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The Language of Exclusion: Ideology and Power in the Fatwa of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia on Ahmadiyah

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Abstract

This article analyses the fatwa issued by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, the Indonesian Council of Ulama) on the Ahmadiyah sect through the frameworks of Teun A. van Dijk's critical discourse analysis. Addressing a research gap on language as an instrument of power in religious discourse, this study examines the graphic structure, syntax, semantics, lexical choices, and rhetorical strategies to reveal how the fatwa not only serves as a legal guideline within Islamic jurisprudence but also functions as an ideological tool reinforcing MUI's authority within Indonesia's religious hierarchy. Findings indicate that passive constructions, abstraction, generalisation, hyperbole, and repetition are employed to obscure agency, amplify societal demands, and frame the Ahmadis as a threat to social stability and Islamic orthodoxy. Lexical choices, such as "deviant", "apostate", and "misleading", legitimise the marginalisation of Ahmadiyah followers and reinforce the binary opposition between mainstream Muslims and the outgroup. Additionally, rhetorical strategies within the fatwa shape public perception, strengthen MUI's authority, and potentially foster institutional discrimination. This study demonstrates that religious discourse extends beyond doctrinal guidance, functioning as a mechanism of social control that sustains exclusionary practices within the religious sphere, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on language, ideology, and power in Islamic studies in Indonesia.

[*Artikel ini menganalisis Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) tentang Aliran Ahmadiyah dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis wacana kritis yang dikembangkan oleh Teun A. van Dijk. Studi ini menyoroti kesenjangan penelitian terkait peran bahasa sebagai instrumen kekuasaan dalam wacana keagamaan, khususnya dalam membentuk kognisi sosial, konstruksi ideologis, dan dominasi institusional. Dengan menelaah struktur grafis, sintaksis, semantik, leksikal, dan retoris, penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa fatwa tersebut tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai pedoman hukum Islam, tetapi juga sebagai alat ideologis yang memperkuat posisi MUI dalam hierarki keagamaan Indonesia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa strategi linguistik, seperti kalimat pasif, abstraksi, generalisasi, hiperbola, dan repetisi, digunakan untuk menyamarkan aktor, memperbesar tuntutan masyarakat, serta membingkai Ahmadiyah sebagai ancaman terhadap stabilitas sosial dan kemurnian Islam. Pilihan leksikal, termasuk istilah "sesat", "murtad", dan "menyesatkan", berperan dalam melegitimasi marginalisasi terhadap pengikut Ahmadiyah serta memperkuat oposisi biner antara Muslim arus utama dan kelompok luar. Selain itu, strategi retoris dalam fatwa ini membentuk persepsi publik, meningkatkan otoritas MUI, serta berpotensi mendorong diskriminasi institusional. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa wacana keagamaan tidak hanya merefleksikan norma Islam, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai alat kontrol sosial yang mempertahankan praktik eksklusi dalam*

ranah keagamaan. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian bahasa, ideologi, dan kekuasaan dalam wacana Islam di Indonesia.]

Keywords: Ahmadiyah, Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology, MUI Fatwa, Power.

Introduction

More than a century after its establishment in Indonesia, the Ahmadiyah community continues to encounter substantial resistance in both religious and social spheres.[1] Michael Buehler's study[2] confirms the persistence of anti-Ahmadiyah sentiments, which are institutionalised through various policies, including fatwas issued by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, the Indonesian Council of Ulama) and numerous regional regulations. These regulations, enacted in provinces such as West Java, Central Java, West Nusa Tenggara, Banten, Jambi, Riau, West Kalimantan, and North Sulawesi, contain explicit anti-Ahmadiyah provisions. Annual reports from organisations specialising in humanitarian issues and religious freedom further corroborate the ongoing circulation of allegations against the Ahmadiyah community within society.[3] These allegations frequently result in acts of persecution across different regions, albeit with varying degrees of severity.[4]

Recent research on religious intolerance in Indonesia indicates that, over the past decade, intolerance has predominantly targeted two minority groups, the Ahmadiyah and Shia communities.[5] Furthermore, several studies suggest that manifestations of intolerance against these groups are, to some extent, influenced by MUI fatwas. Despite the increasing discourse on religious intolerance in Indonesia,[6] the Ahmadiyah and Shia communities remain among the most vulnerable groups, consistently subjected to social exclusion, ranging

1   See: Herman L. Beck, "The Rupture between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyya," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 161, no. 2 (2009): 210–46; Ikhsan Yosarie, Sayyidatul Insiyah, and Syera Anggreini Buntara, *Inklusi Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia dalam Keindonesiaan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Masyarakat Setara, 2021), 6; Ahmad Najib Burhani, "It's a Jihad: Justifying Violence towards the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia," *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 9, no. 1 (2021): 99–112.

2   See: Michael Buehler, "Do Discriminatory Laws Have Societal Origins? The Diffusion of Anti-Ahmadiyah Regulations in Indonesia," *Politics and Religion* 16, no. 3 (September 2023): 468–91; Anthin Lathifah, "Distributing Rights, Social Justice, and Managing Conflict of Ahmadis," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum dan Syar'iah* 14, no. 2 (December 30, 2022): 317–33; Inasshabihah Inasshabihah, "Women and Advocacy: Study of the Ahmadiyya Community in Tasikmalaya," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan* 20, no. 2 (December 29, 2020): 191–210.

3   See: Norshahril Saat, "The Impact of Non-Violent Muslim Extremism: Reflections on Indonesia and Malaysia," *Muslim Politics Review* 2, no. 1 (2023): 21–39; Hikmawan Saefullah, "Jihad Againts the Ghazwul Fikri: Actors and Mobilization Strategies of Islamic Underground Movement," in *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*, ed. Norshahril Saat and Ahmad Najib Burhani (Singapore, 2020), 317–51.

4   See: Luthfi Assyaukanie, "Fatwa and Violence in Indonesia," *Journal of Religion and Society* 11, (2009): 1–21; Fariz Alnizar, "Pretext for Religious Violence in Indonesia: An Anthropolinguistic Analysis of Fatwas on Ahmadiyya," *Studia Islamika* 26, no. 3 (December 12, 2019): 417–44.

5   See: M. Subhi Azhari and Moh. Hafidz Ghozali, *Peta Kuasa Intoleransi dan Radikalisme di Indonesia Laporan Studi Literatur 2008-2018*, (Depok: Inklusif, 2019), 54; A'an Suryana, "State Officials' Entanglement with Vigilante Groups in Violence against Ahmadiyah and Shi'a Communities in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (July 3, 2019): 475–92.

6   Adam J. Fenton, "Faith, Intolerance, Violence and Bigotry: Legal and Constitutional Issues of Freedom of Religion in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 2 (December 1, 2016): 181–212.

from accusations of heresy to intimidation and restrictions on religious activities.[7] These ongoing challenges underscore the persistence of systemic discrimination against these communities, highlighting an unresolved issue that continues to warrant critical attention.

Previous studies on MUI fatwas concerning Ahmadiyah generally reveal two main perspectives. The first views fatwa as Islamic legal rulings reflecting religious doctrine, analysing them through theological arguments and considering them as products of *ijtihād* (Islamic legal reasoning) based on scholars' interpretations of doctrinal validity. This approach emphasises how religious legitimacy is constructed through fatwas and how they serve as guidelines for Muslims in shaping their stance toward Ahmadiyah.[8] The second perspective situates fatwas within a political framework, arguing that the persecution of the Ahmadiyah community is not solely rooted in theological beliefs but also shaped by power dynamics. From this view, MUI fatwas function as instruments for political and religious elites to consolidate authority and garner support from conservative Islamic groups.[9] Moreover, research indicates that anti-Ahmadiyah fatwas not only directly impact the Ahmadiyah community but also restrict religious pluralism in Indonesia, exacerbating social exclusion and institutional discrimination against other minority groups.[10]

In this context, this study seeks to synthesise the two dominant perspectives by analysing MUI's fatwa not only as an Islamic legal ruling but also as an instrument of power embedded within broader social, political, and cultural structures. This study applies Teun A. van Dijk's framework to look at how discourse affects social cognition, ideology construction, and power dynamics. Previous studies have mostly used critical discourse analysis to look at the relationship between fatwa texts and socio-political contexts. MUI's Fatwa No. 11/MUNAS VII/MUI/15/2005 on the Ahmadiyah Sect[11] embodies an exclusive form of Islamism, positioning Ahmadiyah as a 'heretical' and 'misleading' sect. It frames

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7   Ken Miichi and Yuka Kayane, "The Politics of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: The Shi'a Response to the Sampang Incidents of 2011–12," *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8, no. 1 (May 2020): 51–64.

8   See: Zainul Mun'im, "Between Conservatization and Modernization of Human Rights: A Study of MU's Fatwa on Ahmadiyah," *Asian Journal of Law and Humanity* 2, no. 1 (2022): 17–38; Dimyati Sajari, "Fatwa MUI tentang Aliran Sesat di Indonesia (1976-2010)," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 39, no. 1 (June 9, 2015): 44–62; Mohamad Yahya, "Majelis Ulama Indonesia tentang 'Khâtam' al-Nabiyyîn (Studi atas Penggunaan Q.S. al-Azab, [33]:40 sebagai Dasar Penetapan Fatwa tentang Ahmadiyah)," *AN NUR: Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, no. 2 (2011): 239–54.

9   See: Burhani, "It's a Jihad," 99–112; Maksimus Regus, *Human Rights Culture in Indonesia: Attacks on the Ahmadiyya Minority Group, Human Rights Culture in Indonesia* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 116; Syafiq Hasyim, "Fatwas and Democracy: Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Indonesian Ulema Council) and Rising Conservatism in Indonesian Islam," *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8 (2020): 21–35; Andi Muhammad Irawan et al., "Arguing against Political and Religious Discriminations: Critical Discourse Analysis of Indonesian Ahmadiyya," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 19, no. 1 (2022): 53–76; Fariz Alnizar, Fadlil Munawwar Manshur, and Amir Ma'ruf, "Following the Global Rejection: The Motives of Majelis Ulama Indonesia's Fatwas on Ahmadiyah," *Studia Islamika* 29, no. 3 (2023): 519–46.

10   See: Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Treating Minorities with Fatwas: A Study of the Ahmadiyya Community in Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 8, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 285–301; Irman G. Lanti, "The Controversies of Fatwa: Growing Conservatism in Indonesia," *RSIS Commentaries*, no. 13 (January 1, 2008): 1–2; Assyaukanie, "Fatwa and Violence in Indonesia," 1–21.

11   Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2011), 101–5. See also: "Fatwa MUI No. 11/MUNAS VII/MUI/15/2005 tentang Aliran Ahmadiyah," accessed February 17, 2024, https://mui.or.id/baca/fatwa/aliran-ahmadiyah.

Ahmadiyah's teachings as a threat to social harmony and reinforces a binary opposition between 'mainstream Muslims' and 'deviants,' thereby legitimising marginalisation. Lexical choices such as 'deviant' and 'heretical,' along with Islamic terminology, construct a discourse that influences public perceptions and fosters social exclusion. This study demonstrates how MUI fatwas employ linguistic strategies to shape ideological affiliations, reinforcing discriminatory attitudes within society. Additionally, these fatwas serve to strengthen MUI's religious authority and contribute to the construction of social hierarchy within the religious sphere.

This article is a literature-based study that employs a critical discourse analysis approach to examine the relationship between discourse and power in MUI fatwas. The research analyses the content of MUI's 2005 Fatwa on the Ahmadiyah Sect as the primary object to identify discourse patterns within the fatwa. The analysis focuses on syntactic, semantic, and lexical aspects, particularly four points in the fatwa's considerations and three points in its dictum. The fatwa's textual data is examined using Teun A. van Dijk's critical discourse analysis framework, which not only encompasses structural elements—such as graphic structure, syntax, semantics, lexical choices, and rhetoric—but also considers the role of discourse creators in shaping ideological messages.[12] Beyond textual analysis, this study also incorporates aspects of social cognition and contextual factors that influence the construction of religious discourse. By adopting this approach, the study contributes to the understanding of fatwas not only as Islamic legal instruments but also as mechanisms for the reproduction of power within Indonesia's religious discourse.

Language, Ideology, and MUI's Fatwa on Ahmadiyah

In critical discourse analysis, language, power, and ideology are closely interconnected, with language functioning not only as a means of communication but also as a mechanism for reproducing social domination. Van Dijk asserts that discourse is intrinsically linked to power structures, particularly in how elite groups employ language to sustain authority and shape public cognition.[13] In social contexts, dominant practices do not emerge naturally but are constructed and maintained by institutions, groups, or ruling elites. This dominance is exercised through control over authority, religious legitimacy, and media access, shaping collective consciousness and reinforcing social hierarchies.[14]

In MUI's 2005 Fatwa on Ahmadiyah, language functions not only as a legal instrument but also as an ideological tool reinforcing MUI's authority within Indonesia's religious hierarchy. Beyond articulating MUI's stance on Ahmadiyah, the fatwa constructs a discourse that portrays Ahmadiyah as a deviant group threatening social stability and the purity of the Islamic faith.[15] Using van Dijk's critical discourse analysis, this study explores how language

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12   Teun A. van Dijk, "Ideological Discourse Analysis," *MOARA – Revista Eletrônica do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras* 2, no. 6 (July 12, 2016): 13–45.

13   Teun A. van Dijk, "Discourse, Power and Access," in *Texts and Practices*, ed. Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (London: Routledge, 2013), 84–104.

14   See: Mark. C. J. Stoddart, "Ideology, Hegemony, Discourse: A Critical Review of Theories of Knowledge and Power," *Social Thought & Research* 28, no. 2007 (2007): 191–225; Robert S. Stuart, "Ideology, Theory, and Mentality: Some Issues in the Historical Study of Ideology," *Labour History*, no. 50 (1986): 63–71.

15   See: Mohamad Abdun Nasir, "The ʿUlamāʾ, Fatāwā and Challenges to Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 25, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 489–505; Muhammed Haron,

establishes a dichotomy between "true Islam" and "deviant Islam" and reinforces MUI's legitimacy as the primary authority on Islamic orthodoxy in Indonesia.[16]

In van Dijk's theory, power is not merely a privilege or absolute possession of a particular group but is embedded within strategic social networks that shape individual and collective cognition.[17] This form of power extends beyond physical control, operating within the realm of thought to influence public perception of specific issues. This perspective aligns with Smith's argument that modern colonialism and imperialism no longer rely solely on military and economic dominance but have evolved into discursive strategies that shape societal mindsets.[18] In this context, discourse control serves as a primary mechanism for establishing and maintaining power. Regarding MUI's fatwa, the constructed discourse not only provides religious guidance but also fosters a collective perception of Ahmadiyah as a threat, thereby legitimising exclusionary and restrictive measures against the community.[19]

Graphis Structure

The graphic structure plays a crucial role in shaping meaning and reinforcing the ideological dimensions of a text. It encompasses various formatting techniques, including capitalisation, bold text, font selection, enumeration, and text layout. These visual strategies are designed to capture the reader's attention, enhance the text's authority, and influence the perception of its content.[20] In the context of MUI's 2005 Fatwa on the Ahmadiyah Sect, the graphic structure serves not only as an organisational tool but also as an ideological instrument that reinforces the fatwa's core message and affirms MUI's institutional authority within Indonesia's religious discourse.[21]

The fatwa begins with the title *"Aliran Ahmadiyah",* presented in capital letters and bold using the Times New Roman font.[22] This formatting technique visually emphasises the fatwa's central subject and immediately captures the reader's attention, framing Ahmadiyah as a critical issue warranting special consideration. The overall structure of the fatwa adheres to the formal framework outlined in the *Guidelines for Fatwa Stipulation of the Indonesian Ulema Council (1997),*[23] which includes key components such as the fatwa number and theme, the *basmalah* phrase, considerations (comprising justifications, reminders, and concerns), and the dictum of the decision (encompassing general provisions, legal rulings, and

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"Africa's Muslim Authorities and Ahmadis: Curbed Freedoms, Circumvented Legalities," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16, no. 4 (October 2, 2018): 60–74.

16   Burhani, "Treating Minorities with Fatwas," 285–301.

17   Christopher Hart, *Discourse, Grammar and Ideology* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 169.

18   Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999), 28–74.

19   Fariz Alnizar, Amir Ma'ruf, and Fadlil Munawwar Manshur, "The Language of Fatwa: Understanding Linguistic Violence in the Indonesian Ulama Council's Fatwa on Ahmadiyah," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 21, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 1–24.

20   Teun A. van Dijk, "Discourse Analysis as Ideology Analysis," in *Language & Peace*, ed. Christina Schäffne and Anita L. Wenden (London: Routledge, 1995), 17–33.
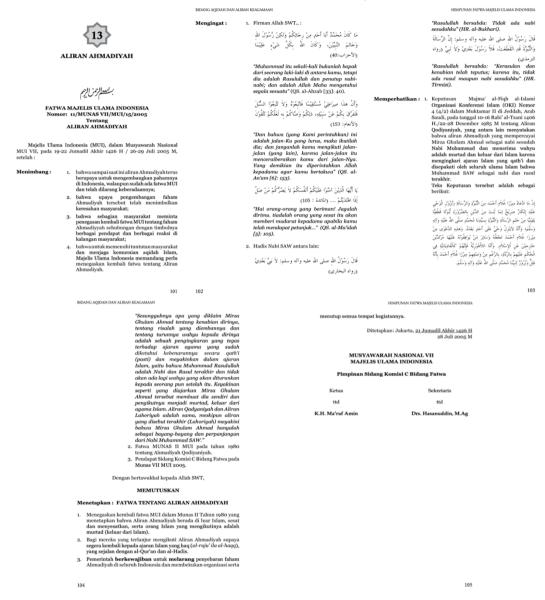
21   Syafiq Hasyim, "Majelis Ulama Indonesia and Pluralism in Indonesia," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 41, no. 4–5 (May 1, 2015): 487–95.

22   Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 101.

23   Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Pedoman Penetapan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia" (Jakarta: Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2003), 80.

recommendations). This systematic structure not only enhances readability but also reinforces the perception that these fatwas possess a level of authority comparable to formal legal decisions.

Figure 1
MUI's 2005 Fatwa on Ahmadiyah

Source: Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2011.[24]

A notable aspect of the fatwa's graphic structure is the use of *dīwānī* Arabic script for the *basmalah* phrase. This choice carries strong symbolic significance, as *dīwānī* calligraphy was historically used in official documents of the Ottoman Empire, a central authority in classical Islamic governance. A comparison with MUI's 1980 fatwa on Ahmadiyah Qadiyan reveals a shift in format. The 1980 fatwa lacked explicit identification,[25] whereas the 2005

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[24] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 101–5.
[25] "Fatwa MUI Tahun 1980 tentang Ahmadiyah Qadiyan," accessed February 16, 2024, https://www.mui.or.id/baca/fatwa/ahmadiyah-qadiyan.

fatwa includes a numbered designation and clear document identification, reflecting a growing resemblance to state legal instruments. Additionally, the explicit reference to the fatwa as the outcome of the VII MUI National Conference (19–22 Jumadil Akhir 1426 H/26–29 July 2005) serves to reinforce its legitimacy as a collective decision issued by Indonesia's highest religious authority.

The fatwa is structured into three considerations and concludes with three dictums. Additionally, it includes two reminder considerations referencing three Qur'anic verses—Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33:40), Sūrat al-Anʿām (6:153), and Sūrat al-Māʾidah (5:105)—along with two ḥadīths narrated by Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām al-Tirmidhī. The considerations cite three key references: the decision of *Majmaʿ al-Fiqh al-Islāmī* of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on Ahmadiyah Qadiyan, MUI's 1980 Fatwa on Ahmadiyah Qadiyan, and the opinion of Commission C for Fatwa at the VII MUI National Conference in 2005. The fatwa concludes with an official endorsement signed by K.H. Ma'ruf Amin as the chairman and Drs. Hasanuddin, M.Ag., the Secretary of the Commission C for Fatwa.[26]

The fatwa employs enumeration through numbered lists in both the preamble and the dictum of the decision. This technique has a significant cognitive impact, as readers tend to associate a structured, numbered format with the formal legal systematics found in legislation. By presenting its rulings in this manner, the fatwa creates the perception of legal precision and authority, despite lacking formal legal binding power. This enumeration technique is also evident in other MUI fatwas across various domains,[27] such as the 2005 Fatwa on Religious Pluralism, Liberalism, and Secularism, as well as the 2016 Fatwa on Blasphemy by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok). These fatwas adopt a legalistic format to enhance their legitimacy and influence in public discourse.[28]

In the third dictum, two key terms, *"obliged"* and *"prohibit"*, are highlighted in bold, underscoring their ideological significance. The decree states *"The government is **obliged** to **prohibit** the spread of Ahmadiyah throughout Indonesia and to freeze the organisation and close all its places of activity"*.[29] This graphic emphasis directs the reader's attention to the core message and reinforces the intended meaning. By bolding *"obliged"*, the fatwa frames state intervention as a mandatory duty rather than a mere recommendation, while *"prohibit"* emphasises the necessity of firm state action against Ahmadiyah. This demonstrates that the fatwa functions not only as religious guidance but also as an ideological instrument aimed at shaping state policy and public perception.[30] Notably, such typographic emphasis is absent in MUI fatwas

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[26] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 101–5.

[27] See: Muhammad Rasyid et al., "Science and Its Role in Changes in Islamic Legal Thought (An Analysis of Changes in the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council Due to Recent Scientific Findings)," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 23, no. 2 (2023): 120–37; Bayu Prasetyo and Dewi Ayu, "Comparative Study of the MUI Fatwa and Sadd al-Żarīʿah Concerning Spirit Dolls," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Law* 5, no. 2 (December 30, 2022): 60–79; Abdul Syatar et al., "The Development of Fatwas Based on Local Wisdom to the National Level: A Case Study of Panaik Money Fatwa," *El-Mashlahah* 13, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 133–50; Abd Rauf Muhammad Amin et al., "Problematic Fatwa: An In-Depth Sociological Investigation of MUI's Fatwa on Supporting Palestine's Struggle," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 1 (July 1, 2024): 237–52.

[28] A'an Suryana, "Discrepancy in State Practices: The Cases of Violence against Ahmadiyah and Shi'a Minority Communities during the Presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 55, no. 1 (June 26, 2017): 71–104.

[29] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 104–5.

[30] Fariz Alnizar, "Pretext for Religious Violence in Indonesia," 417–44.

concerning other religious minorities, such as Shia, indicating a heightened sense of urgency in the Ahmadiyah case.[31] Thus, the use of bold text is not merely a stylistic choice but a deliberate discursive strategy to exert ideological pressure on the government.[32]

From an ideological perspective, the graphic technique in the fatwa shows how the format and delivery of text can be a tool to reproduce power and ideology. As a text producer, the MUI adopts a fatwa format that prioritises clarity, systematic reasoning, argumentation, applicability, and contextual relevance in addressing religious enquiries from the public (*mustafti*).[33] Additionally, the formal legal-style structure fosters the perception that fatwas carry significant legal weight, despite lacking constitutional coercive power. Here, legal language extends beyond vocabulary and grammar to encompass the graphic structure and form, reinforcing the authoritative impression of fatwas.[34] While the use of formal legal language is a common feature in MUI fatwa issuance, this technique serves as a key medium in shaping readers' perceptions of fatwas as binding. This phenomenon aligns with van Dijk's argument that graphic strategies in discourse reinforce ideological dominance and legitimise authority in the minds of readers.[35]

The graphic structure of MUI's 2005 Fatwa on the Ahmadiyah Sect serves not only to organise content but also as an ideological instrument that strategically shapes readers' perceptions. It reflects the implementation of MUI's 2003 and 2012 fatwa guidelines, which emphasise systematic (*tafṣīlī*), argumentative (*sharia-based*), contextual (factual), and applicative (practical) religious rulings.[36] Techniques such as enumeration, capitalisation, bold fonts, and legalistic formatting reinforce the authority of fatwas, framing them as decisions with significant legal weight.[37] By adopting graphic elements resembling state legal documents, MUI effectively creates the impression that its fatwa is more than mere religious advice -it is a binding decision.[38] This underscores that in religious discourse, both textual content and structural presentation play a crucial role in shaping public perception.

Syntactic Structure

Syntactic structure plays a crucial role in shaping and conveying ideological meaning in a text. It encompasses word order, relationships between clauses, generalisations, and syntactic strategies that emphasise or obscure specific information. According to van Dijk,[39] syntactic emphasis often aligns with semantic emphasis, where sentence structure choices reflect the prominence of actors and their roles within a mental model. In the context of MUI's 2005

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31 See: "Fatwa MUI Tahun 1984 tentang Faham Syiah," accessed February 16, 2024, https://www.mui.or.id/baca/fatwa/faham-syiah; Chiara Formichi, "From Fluid Identities to Sectarian Labels: A Historical Investigation of Indonesia's Shi'i Communities," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 52, no. 1 (June 8, 2014): 101–26.

32 Jeremy Menchik, "The Politics of the Fatwa: Islamic Legal Authority in Modern Indonesia," *Indonesia* 114, no. 1 (October 2022): 75–97.

33 Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Pedoman Penetapan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia," 72.

34 Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Pedoman Penetapan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia," 80.

35 Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: SAGE, 1998), 55.

36 Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Pedoman Penetapan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia," 71.

37 Alnizar, Ma'ruf, and Manshur, "The Language of Fatwa," 1–24.

38 A.M. Purba, N.F. Nasution, and I.C. Bangun, "Islam and Cults: A Study of the Implementation of the Fatwa Policy of the Indonesian Ulema Council," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 105, no. 2 (2024): 1–14.

39 Dijk, "Discourse Analysis as Ideology Analysis," 40.

Fatwa on Ahmadiyah, syntactic analysis reveals how text producers employ syntactic strategies to construct ideological opposition between the ingroup and outgroup while reinforcing MUI's institutional authority in Indonesia's religious discourse.[40]

One notable syntactic strategy in this fatwa is the use of passive voice to obscure the actor or agent responsible for an action, particularly in contexts that may raise questions about its legitimacy. This is evident in the first consideration: *"That until now, the Ahmadiyah sect continues to attempt to spread its teachings in Indonesia, despite the existence of an MUI fatwa and its prohibition".*[41] In this consideration, the passive construction *"has been banned"* omits the entity responsible for the ban, creating ambiguity for the reader. Similarly, the phrase *"there has been an MUI fatwa"* does not necessarily imply that the prohibition originates from the 1980 MUI fatwa for two reasons. First, the 1980 fatwa did not explicitly ban Ahmadiyah but merely declared it a deviation from Islam. Second, the 1980 fatwa specifically addressed Ahmadiyah Qadian, whereas MUI's 2005 Fatwa on the Ahmadiyah Sect refers more broadly to the Ahmadiyah sect. The absence of a clear distinction regarding which branch of Ahmadiyah is being referenced further contributes to this ambiguity.[42]

Another syntactic strategy employed in this fatwa is abstraction, which serves to obscure information that might undermine the legitimacy of MUI's authority, particularly regarding its decision-making process. This is evident in the third consideration: *"That some people have requested a reaffirmation of MUI's fatwa on Ahmadiyah in response to the emergence of various opinions and reactions within society".*[43] Here, the phrase *"some people"* is deliberately vague, failing to specify who requested the reaffirmation. This abstraction enables the text producer to create the impression that MUI's reaffirmation of the fatwa is a response to public demand,[44] despite the absence of concrete evidence regarding the scale or legitimacy of such a request. In discourse syntax, this type of abstraction has a significant cognitive impact, as readers are likely to infer that the request originates from a substantial group. Within the societal mental model, demands perceived as coming from a majority are generally seen as more legitimate and warranting a response.

In addition to abstraction, the text producers employ generalisation to reinforce the narrative that Ahmadiyah has caused social unrest. This technique is evident in the second consideration: *"That the effort to develop Ahmadiyah has caused public unrest".*[45] The phrase *"public unrest"* is used without specifying who is affected or in what form the unrest manifests. The text provides no empirical evidence to substantiate this claim but employs a syntactic structure that presents the unrest as widespread and an unquestioned reality. This strategy enables the text producers to construct the perception that Ahmadiyah threatens social stability without offering concrete data to support the assertion. Additionally, this

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[40]   Fariz Alnizar, "Pretext for Religious Violence in Indonesia," 417–44.

[41]   Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 101.

[42]   "Fatwa MUI Tahun 1980 tentang Ahmadiyah Qadiyan."

[43]   Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 101.

[44]   Syafiq Hasyim, "Fatwa Aliran Sesat dan Politik Hukum Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)," *Al-Ahkam* 25, no. 2 (October 24, 2015): 241–66.

[45]   Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 101.

generalisation strengthens the legitimacy of MUI's actions by suggesting that its decision is a necessary response to an urgent and unavoidable social condition.[46]

While abstraction is used in certain parts of the fatwa to obscure information unfavourable to the in-group, objectification is employed elsewhere as a syntactic strategy to reinforce the legitimacy of the decision by presenting it as an objective fact. This is evident in the fourth consideration: *"That in order to fulfil the demands of the community and maintain the purity of the Islamic faith, the Indonesian Ulema Council considers it necessary to reaffirm the fatwa on the Ahmadiyah sect".*[47] Two notable syntactic strategies emerge in this statement. First, the shift from *"some people"* to *"the community"* is not incidental but a deliberate attempt to create the impression that the pressure on MUI comes not from a small group but from society at large.[48] Second, the use of *"demands"* instead of *"requests"* conveys a sense of urgency, implying that reaffirming the fatwa is not merely a response to an appeal but a necessary action to safeguard the stability and purity of Islam.[49]

Semantic Structure

The semantic structure of a text plays a crucial role in shaping meaning and reproducing ideology. It not only determines how information is organised but also assigns positive or negative attributes to actors, events, and actions, thereby reinforcing or undermining particular positions within a discourse.[50] In the context of MUI's 2005 Fatwa on the Ahmadiyah Sect, semantic structuring is employed to construct an ideological opposition between the ingroup, represented by MUI and the mainstream Muslim community, and the outgroup, represented by the Ahmadiyah community. The ingroup is depicted as upholding social responsibility and acting in the interests of the *ummah*, whereas the outgroup is characterised by negative attributes, such as deviation and posing a threat to social stability and the purity of the Islamic faith.[51]

In the first consideration, the fatwa constructs a narrative depicting Ahmadiyah as a group persistently propagating deviant teaching. The sect is portrayed as actively opposing MUI's authority through the phrase *"continues to strive to develop its understanding."* The word *"continues"* conveys a sense of ongoing activity in defiance of MUI's religious rulings. Additionally, the phrase *"has been banned"* implies that Ahmadiyah is an illegal organisation, despite the absence of an explicitly stated banning authority. The omission of the actor behind this ban allows readers to assume that the prohibition is both final and legally binding, even though the text itself provides no clear legal basis for this claim. This semantic strategy

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46 Ika Putri Mahardhika, "Social Exclusion towards Ahmadiyya in Indonesia in Contrast to the Guarantee of Freedom of Religion in the Constitution," *Journal of Gender, Culture and Society* 3, no. 2 (June 27, 2023): 1–7.

47 Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 101.

48 Fatima Zainab Rahman, "State Restrictions on the Ahmadiyya Sect in Indonesia and Pakistan: Islam or Political Survival?," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 408–22.

49 Nasir, "The ʿUlamāʾ, Fatāwā and Challenges to Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia," 489–505.

50 Teun A. van Dijk, "Discourse Semantics and Ideology," *Discourse & Society* 6, no. 2 (April 1, 1995): 243–89.

51 Fariz Alnizar, "Pretext for Religious Violence in Indonesia," 417–44.

reinforces the perception that Ahmadiyah has violated a prior fatwa, justifying further action to reaffirm its banned status.[52]

In the second consideration, the text producer employs generalisation to reinforce the discourse that Ahmadiyah has caused public unrest. The term *"unrest"* is abstract, lacking specificity regarding its nature, the affected parties, or how it manifests. Similarly, the use of *"society"* implies that the unrest is widespread, despite the absence of concrete evidence in the fatwa. This semantic strategy leads readers to perceive the unrest as large-scale rather than confined to a specific group. Additionally, nominalization is evident in the term *"development,"* which shifts the focus to Ahmadiyah's activities as the source of social instability. By framing the issue around the *"development"* of Ahmadiyah teachings, the text diverts attention from those who claim to be affected, reinforcing the perception that Ahmadiyah is the primary cause of disruption.[53]

Beyond attributing negative characteristics to Ahmadiyah, the fatwa also reinforces MUI's legitimacy as a religious authority responsible for safeguarding Islamic purity. In the fourth consideration, MUI is depicted as acting in response to community demands and the best interests of Muslims. The phrase *"maintaining the purity of the Islamic faith"* frames MUI's actions as a normative necessity to uphold religious orthodoxy, positioning the fatwa not merely as an administrative ruling but as a form of religious protection. Additionally, the shift in diction from *"request"* to *"demand"* strengthens the impression that MUI's decision responds to significant societal pressure rather than an internal initiative.[54] This rhetorical strategy enhances the fatwa's perceived legitimacy and broadens its social acceptance. Consequently, the fatwa can be seen as both an extension of the dominant ideology constructed by MUI as a text producer and as an assertion of its religious authority.[55]

A key semantic strategy in this fatwa is the reinforcement of MUI's ideological dominance through its directive to the government, particularly in the first dictum: *"Reaffirming MUI's fatwa in National Conference II of 1980, which stipulates that the Ahmadiyah Sect is outside Islam, heretical, and misleading, and that Muslims who follow it are apostates (murtad)".*[56] The phrase *"the government is obliged"* employs an imperative structure that implicitly positions MUI as an authoritative body capable of influencing policies related to Ahmadiyah. From the perspective of van Dijk's critical discourse analysis, this semantic strategy blurs the boundary between a fatwa as religious guidance and state policy. By instructing the government to act, the fatwa reinforces MUI's role not only as a regulator of religious norms but also as a key actor shaping state regulations on religious matters.[57]

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52   Dadi Darmadi, "The Meccan Fatwas and the Globalized Discourse of Exclusion: The Case of Anti-Ahmadiyah Movements in Indonesia," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 2, no. 1 (2013): 22–50.

53   Dijk, "Discourse Semantics and Ideology," 243–89.

54   Idhamsyah Eka Putra, Peter Holtz, and Any Rufaedah, "Who Is to Blame, the Victims or the Perpetrators? A Study to Understand a Series of Violence Targeting the Accused Heretic Group Ahmadiyya," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 10, no. 2 (2018): 166–73.

55   Ismatu Ropi, "Islamism, Government Regulation, and the Ahmadiyah Controversies in Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 48, no. 2 (December 18, 2010): 281–320.

56   Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 104.

57   Fariz Alnizar, "Pretext for Religious Violence in Indonesia," 417–44.

According to van Dijk, ideology can manifest in various aspects of discourse, but it is most explicitly expressed through meaning.[58] In MUI's 2005 fatwa on the Ahmadiyah sect, semantic analysis reveals a dominant ideological stance against the excluded group. The extensive use of negative attributes and prescriptive measures for Ahmadiyah followers demonstrates an assertion of dominance. This dominance is evident not only in the negative characterisation of Ahmadiyah but also in the third dictum, which obligates the government to prohibit the sect's teachings, dissolve its organisation, and shut down its activities. The invocation of governmental responsibility underscores MUI's intent to assert authority and influence. By incorporating this dictum, the fatwa positions MUI as a key factor in directing state action against Ahmadiyah,[59] reinforcing its ideological dominance.

Lexical Structure

Lexicalisation studies examine how vocabulary choices in discourse reflect and express the interests of specific groups. Similar meanings can be conveyed through different word choices, depending on the speaker's position, role, purpose, perspective, and the broader contextual features of the discourse.[60] Lexicalisation is closely linked to word selection in representing particular concepts, making it a central focus of this analysis. Within a text, a single concept can be expressed through varied lexical choices, while in some instances, it may be presented with minimal wording, thereby limiting the reader's interpretation.[61]

An essential aspect of lexicalisation studies in uncovering the underlying ideology of a text is the analysis of euphemism and dysphemism. Euphemism involves the use of milder or more neutral terms to soften the negative impact on certain groups, whereas dysphemism employs harsher or more negative language to discredit specific groups within a discourse. Both strategies play a crucial role in shaping readers' cognitive perceptions and influencing how they interpret the information presented in the text.[62]

In the fatwa's considerations, the text producer employs abstract vocabulary to describe the social situation concerning Ahmadiyah. This is evident in the use of the terms *unrest* and *reaction* in the second and third considerations. The choice of these words aims to depict the community's response to Ahmadiyah's presence. However, the text provides no concrete information regarding the specific nature of this unrest, whether it manifests as open protests, social conflicts, or mere disagreements within certain groups. This technique creates the impression that public unrest is a fact, despite the absence of empirical evidence. By utilising ambiguous language, the text producer constructs a perception that Ahmadiyah is causing social instability without explicitly detailing how this unrest occurs. Moreover, the lack of clarity regarding who experiences this unrest and how it is measured suggests a degree

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58 Teun A. van Dijk, "Ideology and Discourse," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, ed. Michael Freeden and Marc Stears, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2013), 175–96.
59 Fariz Alnizar, "Pretext for Religious Violence in Indonesia," 417–44.
60 Dijk, "Ideology and Discourse," 175–96.
61 Dijk, "Ideological Discourse Analysis," 13–45.
62 Dijk, *Ideology*, 272.

of subjectivity. This raises critical questions about how the discourse constructs the notion of unrest and whether it genuinely reflects the broader public sentiment.[63]

In establishing the legitimacy of the fatwa, the text producer employs lexical choices that reinforce MUI's authority. A notable strategy is the shift in diction from *"request"* to *"demand"*, as seen in the fourth consideration. This change signifies a difference in urgency, while word *"request"* carries a softer connotation, word *"demand"* conveys a sense of immediacy and obligation. Through this lexical choice, the fatwa constructs the perception that society collectively pressures MUI to act, making its decision appear as an unavoidable response. This strategy not only bolsters MUI's legitimacy as a religious authority but also reinforces the impression that the fatwa was issued in the broader public interest.[64]

In addition to employing dysphemism and euphemism, this fatwa utilises religious vocabulary to reinforce the exclusivity of the truth as claimed by MUI. This is evident in the second dictum, which states, *"For those who have followed the Ahmadiyah Sect, immediately return to the teachings of true Islam (al-rujū' ilā al-ḥaqq), which align with the Qur'an and ḥadīth".*[65] The phrase *"teachings of Islam ḥaqq"* serves to establish a clear ideological boundary between the version of Islam deemed authentic by MUI and the teachings of Ahmadiyah, which are labelled as deviations. In this context, *ḥaqq* not only denotes objective truth but also functions as a normative justification for MUI's decision. Thus, this lexical choice not only reinforces the distinction between the in-group and out-group but also strengthens the narrative that MUI holds the exclusive authority to define Islamic orthodoxy.[66]

The third dictum employs three imperative verbs; *"prohibit", "freeze",* and *"close",*[67] each carrying strong connotations of coercion, reinforcing the government's obligation to take decisive action against Ahmadiyah. The verb *"prohibit"* mandates the official cessation of Ahmadiyah teachings, *"freeze"* signifies the suspension of its organisational activities, and *"close"* underscores the complete shutdown of its places of worship. These verbs not only function normatively but also reinforce MUI's dominance in the discourse by positioning it as an authority capable of directing government actions.[68] From van Dijk's critical discourse analysis perspective, this lexical structure is not merely descriptive but actively constructs a social reality that legitimises the exclusion and repression of Ahmadiyah.

Rhetoric

Rhetorical strategies reinforce a group's ideological position by emphasising the positive attributes of the ingroup while highlighting the negative aspects of the outgroup. In religious discourse, rhetoric serves to assert dominance, construct binary oppositions between *"us"* and *"them"*, and shape interpretations that align with the interests of the text producers.[69] In

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[63] Bastiaan Scherpen, "Enforcing Religious Freedom in Indonesia: Muslim Elites and the Ahmadiyah Controversy after the 2011 Cikeusik Clash," in *Islam, Politics and Change: The Indonesian Experience after the Fall of Suharto*, ed. Nico J. G. Kaptein and Kees van Dijk (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), 103–32.

[64] Putra, Holtz, and Rufaedah, "Who Is to Blame, the Victims or the Perpetrators?," 166–73.

[65] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 104.

[66] Fariz Alnizar, "Pretext for Religious Violence in Indonesia," 417–44.

[67] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, 104–5.

[68] Fariz Alnizar, "Pretext for Religious Violence in Indonesia," 417–44.

[69] Dijk, "Ideology and Discourse," 175–96.

the 2005 MUI Fatwa on the Ahmadiyah Sect, various rhetorical techniques, including hyperbole, repetition, and irony, are employed to construct a narrative that consolidates MUI's authority while marginalising Ahmadiyah from mainstream Islamic discourse.[70]

Hyperbole in discourse serves to exaggerate situations or events, shaping readers' perceptions. In this fatwa, hyperbolic language portrays Ahmadiyah as a major threat to mainstream Islam. This is evident in the first consideration, where the word *"continue"* suggests that Ahmadiyah's propagation efforts are relentless and widespread, despite being limited to specific regions.[71] Additionally, the phrase *"in Indonesia"* without further clarification implies a nationwide spread, even though no concrete evidence supports this claim. A similar use of hyperbole appears in the first dictum of the decision. The terms *"deviant"* and *"misleading"* reinforce the stigma against Ahmadiyah, with the latter amplifying the severity of the claim despite its semantic redundancy.[72] A comparable strategy is found in the 1980 MUI Fatwa on Ahmadiyah Qadiyan.[73] While both terms convey deviation, their repetition serves to depict Ahmadiyah not only as heretical but also as a threat to other Muslims. This hyperbolic framing reinforces the ideological construction of Ahmadiyah as a widespread, active, and dangerous movement,[74] justifying the call for decisive action.

Repetition in discourse serves to reinforce an idea and enhance the reader's comprehension of the intended message. In this fatwa, repetition is employed to construct a narrative emphasising the urgency of action against Ahmadiyah and the exclusivity of Islam as defined by the MUI. One example appears in the third consideration, where the terms *"opinion"* and *"reaction"* are used together, despite *opinion* being inherently a part of *reaction*. This redundancy seeks to amplify the impression that the Ahmadiyah issue has provoked a significant societal response,[75] even in the absence of empirical evidence substantiating the scale or nature of such a reaction.

Repetition also appears in the reference to apostasy in the first dictum. The term *murtad*, derived from Arabic, has been integrated into the Indonesian language to mean "leaving religion".[76] However, the text producer includes an additional explanation in brackets, clarifying the term for unfamiliar readers while reinforcing the ideological assertion that Ahmadiyah followers have definitively left Islam. This strategy underscores the prescribed actions for individuals labelled as apostates.[77] Another instance of repetition

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[70] Fariz Alnizar, "Pretext for Religious Violence in Indonesia," 417–44.

[71] See: Torhild Breidlid, "The Legitimation of Violence Against the Ahmadiyya Community in Indonesia," *Jurnal Kawistara* 3, no. 2 (August 17, 2013): 165–77; Bernhard Platzdasch, "Religious Freedom in Contemporary Indonesia: The Case of the Ahmadiyah," in *Encountering Islam: The Politics of Religious Identities in Southeast Asia*, ed. Yew-Foong Hui, Books and Monographs (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2012), 218–46.

[72] Januddin Muhammad Yusuf, Nawir Yuslem, and Dhiauddin Tanjung, "The Inclusion of Ulema in the Aplication of Islam Nusantara Law for the Aceh Community," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 23, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 186–97.

[73] "Fatwa MUI Tahun 1980 tentang Ahmadiyah Qadiyan."

[74] Nasir, "The ʿUlamāʾ, Fatāwā and Challenges to Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia," 489–505.

[75] Alnizar, Ma'ruf, and Manshur, "The Language of Fatwa," 1–24.

[76] See: Sa'dī Abū Jayb, *Al-Qāmūs al-Fiqhīya: Lughatan wa Iṣṭilāḥan* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), 189; Pusat Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, 4th ed. (Jakarta: Pusat Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2008), 181.

[77] Andi Muhammad Irawan, "'They Are Not Muslims': A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Ahmadiyya Sect Issue in Indonesia," *Discourse & Society* 28, no. 2 (March 1, 2017): 162–81.

occurs in the second dictum with the phrase *"return to the true teachings of Islam (al-rujū' ilā al-ḥaqq)"*. Here, Indonesian and Arabic are used together to emphasise the urgency of adhering to *true* Islamic teachings. The inclusion of Arabic not only bolsters the MUI's religious authority but also signals the text producer's ideological alignment with Islamism.[78]

Linguistics Strategies and Ideological Reinforcement

According to van Dijk, social cognition and contextual factors play a crucial role in shaping discourse by reflecting the identity of the text producer and the surrounding social environment.[79] The MUI fatwa on Ahmadiyah is not merely an Islamic legal text but also an ideological tool that reinforces MUI's dominant position within Indonesia's religious hierarchy. Analysing its syntactic, semantic, lexical, and rhetorical strategies demonstrates that language functions beyond communication, as a mechanism for reproducing power and maintaining social order. This study highlights how MUI, as a dominant religious authority, strategically employs discourse to solidify its ideological stance, sustain its influence, and shape public perception of Ahmadiyah.[80]

A key linguistic strategy in the MUI fatwa is the use of passive constructions, abstractions, generalisations, and objectification techniques, which systematically obscure the role of the actors, amplify societal demands, and position Ahmadiyah as an outgroup. This strategy indicates that the fatwa functions not only as an Islamic legal ruling but also as a political instrument for shaping public opinion.[81] In Indonesia's socio-political context, where religious authorities play a crucial role in defining social norms and influencing policy,[82] such linguistic strategies contribute to constructing a collective consciousness that justifies Ahmadiyah's exclusion.[83] The use of negatively connoted terms such as "heretic", "misleading", and "apostate" systematically dehumanises the Ahmadiyah community and legitimises their marginalisation within mainstream Islamic discourse. These terms are not merely descriptive; they carry ideological weight, framing Ahmadiyah as a threat to the purity of Islamic faith and social cohesion.[84]

The fatwa's rhetorical strategy also employs hyperbole and repetition of terms such as "unrest" and "public demands" to create a sense of urgency and consensus in support of MUI's actions.[85] By framing Ahmadiyah as a threat to social stability, the text producers shape public opinion to justify repressive measures against the group.[86] This strategy not only

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[78] Alnizar, Ma'ruf, and Manshur, "The Language of Fatwa," 1–24.

[79] Dijk, *Ideology*, 272.

[80] See: Hasyim, "Majelis Ulama Indonesia and Pluralism in Indonesia," 487–95; Nasir, "The ʿUlamāʾ, Fatāwā and Challenges to Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia," 489–505.

[81] Dijk, "Ideology and Discourse," 175–96.

[82] Muntasir Muntasir et al., "Power Structures and Religious Legitimacy: The Influence of Dayah Ulama in the Politics of Aceh Analyzed Using Powercube Theory," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 1 (January 30, 2025): 437–62.

[83] Norshahril Saat, "Theologians 'Moralising' Indonesia? The Case of the Post-New Order Ulama Council of Indonesia (MUI)," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 44, no. 4/5 (2016): 546–70.

[84] Nasir, "The ʿUlamāʾ, Fatāwā and Challenges to Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia," 489–505.

[85] Doli Witro, "State Islamic University Students' Perceptions of Israel Affiliated Products: A Study After the Fatwa of Indonesian Ulema Council No. 83 of 2023 Concerning the Law on Support for the Palestinian Struggle," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 18, no. 1 (June 12, 2024): 145–60.

[86] Hasyim, "Fatwa Aliran Sesat dan Politik Hukum Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)," 241–66.

reinforces MUI's authority as a religious institution responsive to societal concerns but also fosters compliance with its directives. Consequently, it contributes to increasing social discrimination against the Ahmadiyah community, leading to exclusion, restrictions on religious rights, and even religiously motivated violence.[87]

Social cognition plays a crucial role in how the MUI fatwa's discourse is interpreted and internalised by its audience. The use of abstractions and generalisations, such as broad claims about "societal demands" or vague references to "some members of society", allows readers to project their assumptions and biases onto the text. This technique not only conceals the lack of concrete evidence supporting the MUI's claims but also reinforces the fatwa's legitimacy as an expression of the collective Muslim will. The shift in terminology from "requests" to "demands" further amplifies the sense of urgency and inevitability surrounding action against the Ahmadiyah. As a result, this strategy cultivates the perception that the fatwa reflects the majority's will rather than an institutional decision shaped by specific ideological and political influences.[88]

From a lexical perspective, the inclusion of Islamic terminology such as *murtad*, return to the true teachings of Islam (*al-rujū' ilā al-ḥaqq*), and "definite Islam" underscores the deep ideological foundation of Islamism within this fatwa. These terms function not only as religious rhetoric but also as instruments of legitimation, reinforcing the MUI's narrative that Ahmadiyah is a deviant group that must be brought back to the correct path. The use of Arabic phrases enhances the MUI's religious authority while simultaneously creating a symbolic exclusion of the group targeted by the fatwa. By framing Ahmadiyah as contradicting the true teachings of Islam, the MUI effectively consolidates its role as the guardian of Islamic orthodoxy in Indonesia.[89]

The linguistic strategies in the MUI fatwa reflect a shift in the organisation's ideological stance from a more inclusive approach in its early years to a more exclusive position after 2000.[90] While the 1980 MUI fatwa on Ahmadiyah Qadiyan used religious terminology sparingly,[91] the 2005 fatwa on the Ahmadiyah sect saw a significant increase in theological language. This shift coincided with MUI's transition from adhering to Pancasila as *khādim al-ḥukūmah* (servants of the government) to prioritising Islamic principles as *khādim al-ummah* (servants of the people).[92] This transformation directly influenced the discourse in MUI fatwas, where the increasing use of Islamic terminology served to reinforce their religious

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[87] See: Max Regus, "The Victimization of the Ahmadiyya Minority Group in Indonesia: Explaining the Justifications and Involved Actors," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama dan Lintas Budaya* 4, no. 4 (December 31, 2020): 227–38; Hasse J and Mega Hidayati, "Religious Violence in the Indonesian Democratic Era," *Al-Albab* 7, no. 1 (October 9, 2018): 3–16.

[88] Burhani, "Treating Minorities with Fatwas," 285–301.

[89] Burhani, "Treating Minorities with Fatwas," 285–301.

[90] Muhammad Lutfi Hakim et al., "Between Exclusivity and Inclusivity of Institutions: Examining the Role of the Indonesian Ulema Council and Its Political Fatwa in Handling the Spread of Covid-19," *Khazanah Hukum* 5, no. 3 (December 31, 2023): 232–33.

[91] "Fatwa MUI Tahun 1980 tentang Ahmadiyah Qadiyan."

[92] Moch Nur Ichwan and Nina Mariani Noor, "Arah Baru Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)," in *Ulama dan Negara-Bangsa: Membaca Masa Depan Politik di Indonesia*, ed. Noorhaidi Hasan (Yogyakarta: Pusat Pengkajian Islam, Demokrasi, dan Perdamaian (PusPIDeP), 2019), 67–96.

authority. Consequently, MUI fatwas became more aligned with Islamist ideology,[93] employing linguistic strategies to solidify their ideological position in society.

The interaction between language, ideology, and power in the MUI fatwa demonstrates how discourse functions as a tool for constructing and maintaining religious hierarchies. The fatwa is not merely a religious directive but also a political instrument that shapes the narrative of Islam in Indonesia. This analysis reveals that its textual structure is deliberately crafted to influence public perception, reinforce the authority of religious institutions, and marginalise minority groups such as the Ahmadiyah. By examining the linguistic strategies employed, this study underscores the significance of the broader socio-political context in the production of religious discourse. Furthermore, it highlights how fatwa discourse can legitimise exclusionary practices, contributing to the marginalisation of specific groups. Hence, the fatwa serves not only as a legal guideline but also as an ideological tool that sustains the existing socio-religious order in Indonesia.

Conclusion

An analysis of MUI Fatwa No. 11/MUNAS VII/MUI/15/2005 on the Ahmadiyah Sect reveals the systematic use of linguistic strategies to reinforce the MUI's ideological position. Through passive syntactic structures, abstraction, generalisation, hyperbole, and repetition, the fatwa frames Ahmadiyah as a deviant group threatening Islamic purity and social stability. By obscuring actors in key statements and amplifying societal demands, the fatwa legitimises MUI's authority as the guardian of Islamic orthodoxy while shaping public opinion and reinforcing the exclusion of Ahmadiyah. In Indonesia's socio-political context, where religious authorities play a crucial role in shaping public discourse, such linguistic strategies further entrench MUI's dominance in defining legitimate Islamic norms.

This fatwa illustrates how language functions as an ideological instrument to regulate social cognition and shape collective action. Through religious terminology, repetition, and objectification techniques, it not only reinforces MUI's Islamist ideology but also constructs a social reality that legitimises the exclusion of Ahmadiyah from mainstream Islam. The interplay between language, power, and ideology in this fatwa demonstrates how textual structures do more than convey religious norms; they create cognitive frameworks that sustain majority dominance over minority groups. Thus, this fatwa serves as a case study of how religious institutions employ discourse to assert authority, marginalise minority communities, and uphold exclusionary practices in the religious sphere.

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[93] Nasir, "The ʿUlamāʾ, Fatāwā and Challenges to Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia," 489–505.

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