understanding intra-Islamic diversity. Their emergence as a reformist movement amidst the crisis of colonial Islam has transformed them into a powerful, yet controversial, transnational entity. Their teachings on prophethood and messianism have been a major point of exclusion from mainstream Islam, but on the other hand have been an underlying force in their global mission of proselytization. The internal split between Qadian and Lahore exhibits a distinctive internal dynamic, demonstrating that even within minority groups there is plurality of thought. The global response to Ahmadiyya - rejection in the Islamic world and acceptance in the West - also highlights how religion operates in spaces that are not only theological, but also political and cultural. In the context of contemporary Islam, the study of Ahmadiyya is important not only to understand theological issues, but also to explain how minority communities shape survival strategies, negotiate with power, and

construct alternative religious narratives in a globalized society.

Ahmadiyya Da'wah Strategy in the Western World

Adaptation to Secular and Plural Environments

The Western world, particularly countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada and the United States, is known as a region with secular and pluralistic social characteristics. In this context, Ahmadiyya has developed a proselytization strategy that adapts to the principles of liberal societies-particularly in terms of religious freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for ethnic and religious diversity (Nur et al., 2024). This adaptation is the key to Ahmadiyya's success in establishing its existence among minority Muslim communities in the West.

Ahmadiyya position themselves as a moderate, peaceful Islamic group that is open to universal human values. This can be seen from their preaching narratives that emphasize the importance of compassion, social justice, and rejection of violence in the name of religion. In the context of secularism, Ahmadiyah is not confrontational towards Western values, but rather builds bridges of dialog through an inclusive and tolerant approach (Fatoni, 2019). This approach strategically differentiates them from conservative Islamic groups that tend to harshly criticize the West.

Furthermore, in a plural society, Ahmadiyya proselytization strategies tend to avoid exclusive identity symbols. Instead, they focus on universal ethical values such as honesty, hard work and social contribution. This not only makes it easier for them to be accepted by the wider community but also allows their

proselytizing to reach non-Muslim groups more effectively.

Da'wah Media: TV, Social Media, Publishing, and Philanthropy

One of the main strengths of Ahmadiyya proselytization in the Western world lies in their ability to effectively utilize modern media. The Ahmadiyya were pioneers in using satellite television as a means of global proselytization through MTA (Muslim Television Ahmadiyya), which was launched in 1994. MTA broadcasts da'wah programs, tafsir studies, Friday sermons, as well as documentaries on Ahmadiyya history and teachings in multiple languages including English, Arabic, Urdu, French, and German (Effendy et al., 2023). Through these broadcasts, Ahmadiyya not only reaches out to the internal community, but also opens a space for dialog with the non-Ahmadi public at large.

In addition to television, social media is an important instrument in disseminating Ahmadiyya's proselytizing message to the younger generation and digital audiences. They are active on platforms such as YouTube, Twitter (X), Instagram and Facebook, with professionally packaged and engaging content. Dawah messages are not delivered with a dogmatic approach, but rather in the form of personal, educative, and inspirational narratives. They also often utilize the momentum of global issues such as humanitarian crises, climate change, and interfaith conflicts to demonstrate an Islamic commitment that favors peace and social justice.

In terms of publishing, Ahmadiyya has literacy institutions that actively produce books, pamphlets, and scientific journals in various languages. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's works are translated into

dozens of languages and circulated widely, especially in their proselytization centers in London, Frankfurt, and Toronto. Organizations such as Islam International Publications play an important role in framing Ahmadiyya teachings in language acceptable to Western intellectual publics, including academics and journalists.

Philanthropic strategies are also an integral part of Ahmadiyya proselytizing. They established various social organizations such as Humanity First, which is active in global humanitarian activities such as disaster relief, education, healthcare, and clean water provision. These activities not only create a positive image of Islam but also strengthen their social networks in the countries where they settle.

Interfaith Communication and the Peaceful Islam Image Campaign

Ahmadiyya has consistently developed interfaith dialogue as a strategic medium of proselytizing in the West. They regularly hold interfaith dialogue forums involving leaders from Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh and other religious communities, focusing on shared values such as peace, compassion and justice. One of the most famous slogans in their global campaign is "Love for All, Hatred for None," which serves as the basis of their public rhetoric in various international forums.

This is not only to defend Islam from stereotypes of violence and intolerance, but also as part of an identity strategy: constructing the Ahmadiyya as a rational, peaceful face of Islam that can dialogue with the modern world. On various occasions, Ahmadiyya leaders have also openly criticized acts of extremism and terrorism in the name of Islam, and emphasized that violence is contrary to the

essence of Islamic teachings which are rahmatan lil-'alamin (M. Pd & Hadi, 2021).

In addition, Ahmadiyya often organizes public events such as the Peace Symposium and the National Peace Prize in the UK and Germany, which feature cross-sectoral figures such as politicians, academics, activists and journalists. These events serve as an effective proselytizing platform in conveying the peaceful Islamic narrative and encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration in building social harmony. Analysis of Strategy Differentiation in Some Western Countries

Despite having uniform basic principles, Ahmadiyya proselytization strategies experience differentiation in their implementation in various Western countries, depending on the sociopolitical and cultural context of the local community. In the UK, for example, as the center of the Ahmadiyya global caliphate since the diaspora from Pakistan in 1984, proselytization strategies tend to be more open, formal, and receive institutional support from the state. The country gives the Ahmadiyya community full freedom to establish mosques, schools and television stations (Jonker, 2014). In Morden, South London, stands Baitul Futuh Mosque, the largest mosque in Western Europe and the center of their religious and social activities.

Unlike the UK, in Germany the proselytization strategy focuses more on social integration and public education through cooperation programs with the local government in the fields of civic education and anti-radicalism. In this country, the Ahmadiyya have also managed to gain recognition as a religious legal entity (Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts), which gives them the same legal

status as churches and other major religious organizations.

Meanwhile, in the United States and Canada, the Ahmadiyya tend to emphasize aspects of communitarianism and philanthropy. The proselytization strategy is developed through a grassroots approach, focusing on community building, human rights advocacy, and strengthening progressive Muslim identity. They are active in national campaigns such as “Muslims for Loyalty” and “Muslims for Life,” which aim to affirm Muslim loyalty to the state while opposing religious extremism (Al-Hamdi & Surahmat, 2022).

Differences in legal contexts, levels of societal tolerance, and institutional support also influence the effectiveness of Ahmadiyya proselytization strategies in each country. However, in general, the adaptive, rational and communicative approach that characterizes Ahmadiyya proselytizing has proven successful in building a positive image and expanding their influence in complex and pluralistic Western environments.

Ahmadiyya’s proselytization strategy in the Western world shows success in reframing Islam as a religion that is compatible with the values of democracy, pluralism, and peace. By optimizing modern media, building interfaith communication, and adjusting the da’wah approach to the local context, Ahmadiyah can assert its existence as a dynamic and adaptive Muslim community. This success provides important lessons for other Islamic da’wah movements in responding to the challenges of globalization, secularism, and the crisis of Islamic representation in the contemporary world.

Ahmadiyya Response and Controversy in Western Public Spaces

Reaction from the Mainstream Muslim Community

Ahmadiyya’s presence in the Western public sphere invites complex responses from mainstream Muslim communities. These reactions range from outright rejection to ambivalence that reflects deep theological and sociological struggles. Mainstream Islamic organizations in Europe and North America, such as the Muslim Council of Britain and the Islamic Society of North America, have consistently rejected Ahmadiyya legitimacy as part of orthodox Islam.

This rejection is based on the fundamental belief that the teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet after Muhammad contradict the doctrine of khatm al-nabiyyin (prophetic closure). The mainstream Muslim community views this prophetic claim as an innovation that undermines the Islamic faith (Supardi, 2019). Consequently, various mosques and Islamic organizations in the West issued fatwas affirming that Ahmadiyya is not part of Islam.

However, this dynamic becomes more complex in the context of Muslim minorities in the West. Some moderate Muslims adopt a more pragmatic approach, emphasizing the importance of solidarity in the face of Islamophobic challenges. They argue that internal divisions will weaken the position of the entire Muslim community. Nonetheless, most mainstream Muslim organizations have maintained a firm line in rejecting the theological legitimacy of Ahmadiyya.

This reaction was also influenced by pressure from Muslim-majority countries, particularly Pakistan and Saudi Arabia,

which actively lobbied Islamic organizations in the West to take an anti-Ahmadiyya stance. This phenomenon creates a dilemma for mainstream Muslims who must balance between theological orthodoxy and the political realities of the diaspora.

Acceptance and Perception of Non-Muslims in the West

The reception of Ahmadiyya among Western non-Muslims shows a significantly different pattern compared to the reaction of Muslim communities. Western society, particularly governments and the media, tend to view Ahmadiyya positively because of the movement's emphasis on peace, tolerance and social integration. The slogan "Love for All, Hatred for None" that Ahmadiyya promotes resonates with Western liberal values.

Governments in various Western countries, including the UK, Germany, and Canada, have granted legal protection to the Ahmadiyya community and recognized them as a legitimate religious group. This recognition is not only legal but also political, with some Western politicians openly supporting Ahmadi rights. This support is often motivated by a broader political agenda of promoting pluralism and countering extremism.

Western media also provide relatively positive coverage of the Ahmadiyya, particularly in the context of narratives about "moderate Islam" versus "radical Islam". Ahmadiyah is often portrayed as a representation of Islam that is compatible with democratic values and human rights (Sulistiyati, 2020). However, these representations are not always accurate and sometimes give rise to stereotypes that oversimplify the complexity of Islamic theology.

Western academics have also shown significant interest in Ahmadiyya, not only as an object of religious study but also as a test case for understanding the dynamics of religious minorities in plural societies. These studies contribute to a more nuanced understanding of contemporary Islam and the challenges facing minority Muslim communities.

Islamic Discourse: Islamophobia, Legitimacy, and Authenticity

The presence of Ahmadiyya in the West trigger's complex discourses on the definition of Islam, religious authenticity, and the phenomenon of Islamophobia. A paradox arises when a community that is rejected by most Muslims is accepted and even supported by non-Muslim societies. This situation raises fundamental questions about who has the authority to define Islam and how religious legitimacy is constructed in the context of the diaspora.

The discourse on Islamophobia becomes even more complicated with the presence of Ahmadiyya. On the one hand, Ahmadis experience discrimination similar to other Muslims in the form of anti-Islamic stereotypes and prejudices. On the other hand, they also face rejection from the Muslim community itself, creating a phenomenon of "double marginalization". This challenges the simple narrative of Islamophobia as a phenomenon that only involves Muslim-non-Muslim relations.

The question of authenticity is central to this discourse. Ahmadiyya claims to be the "true Islam" that has been purified of heresy and deviant practices. In contrast, mainstream Muslims view this claim as delegitimizing centuries of established Islamic tradition. The debate is not only theological but also epistemological, concerning the criteria for determining

truth and authenticity in religious traditions (Sealy, 2021).

In the Western context, this discourse is also influenced by the concepts of secularism and religious pluralism. Liberal principles of freedom of religion and non-interference of the state in religious affairs provided room for the Ahmadiyya to flourish, despite opposition from the Muslim majority. This created tension between liberal values and the norms of the religious community.

Ahmadiyya's Role in Interfaith Dialogue and Western Media

The Ahmadiyya have positioned themselves as important actors in interfaith dialogue in the West, capitalizing on their theological emphasis on peace and tolerance. Ahmadiyya organizations actively participate in interfaith forums, academic conferences, and community dialogue programs. This participation aims not only to promote interfaith understanding but also to legitimize their position in the Western religious landscape (Khalil Muflih, 2023).

Western media have shown particular interest in Ahmadiyya, particularly in the context of narratives about religious persecution and religious freedom. Media coverage often focuses on the Ahmadiyya experience as victims of persecution in Pakistan and other Muslim countries, creating sympathizers among Western societies. The Ahmadiyya's sophisticated communication strategies, including the use of social media and digital platforms, contribute to their high visibility.

Ahmadiyya caliphs, as the movement's spiritual leaders, regularly meet with government officials, religious leaders, and community leaders in the West. These meetings serve as soft power

diplomacy that strengthens Ahmadiyya's position within Western political and religious elites (Solikhati et al., 2022). The messages of peace and moderation conveyed in these meetings resonate with the West's political agenda of countering violent extremism.

However, Ahmadiyya's active engagement in Western public spaces has also led to criticism from Muslim communities who view it as an attempt to gain legitimacy through non-Muslim support. This criticism reflects broader tensions about proselytization strategies and the representation of Islam in minority contexts.

Tensions between Community Identity and Global Da'wah

The Ahmadiyya face a complex dilemma in balancing maintaining a cohesive community identity and carrying out a global mission of proselytization. On the one hand, external pressures from the mainstream Muslim community and the governments of Muslim countries push the Ahmadiyya to consolidate their internal identity as a separate and distinct community. On the other hand, their global vision of purification and renewal of Islam necessitated engagement with the wider society (Eroğlu, 2025).

This tension manifests in various aspects of the lives of Ahmadiyya communities in the West. In the social domain, they must determine the extent to which they will integrate with mainstream society while maintaining distinctive religious values and practices. In the political domain, they must choose between the adoption of an identity as a persecuted minority or as a proactive reformist movement.

Ahmadi youth in the West face particular challenges in navigating their

dual identities as Muslims and as Ahmadis. They often experience alienation from their peer Muslim communities while trying to maintain a commitment to Ahmadiyya teachings. This creates complex intergenerational dynamics within the Ahmadiyya community.

Ahmadiyya proselytization strategies must also be adapted to the reality of being a minority within a minority. They cannot adopt a confrontational proselytizing approach towards mainstream Muslims because of their vulnerable position. Instead, they develop more subtle strategies through social service, education, and intellectual dialog (Nurcholis, Moh. Arif, Efendi, & Sunarsih, 2021).

The fundamental paradox in the Ahmadiyya mission is that the more successful they are in gaining acceptance from Western society, the greater their alienation from the global Muslim community. This creates a strategic dilemma about the movement's long-term priorities: whether to focus on consolidating communities in the West or remain committed to a global vision of Islamic reform.

Ahmadiyya Da'wah Discourse and Its Implications for Contemporary Islam

Discourse Analysis of Ahmadiyya Da'wah and Its Consequences

The da'wah discourse carried by the Ahmadiyya Congregation presents a distinctive da'wah paradigm in the contemporary Islamic landscape. Their approach combines reformist theological narratives with modern communication strategies, which carry the reconstruction of Islamic identity within the framework of progressivism and compatibility with universal values. Through discursive

analysis, it can be seen that Ahmadiyah's proselytizing rhetoric functions not only as a medium for spreading teachings, but also as a legitimization mechanism in the arena of contested religious authority (Syukur, 2017).

The structure of Ahmadiyya discourse is built on three main pillars: first, the claim to the purification of Islamic teachings; second, the rationalization of doctrine with a modernist approach; and third, the positioning of oneself as a representation of Islam that is compatible with the principles of human rights and liberal democracy. Terminology such as "revival of Islam" and "true teachings of Prophet Muhammad" are used to assert their religious authority, often by challenging the narratives of mainstream Islamic authorities.

The consequences of this discourse construction include two major dimensions. On the one hand, the Ahmadiyya discourse creates a binary opposition between progressive Islam and orthodox Islam, leading to internal fragmentation among Muslims. On the other hand, their narrative of moderation and tolerance strengthens their soft power in the context of Western society, even as it deepens their alienation from the global Muslim community (Dahlan, 2021). In the long run, this discourse opens space for the birth of alternative Islamic authorities that are not rooted in classical scholarly consensus (*ijma'*), which in turn challenges the structure of authority in Islam and has the potential to profoundly transform the face of Islamic theology.

A New Typology of Controversial Da'wah in the Digital Age

The development of digital technology has given rise to a new typology of Islamic da'wah activities,

including those developed by the Ahmadiyya. Their 'controversial da'wah' model shows how controversy can be used as a communication strategy, not merely a risk to be avoided. Digital platforms such as Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA) and their official website are used to circulate proselytising messages while shaping global public perceptions (Thahir, 2023).

This typology has several distinctive characteristics. First, the use of victimisation narratives as a key strategy, where experiences of persecution are capitalised on as a source of moral legitimacy. Second, a counter-narrative approach that challenges mainstream interpretations of Islam through alternative interpretations of sacred texts. Third, the formation of inter-religious alliances as a strategy to gain external validation and expand the support base.

Digital platforms allow the Ahmadiyya to bypass traditional custodians of religious authority (disintermediation of religious authority) and directly interact with a global audience. This changes the structure of religious authority from a hierarchical model to an open network. The implications for the global Islamic da'wah landscape are significant, with their success demonstrating that controversy can be a strategic asset in religious marketing (Agudelo, 2023). This model may even inspire other religious movements to adopt similar strategies, which in turn increases the potential for polarisation in contemporary Islamic discourse.

Ahmadiyya's Contribution to the Rebranding of Islam in the West

The Ahmadiyya play an important role in efforts to rebrand the image of Islam in Western society, by highlighting the

interrelationship between Islamic values and the principles of Western liberalism. This contribution spans three main dimensions: symbolic representation, discursive contribution, and practical demonstration.

In the symbolic dimension, the slogan "Love for All, Hatred for None" became a powerful branding instrument in conveying the image of Islam as an inclusive and peaceful religion. Visual representations in neat and peaceful public events contribute to the construction of a "moderate Muslim" image in the eyes of the Western public.

Discursive contributions are seen in the use of alternative Islamic vocabulary that emphasizes universal values, such as "jihad" defined as a struggle against lust, "caliphate" as spiritual leadership, and religion as a personal relationship with God. This discourse successfully shifted perceptions of Islam in academic and public policy spaces in the West, not only benefiting the Ahmadiyya, but also strengthening the position of the Muslim community as a whole in the face of negative stereotypes (Ryad, 2016).

Practical demonstrations of these contributions take the form of social services, interfaith dialogue and civic engagement. Activities such as the establishment of hospitals, schools and humanitarian work demonstrated that Islamic values could be harmoniously integrated with the expectations of Western society. However, this success has sparked criticism from the mainstream Muslim community, who see these efforts as a distortion of authentic Islamic teachings. This paradox reflects the complexity of religious representation in a pluralistic society.

Implications for Contemporary Islamic Global Da'wah Strategy

The Ahmadiyya da'wah model offers various strategic implications for the development of global Islamic da'wah. First, the importance of contextual adaptation in proselytization strategies. The Ahmadiyya have shown that the effectiveness of proselytization relies heavily on a deep understanding of the local context and the ability to adapt the proselytization message to the characteristics of the audience. They can use theological language to fellow Muslims and humanitarian language to non-Muslim audiences, demonstrating sophistication in strategic communication.

Second, the significance of institution building is sustainability of proselytization. The infrastructure built by Ahmadiyya—including mosques, schools, hospitals, and media-shows the importance of institutionalization in ensuring the sustainability of da'wah. This is a different approach to the traditional model of da'wah that is more individualized and sporadic.

Third, the utilization of modern technology as a tool for da'wah amplification. The Ahmadiyya digital infrastructure that includes satellite television, online platforms, and a social media presence demonstrates how technology can exponentially expand the reach of proselytization. The integration of traditional religious content with modern communication tools results in an efficient and adaptive hybrid model.

Fourth, the importance of image consistency in religious communication. Ahmadiyya's success in maintaining a coherent image across contexts and time confirms the value of strategic branding in the religious sphere. This poses a challenge

for traditional Islamic organizations that are often uncoordinated in terms of messaging and public presentation (Ibrahim & Riyadi, 2023).

However, this model also shows potential risks, such as the possibility of deviating from the basic principles of Islam due to over-adaptation to the local context. Therefore, maintaining a balance between contextual relevance and doctrinal integrity is a major challenge in Islam's global proselytization strategy.

Response of Muslim and Non-Muslim Communities in the West to the Ahmadiyya Movement

The Ahmadiyya Movement as one of the most controversial religious groups in contemporary Islam has triggered various responses from Muslim and non-Muslim communities, especially in Western countries. On the one hand, the movement has gained space for expression and support from secular circles that uphold religious freedom. On the other hand, they face sharp resistance from the mainstream Muslim community, which considers Ahmadiyya doctrines to deviate from authoritative Islamic teachings. This article examines in depth the dynamics of the response to Ahmadiyya in the West, focusing on four main aspects: the attitude of the mainstream Muslim community, the response of non-Muslim communities, the role of Ahmadiyya in interfaith dialogue and human rights, and the social consequences in the form of internal fragmentation within the Muslim community.

Mainstream Muslim Attitudes: Rejection and Marginalization

The mainstream Muslim community's reaction to the Ahmadiyya in the West largely reflects theological

attitudes that have taken root in the Islamic world since the 20th century, when the Ulema Council and religious authorities of various Muslim countries, including Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia, officially declared the Ahmadiyya to be a group outside of Islam. This stigma has been carried by the Muslim diaspora in the West, who maintain a doctrinal dividing line between themselves and the Ahmadiyya community (Nijhawan, 2010).

One of the main sources of this rejection is a fundamental difference in the understanding of prophethood. Mainstream Muslims consider that prophethood was closed with the death of the Prophet Muhammad, referring to the concept of *khatm an-nubuwwah*. In contrast, the Ahmadiyya believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a prophet albeit in terms of a subordinate prophethood, which is considered by many scholars as a form of invalidation of the principle of prophetic finality. Accordingly, many Muslim communities in the West, including mosque boards, Muslim student associations, and dawah organizations, have publicly refused to cooperate with the Ahmadiyya in joint religious activities.

This refusal is not only symbolic but also manifests in the form of social and political marginalization. Ahmadiyya are often excluded from large-scale Muslim events, such as joint Eid al-Fitr celebrations, national Islamic congresses, or unifying forums in the West. In some cases, there has even been explicit opposition to the existence of Ahmadiyya mosques in areas with significant Muslim populations. For example, several Islamic organizations in the UK and Canada have objected to the use of the word “mosque” by the Ahmadiyya community, arguing that it

misleads the public about their Islamic identity (Valentine, 2014).

However, it should be noted that this attitude is not universal. In some more plural and open Muslim communities, especially the younger generation of Muslims who are more accustomed to democratic and multicultural cultures, there is a tendency to be more inclusive while maintaining theological distance.

Response of Non-Muslim Western Societies: Acceptance and Sympathy

While mainstream Muslim communities show resistance to Ahmadiyya, non-Muslim communities in the West tend to respond more positively, especially in terms of human rights and religious freedom. Ahmadiyya is often seen as a representation of “moderate Islam” that is compatible with liberal democratic values and tolerance.

One factor that reinforces this sympathy is the position of the Ahmadiyya as victims of persecution in their home countries, such as Pakistan, Indonesia and Bangladesh. In many of these countries, Ahmadis experience physical violence, social ostracization, and legal discrimination. When Ahmadiyya communities migrate to the West, they bring with them narratives of suffering and struggle for religious freedom, which resonate with human rights and minority protection agendas (Putra, Holtz, & Rufaedah, 2018).

Western media has also played a major role in shaping a positive image of the Ahmadiyya. Mainstream media reports often highlight Ahmadiyya peaceful activities, such as the “Love for All, Hatred for None” campaign, interfaith dialog, humanitarian aid, and participation in civic activities. In the context of rising Islamophobia post-9/11, the Ahmadiyya

are often promoted as the “friendly” face of Islam, as they reject violence, respect the laws of the country, and emphasize loyalty to legitimate governments.

In addition, the Ahmadiyya have also managed to build close relationships with some Western government agencies and civic organizations. In the UK, for example, the Ahmadiyya community has invited members of parliament and public figures to their annual events such as the Jalsa Salana, which features universal themes such as peace, justice and the unity of humanity. These relationships provide socio-political protection for the Ahmadiyya and strengthen their legitimacy as a religious group that contributes positively to society.

Ahmadiyya’s Role in Interfaith Dialogue and Human Rights

The Ahmadiyya Movement has a long history of active engagement in the field of interfaith dialog. This is due to the universalistic orientation of their teachings, which emphasize that Islam is a religion of peace and compassion for all humanity. This commitment is realized through various initiatives such as interfaith discussions, the publication of tolerance literature, and social campaigns involving interfaith participation (Khalil Muflih, 2023).

The Ahmadiyya position themselves as a bridge between Islam and the secularized Western world. They consciously adopt a dialogical and rational approach to proselytization, avoiding antagonistic or exclusionary rhetoric. In various forums, Ahmadiyya leaders emphasize the common values between Islam and human rights principles, such as freedom of religion, gender equality, and the prohibition of violence.

These contributions have been recognized by international human rights organizations. The Ahmadiyya community has collaborated with bodies such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and even some UN agencies in the fight for the rights of religious minorities. The Ahmadiyya have also been active in documenting and reporting on human rights violations they have experienced, thus strengthening their position as a credible actor in global advocacy (Rohman et al., 2025).

However, this engagement has not always been received positively by the mainstream Muslim community. In some cases, Ahmadiyya participation in international forums is perceived as a form of false representation of Islam, which misleads Western public opinion. This is where the paradox occurs: on the one hand Ahmadiyya appear as a representation of moderate Islam in the eyes of the world, while on the other hand they are ostracized by most Muslims themselves.

Social Consequences: Internal Fragmentation of the Muslim Community

One of the most significant impacts of Ahmadiyya presence in the West is the emergence of internal fragmentation within the diaspora Muslim community. The Ahmadiyya issue has become a crucial point in the negotiation of the collective identity of Muslims in multicultural countries. The debate over whether Ahmadiyya can be considered part of the Muslim community has led to divisions that are not only theological, but also political and social.

This fragmentation is reflected in the formation of exclusive and competing Islamic organizations. Some Muslim organizations explicitly state that they will not cooperate with groups that are

considered out of Islam, including the Ahmadiyya. This has led to the formation of two main currents: an inclusive group that prioritizes Muslim solidarity at large, and an exclusive group that prioritizes creedal orthodoxy (Widiyanto et al., 2024).

This internal conflict also affects the representation of Muslims in the public sphere. When Western governments or the media make Ahmadiyya the main source on Islamic issues, some Muslim communities feel that they are not fairly represented. As a result, a counter-narrative emerges alleging that the West is deliberately elevating Ahmadiyya as a tool to discredit mainstream Islam.

In the long run, this fragmentation has the potential to weaken the political and social position of Muslims in the West. Internal strife complicates collective efforts against discrimination, Islamophobia and stigmatization. In fact, the external challenges facing Muslims in the West demand solidarity and cooperation across schools and groups.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion in this research, it can be concluded that the Ahmadiyya movement plays a significant role in reshaping the configuration of Islamic discourse in the modern Western world. Their existence is not merely as a diaspora religious community, but as a strategic actor in the dissemination of Islamic discourse that emphasizes the values of peace, tolerance, and rationality. Using modern communication technology, active engagement in interfaith dialogue, and participation in socio-humanitarian activities, the Ahmadiyya have succeeded in framing Islam in an image that is in line with the principles of a democratic and multicultural society.

However, their position in the global Islamic landscape remains in a complex tension. On the one hand, they have received support and recognition from various institutions in Western countries as a moderate representation of Islam. On the other hand, they continue to face delegitimization from the mainstream Muslim community who reject their theological teachings, especially regarding Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's prophetic claims. This rejection not only constructs Ahmadiyya marginality within the internal Muslim context but also creates an ongoing identity dilemma in the face of ideologically and culturally different audiences.

Ahmadiyah's proselytization strategy in the West shows a paradigm shift from conventional proselytization models to digital proselytization models that are transnational, dialogical, and based on soft power. By promoting narratives of non-violence, spiritual revitalization, and harmony between Islam and universal values, Ahmadiyya has formed a counter Islamic discourse that is able to compete with the dominant narratives in the global Muslim community. Their success in building a peaceful and inclusive image of Islam in the West also shows how da'wah can function as an instrument of negotiating religious identity in the modern public sphere.

This study emphasizes that the study of the Ahmadiyya movement is not only important in the context of Islamic theology studies, but also in understanding the dynamics of identity politics, the disruption of religious authority, and the formation of representations of Islam in the digital and global era. By offering an interdisciplinary approach and cross-regional analysis, this study provides a

theoretical contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic studies, as well as practical implications for the formulation of da'wah strategies that are more relevant, adaptive, and oriented towards social cohesion in pluralistic Western societies.

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