



## STRATEGIES FOR RELIGIOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN INDONESIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE JA'FARIYAH SHI'A MINORITY IN TERNATE

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### *Abstrak*

#### **Kata Kunci:**

Konflik keagamaan, Resolusi konflik, Kelompok minoritas, Syi'ah Ja'fariyah

*Studi ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis relasi antara kelompok keagamaan, masyarakat dan pemerintah serta strategi pengelolaan konflik benuasa agama, dengan studi kasus kelompok minoritas Syi'ah Ja'fariyah di Moya, Ternate. Komunitas Syi'ah yang dipimpin oleh Nawawi Husni ini, oleh Ikatan Jema'ah Ahlul Bait Indonesia (IJABI) dianggap memiliki ajaran dan praktik keagamaan yang berbeda serta dinilai tidak sejalan dengan ajaran Syi'ah pada umumnya. Selain dipandang memiliki kompleksitas berlapis, keberadaan komunitas Syi'ah ini pun dianggap sesat sehingga seringkali menjadi sasaran dari praktik intoleransi kelompok keagamaan lain, bahkan oleh pemerintah setempat. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan menggunakan perspektif sosiologis, hasil studi menunjukkan bahwa sikap diam (tidak reaktif) kelompok Syi'ah Ja'fariyah di Moya, Ternate dalam merespons berbagai penolakan dan anggapan sesat terhadap kelompoknya bukanlah sikap yang pasif. Sebaliknya, mereka justru memilih melakukan 'perlawanan' secara kreatif dengan cara memanfaatkan media untuk melakukan counter opini negatif terhadap mereka. Pilihan model 'perlawanan' ini tidak lepas dari peran dan posisi Husni Nawawi dari tarik ulur kepentingan pemerintah. Mengingat, pola pendekatan konflik secara hard-power harus berubah ke model transformasi smart-power.*

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## Abstract

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### Keywords:

Religious conflict, Conflict resolution, Minority groups, Ja'fariyah Shi'a

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This study aims to describe and analyse the relationship between religious groups, societies, and governments, as well as strategies for managing religious conflict, with a case study of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a minority group in Moya, Ternate. The Shi'a community led by Nawawi Husni, according to the Jema'ah Ahlul Bait Indonesia (IJABI), is considered to have different religious teachings and practices and is judged to be inconsistent with the teachings of the Shi'a in general. In addition to having a layered complexity, the existence of this community is also considered misguided, so it is often the target of the intolerance of other religious groups, even by the local government. Through a qualitative approach using a sociological perspective, the results of this study revealed that the silent (non-reactive) attitude of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group in responding to various rejections and misconceptions about its group is not passive. Instead, they choose to do "resistance" creatively by using the media to counter negative opinions against them. The choice of this "resistance" model is not separate from the role and position of Husni Nawawi in attracting the government's interests. Consider that the pattern of hard-power conflict approaches must change to the smart-power transformation model.

## Introduction

Indonesia is known as a country with diverse ethnicities, races, cultures, languages and religions. This diversity is manifested in the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. Constitutionally, this diversity, especially in matters of religion, has also been guaranteed and protected by the 1945 Constitution. However, the realization of this principle was repressed during the New Order era.<sup>1</sup> This can be seen from the various limitations and restrictions on social and religious movements in the public sphere.<sup>2</sup> The imbalance in the number of followers of one religion with another is one of the causes of disharmonious relations. Majority and minority-based relations are the triggers for conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, the Indonesian government issued several regulations. However, the substantive goal is to minimize the potential for the friction

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<sup>1</sup> Nur Kafid, "Agama di Tengah Konflik Sosial: Tinjauan Sosiologis atas Potensi Konflik Keberagaman Agama di Masyarakat," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat* 12, no. 1 (2015): 1–13, <https://ejournal.uinsaid.ac.id/index.php/al-araf/article/view/1180>.

<sup>2</sup> Husni Mubarrak and Intan Dewi Kumala, "Diskriminasi terhadap Agama Minoritas: Studi Kasus di Banda Aceh," *Seurune, Jurnal Psikologi Unsyiah* 3, no. 2 (2020): 42–60.

<sup>3</sup> Ramli Abdul Wahid, "Aliran Minoritas Dalam Islam di Indonesia," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 1, no. 2 (2017): 141–163.

of interests and conflicts between religious communities. However, in practice, some of these regulations have become controversial. For example, the PNPS Law No. 1 of 1965 concerning Prevention and Abuse and Blasphemy of Religion, Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 84 of 1996 concerning Instructions for Implementing the Management of Vulnerability to Religious Harmony, and Joint Regulations of the Minister of Religion and Minister of Home Affairs Number 9 and 8 of 2006 concerning the Implementation of the Duties of Regional Heads/Deputies Regional Head in Maintenance of Religious Harmony, Empowerment of Religious Harmony Forums and Establishment of Houses of Worship.

Since the 1998 Reformation, the wave of democratization in Indonesia has strengthened. It is marked by enhancing individual freedom to speak, convey aspirations, and express beliefs.<sup>4</sup> This is due to the existence of guarantees and protection from the law. But in reality, the strengthening trend of democratization in Indonesia has triggered a new dilemma. State and Society relations are often debated. Various conflicts that were latent in the previous era have simultaneously surfaced and significantly impacted people's social life. Religion is frequently pulled along and accused of being a trigger for conflict, whether internal factors caused by differences in viewpoints and sects or among adherents of religions. Meanwhile, with its authority, the State is often a source of legitimate power to carry out various actions that are substantively contrary to the law.

The voices, expressions and movements of certain groups and beliefs that are considered to threaten social, political, economic and cultural stability often attract and encourage the State to intervene. Normative narratives that seem 'justified' by the system, the State is often used as legitimacy to create stability and balance in addressing conflict

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<sup>4</sup> N Kafid, "Dari Islamisme Ke 'Premanisme': Pergeseran Orientasi Gerakan Kelompok Islam Radikal di Era Desentralisasi Demokrasi," *MASYARAKAT: Jurnal Sosiologi* 21, no. 1 (2016): 57–79, <http://journal.ui.ac.id/index.php/mjs/article/view/4737>.

(*equilibrium*).<sup>5</sup> As happened in North Maluku (Ternate) after the issuance of the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of North Maluku Province Number: 45 of 2015 concerning Deviant Teachings Spread by Groups claiming to be the Ja'fariyah Shi'a sect version of Nawawi Husni (aka Ong) in North Maluku Province. As a result, the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) has always been under the supervision of the local government to this day.

Studies related to minority issues in Indonesia have been widely studied. The study by Ramli Abdul Wahid,<sup>6</sup> found that the MUI declared several sects heretical. As the sect of Yusman Roy from the Itikaf Islamic Boarding School, Malang, East Java, the Nurul Yaqin Study group in Tangerang, whose leader claims to have met God directly through the mi'raj; the emergence of statements to whistle in prayer in Sulawesi; there is a belief that says that prayers must be performed directly to the ground and may not be covered with boards and tiles but may wear sandals; the case of an unscrupulous elementary school principal in Jambi who claimed to be a prophet and apostle after the Prophet Muhammad PBUH; the Soul Training group in North Sumatra who claimed that the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad was only the Qur'an; the Islamic group Jama'ah; Darul Arqam; Inkar Sunnah; Lia Eden's ideology; the Liberal Islam Network (JIL) and al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah, to the cases of Ahmadiyah Qadiyan and Shi'a Imamiyya.

The chronology of MUI issuing deviant fatwas related to Shi'a can be seen from the results of the study of Ibnu Hasan Muchtar.<sup>7</sup> Muchtar viewed the conflict between the Shi'a group led by Husni (Ong) from 2012-2013 to the role of the Ternate City Bakesbangpol, MUI and several other institutions in the Ternate City area in studying the existence and issues related to Shi'a led by Husni (Ong). These studies led to the issuance

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<sup>5</sup> Sindung Haryanto, *Spektrum Teori Sosial: Dari Klasik Hingga Postmodern* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2012), 21.

<sup>6</sup> Ramli Abdul Wahid, "Aliran Minoritas Dalam Islam di Indonesia."

<sup>7</sup> Ibnu Hasan Muchtar, "Dinamika Lahirnya Fatwa Mui Provinsi Maluku Utara tentang Sesatnya Syi'ah Ja'Fariyah Ajaran Nawawi Husni (Ong)," *Harmoni* 17, no. 2 (2018): 269–272.

of North Maluku Province MUI Fatwa Number 45 of 2015 concerning the heresy of Ja'fariyah Shi'a teachings propagated by Nawawi Husni (Ong) dated 11 August 2015. After the issuance of this fatwa, the people of Ternate City were no longer too reactive to the group led by Husni (Ong). Even though the conflict is related to the Shi'a led by Husni (Ong), it does not mean it has disappeared.

Meanwhile, regarding the discriminatory treatment of minority groups, the study of Husni Mubarrak and Intan Dewi Kumala,<sup>8</sup> found that the Christian minority group in Banda Aceh experienced restrictions and barriers to expression in the public space. This discriminatory treatment arose due to the negative prejudice related to efforts to spread teachings believed by minority groups, as well as the existence of state regulations which were seen as restricting opportunities, space for movement and favouring minorities.

When referring to Byman, the emergence of conflict is a form of concern for one group over another because of an element of domination that arises, both materially, religiously and culturally,<sup>9</sup> when one group is in power. In addition, the friction of interests and the desire for power is the main reason for the emergence of conflicts and repressive actions of the majority against minorities, as happened in India after the 2014 elections.<sup>10</sup> Then the majority-minority conflicts in Europe were caused by the thickening of negative stereotypes between groups of different religions,<sup>11</sup> almost the same as the conflicts that occur in the minority religious groups in Western European countries, where the dominant

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<sup>8</sup> Intan Dewi Kumala Husni Mubarrak, "Diskriminasi terhadap Agama Minoritas: Studi Kasus di Banda Aceh," <https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/seurunc/article/view/17553>.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel L. Byman, *Keeping the Peace* (Baltimore dan London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 14.

<sup>10</sup> Deepankar Basu, "Majoritarian Politics and Hate Crimes against Religious Minorities: Evidence from India, 2009–2018," *World Development* 146, no. 105540 (2021): 1–15.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Gesthuizen, Michael Savelkoul, Peer Scheepers, "Patterns of Exclusion of Ethno-Religious Minorities: The Ethno-Religious Hierarchy across European Countries and Social Categories within These Countries," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 82, no. (2021): 12–24.

factor that triggers conflict comes from feelings and attitudes that are less open (exclusive) towards religious sects or religious groups within religion.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the studies above demonstrate that the dynamics of religious life in Indonesia are inseparable from the emergence of issues of new beliefs or religious beliefs in Islam. Therefore, it is important to look at the patterns of strategy and conflict management carried out by groups and the government's strategic steps in dealing with these socio-religious problems. This study will investigate the relationship between the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) Ternate and the local community and government. How is the strategy and conflict management carried out by the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) Ternate? This study was conducted using a combination of several interpretive approaches (interpretative social science/ISS); hermeneutic, constructivist, ethnomethodological, cognitive, idealist, phenomenological, subjectivist, and qualitative sociology.<sup>13</sup>

Referring to the ideas of Talcott Parsons in analyzing systems theory, where conditions of balance and social harmony can be created from the realization of the functions of each sub-system; adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latent patterns maintenance (system fiduciary). Adaptation functions as a defense system for the resources to face external demands. Goal Attainment is a function of the system in determining the priority scale of interests and mobilizing resources to achieve the desired goals. Integration is an inter-relationship coordination process of sub-systems or system units in a large system structure. Meanwhile, latency is a function of maintaining system patterns through motivation or social

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<sup>12</sup> Maykel Verkuyten Borja Martinovic, "Inter-Religious Feelings of Sunni and Alevi Muslim Minorities: The Role of Religious Commitment and Host National Identification," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 52, no. 1 (2016): 1–12.

<sup>13</sup> W. Lawrence Neuman, *Pearson New International Edition, Social Research Methode: Qualitative and Quantitative Approach*, Seventh Ed. (USA: Pearson Education Limited, 2014), 103.

agreement through internal tensions or social control.<sup>14</sup> So that the Shi'a conflict, in this perspective, can be seen as a form of dysfunction of one of the sub-systems of various social systems.

Because the conflict involved elements of the state, a political perspective was used in analyzing the conflict caused by the majority-minority dichotomy, where minority groups in the political context are in a 'powerless' position, whether it is motivated by religious, linguistic and social factors, ethnic groups, or others, 15 the existence of the majority-minority cannot be separated from the frame of identity politics.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, conflict strategy and management is a form of action or reaction to situations and conditions involving certain parties to find a solution to a problem. From the state side, efforts to take action and reaction are seen from efforts to provide guarantees, services, fulfilment of rights, and recognition and protection of identity owners. So the final target is to minimize disparities and inequality among the groups.<sup>17</sup>

Based on the two perspectives above, efforts to manage majority-minority conflict, in the case of the Shi'a led by Nawawi Husni (Ong), require processes and stages for conflict resolution, taking into account several steps;<sup>18</sup> *first* is the recognition of differences as a need and value base that lies behind each culture and non-negotiable beliefs do not need to be fought over to get a truth claim, but must be accommodated. *Second*, using a structural approach to integrate, reconcile and sustainably reconstruct social order as a spectrum of conflict resolution. This

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<sup>14</sup> George Ritzer & Douglas J. Goodman, *Teori Sosiologi Modern* (Jakarta: Prenada, 2011), 37.

<sup>15</sup> George Ritzer & Douglas J. Goodman, *Teori Sosiologi Modern*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Josef Raab, "Heinrich Wilhelm Schäfer, Identity Politics and the Political Field : A Theoretical Approach to Modelling a "Field of Identity Politics," in *New World Colors: Ethnicity, Belonging, and Difference in the Americas, Inter-American Studies, Estudios Interamericanos*, Vol. 9. (Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier & Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press, 2014), 380.

<sup>17</sup> Timothy Laurie and Rimi Khan, "The Concept of Minority for the Study of Culture," *Continuum* 31, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2016.1264110>, hlm. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Ho-Won Jeong, *Conflict Management and Resolution : An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 9.

safeguards against various challenges that become stumbling blocks to lay the foundation of a stable relationship. *Third*, it involves the role of the family in building awareness of values and norms as a control that becomes a provision for establishing relationships and interactions with the broader community.

### **Shi'a: Discourse and Context**

Shi'a etymologically means followers, lovers, and defenders of particular ideas, individuals or groups.<sup>19</sup> While in general, the term Shi'a is well known as followers of Ali ibn Abi Thalib and Ahlul Bayt. While in the saying of the Arab, the word Shi'a is derived from *mushaiah*, which means loyalty.<sup>20</sup> Loyalty to Ali ibn Abi Thalib who was associated as the leader of his group and exalted in rank beyond the position of his contemporaries, apart from the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Therefore, the loyalty is not only to Ali but also to his children and descendants, and he recognises them as *imām*.<sup>21</sup>

In recent years, one of the Shi'a groups under the spotlight of the Ternate City government is the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group, led by Nawawi Husni (Ong). It is known that he was born in 1974 in Marikurubu Village, Central Ternate City District. His father and mother, Husni Tahir and Naria H. DienTomaito are recorded as having a formal public education background and never studied at pesantren or other Islamic religion-based education. His elementary school to Vocational High Schools (STM) were taken in the City of Ternate.

Initially, around 2004, the members of this community were only five people. Its activities are still limited to small groups. Over time, the number of members of the association led by Husni (Ong) began to

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<sup>19</sup> Moh. Hasim, "Syiah: Sejarah Timbul dan Perkembangannya di Indonesia," *Analisa* 19, no. 2 (2012): 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Hashim Al-Musawi, *The Shia: Madzab Syiah, Asal Usul dan Keyakinannya* (Jakarta: Penerbit Lentera, 2008), 20.

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad Babul Ulum, *Merajut Ukhuwah Memahami Syi'ah: Memuat Catatan Untuk Hidayat Nur Wabid* (Bandung: Penerbit Marja, 2008), 38.



increase. Most of them come from youth circles, and most of them even have "naughty" backgrounds. In 2015, to join this Shi'a community led by Husni (Ong), everyone was required to pay a dowry of Rp. 250,000.00. Those who have paid the dowry will then take Bai'a by wrapping a white cloth around their bodies. The initiation process was carried out directly by Husni (Ong) at 03.00 in the morning. From the number of existing members, the authors found around 92 names that were officially included in the Ternate Kesbangpol Agency data. This data was obtained from the results of the author's investigation in 2012, which found that 84 members of Shi'a Ja'fariyah led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) were spread across various sub-districts in Ternate. Before the issuance of the MUI fatwa regarding the ban on this group in 2014, it was alleged that the number of members of this group had reached 200 people.<sup>22</sup> Until this study was conducted, the number of members registered at the Ternate City Kesbangpol Agency was only 92 names. These data are different from the statement of Nawawi Husni (Ong) as the leader of this community. He claims that the number of members has reached approximately 20,000 people. They are scattered in the North Maluku region, not just in Ternate.<sup>23</sup> Apart from differences in data on Shi'a Ja'fariyah members between those registered at Kesbangpol Kota Ternate and Husni (Ong)'s claim, what is clear is that this data shows that the recruitment process for members of the Shi'a Ja'fariyah group is continuing, even though their legal status is still under supervision.

When viewed in terms of religious teachings, this group tends to be exclusive, closed and reluctant to perform prayers in congregation at the mosque. In addition, they believe that people outside their group—including Muslims of different sects and groups—are wrong in worshipping. For them, today's Qur'an is considered not original because

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<sup>22</sup> Muchtar, "Dinamika Lahirnya Fatwa Mui Provinsi Maluku Utara Tentang Sesatnya Syi'ah Ja'Fariyah Ajaran Nawawi Husni (Ong).", hlm. 270.

<sup>23</sup> Interview on Thursday, 2 Sep 2021 with a leader of Ja'fariyah Shi'a, Nawawi Husni, in his house in Marikurubu.

it has undergone many alterations. They also have teachings that they do not have to or are allowed not to perform ablution when they want to perform the Fajr prayer. For them, the obligation to perform prayers in a day is only three times, not five times, as practised by Muslims. Then there is the procedure for praying while sitting cross-legged for women. Assume that the government set the wrong time for Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. They are positioning Nawawi Husni (Ong) as murshid and descendant of Rasulullah Muhammad PBUH. However, the term murshid is commonly used by Sunni Muslims, not Shi'a. Even though Husni (Ong) claims to be a follower of Shi'a, he says he has no affiliation with national or international Shi'a networks.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from these views and teachings, the Shi'a Ja'fariyah led by Husni Nawawi (Ong) has other instructions, which are the hallmarks of this group, such as positioning Nawawi Husni (Ong) as a Joguru (murshid) who is believed to have seen heaven and can show heaven to his followers. There is a guarantee that the members will get to heaven. They believe that the water used to wash Husni's (Ong) hands can cure various diseases and bring good luck; to reach the perfection of knowledge. There must be an allegiance and intercourse with another person's husband or wife as a form of promotion and charity, not praying in congregation, both when performing the obligatory prayers and during the Friday prayers because of the notion that other people are not fit to be an Imam. They do not perform the tarawih prayer, believing that at the time of the Prophet, there were no tarawih prayers but *lail prayers*, i.e. three holidays, namely Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Qadri (special holidays). They do not acknowledge the companions of the Prophet other than Ali ibn Abi Talib and do not apply the greeting "assalamu'alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa barakatuh" as is commonly used by Muslims when meeting fellow Shi'a members but say "salam wa rahma". During the month of Ramadan, the Sahur time is at 06.00 while the time to break the fast is at 19.30; and Eid

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<sup>24</sup> Ibnu Hasan Muchtar, "Dinamika Lahirnya Fatwa Mui Provinsi Maluku Utara Tentang Sesatnya Syi'ah Ja'Fariyah Ajaran Nawawi Husni (Ong)", 269-272

al-Fitr prayers are held on the third day of the month of Shawwal.<sup>25</sup>

The Ja'fariyah Shi'a teachings under the leadership of Nawawi Husni (Ong) do not demonstrate the main foundation of their teachings that have been widely developed or known today. Their principal characteristic of the concept of Imamah is not seen in the teachings of Shi'a led by Husni (Ong). Therefore, the Ja'fariyah Shi'a is not considered part of the Shi'a but a practice of Islamic teachings based on local wisdom in Ternate. The arrival and spread of Islam in Ternate are very thick with their Shi'a style and nuance. Hence, the rituals or traditions that develop in the Ternate Islamic community are not entirely free from the influence of Shi'a-style religious concepts, rituals and practices. As is widely understood, the Shi'a sect developing in Indonesia is the Shi'a Imamah or Shi'a Ja'fariyah.

The Ja'fariyah Shi'a understanding became the foundation of Ong's religious movement in Ternate. However, in the context of Shi'a teachings, Ong does not take their teachings as a whole. This can be seen from the inconsistency in using specific terms, like using the word *murshid* to refer to himself as a leader, not using the word imam. Even though the word *murshid* has become a hallmark of the Sunnis, they practice praying only three times, closer to the practice of the Islamic religious rituals of the Wetutelu community in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara.

### **Social Relations with the Surrounding Community**

The Ja'fariyah Shi'a group led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) is a community group that belongs to a layered minority, especially in religious sects. In the religious context of Indonesia, Shi'a is nationally considered a minority compared to Sunni mainly when the Ja'fariyah Shi'a is considered by the Shi'a community in general—which are members of the Association of Indonesian Ahlul Bait Jama'ah (IJABI)—as a group that does not follow the teachings of Shi'a.

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<sup>25</sup> The data was obtained from the Kesbangpol Kota Ternate on 4 September 2021. The data result from an interview conducted by the government through the Kesbangpol Agency for the City of Ternate with a member of Shi'a Ong on Friday, 20 March 2015, at the Kesbangpol Agency for the City of Ternate.

Of course, there are efforts and strategies carried out by this group to survive, develop and be accepted as part of society in Ternate and as part of Indonesian citizens. From the statement of Opan and Amas, members of Shi'a Ja'fariyah led by Husni (Ong) still believe in themselves like other Muslims in general.<sup>26</sup> Their decision to join the Shi'a Ja'fariyah group led by Husni (Ong) was in 2014. After reading the book "Alternative Islam" by Jalaluddin Rahmat in 2014, they decided to join this community.

Regarding the community's social relations with residents, Nawawi Husni (Ong) stated that the community's relationship with residents and the government had no problems, and there has been no separation.<sup>27</sup> So far, he feels that the community he leads does not discriminate between members of his community and Muslim society in general in the Ternate City area or North Maluku in general. This statement contradicts the data contained in the Ternate City Political and National Unity Agency (Bakesbangpol) document in 2015.

Ong's acknowledgement indicates his interest in driving public opinion, and there is a need for more accurate information regarding data sources owned by Bakesbangpol Kota Ternate. The data comes from the confession of a member of the Ja'fariyah community that he leads. For example, data from Bakesbangpol shows that during prayers, this group does not open up space for parties outside their group as prayer imams, so they do not go to public mosques. Then there is also Bakesbangpol data which states that the greetings of the Shi'a Ja'fariyah Husni (Ong) group are different from those commonly used by Muslims. Their greeting is "salam wa rahmah".

It is clear that there are principal differences between the data in Bakesbangpol and Husni's (Ong) statement. Husni's (Ong) statement tries to conceal community teaching principles and argues that government

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Ikhwan Opan and Amas, members of Ja'fariyah Shi'a congregation led by Nawawi Husni, 26 Agustus 2021

<sup>27</sup> Interview with a leader of Ja'fariyah Shi'a, Nawawi Husni, in his house in Marikurubu, on Thursday, 2 Sep 2021.

attitudes tend to be 'repressive' towards minority groups. In this context, the government is considered a representation of Sunni followers. In addition, if social relations between Shi'a Ja'fariyah Husni (Ong) have no discrimination between their followers and Muslim citizens, they will cooperate more.

### **Conflict Management Principles and Strategies**

Several attempts to create a conducive, harmonious and comfortable social-community life cannot be separated from the process of reciprocal relations. Mutual relations need to be carried out as a form of action-reaction to a condition or situation so that it is hoped that there will be a meeting point for the current problems. One of the initiatives that can be done is through the dialogue process. Dialogue is a space that binds two or more disputing parties to openly express problems from each other's point of view, resulting in a common understanding. This agreement is the starting point and the foundation of a new relationship for parties in conflict to improve it. Or at least to be able to minimize conflict residues that have the potential to trigger new conflicts.

Facing this situation, Shi'a Ja'fariyah tries to take the dialogue to solve the problems faced by their community. Husni said: ".....We are always open for dialogue. If invited, we always come. Yet, sometimes the government creates conflict and clashes with other Muslims, such as the Tablighi Jama'ah."<sup>28</sup> It shows that the attempt by the Ja'fariyah Shi'a led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) to clarify people's accusations to them was by opening themselves to dialogue. Even though in this statement, Husni (Ong) continued to say that the government was one of the parties that contributed to the situation. According to him, the government is actually trying to clash its congregation with other Muslim communities in the Ternate City area. Husni's statement is different from what is stated in the verdict issued by Ternate City Government:

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with a leader of Ja'fariyah Shi'a, Nawawi Husni, in his house in Marikurubu, on Thursday, 2 Sep 2021.

Terkait kejadian penyerangan Sekretariat Komunitas Syiah Jafariyah ajaran sdr. Nawawi Husni oleh kelompok Jamaah Tabliq pada Bulan Juni 2014, merupakan kejadian yang hanya bermuansa salah paham bukan pelanggaran HAM, yang berawal di informasikan oleh warga kelurahan Tanah Raja kepada sesama warganya yang kebetulan masuk sebagai anggota Jamaah Tabliq bahwa selama beberapa bulan ini ada kegiatan aktifitas kumpul-kumpul diskusi di salah satu rumah warga yang belakangan diketahui sebagai Sekretariat Komunitas Syiah Jafariyah pimpinan sdr Nawawi Husni (Ong). Kemudian Lurah dan warga setempat sudah meminta agar Sekretariat Syiah Jafariyah pindah di tempat lain, karena didasarkan bahwa keberadaan dan aktifitas kelompok Syiah Jafariyah ajaran sdr. Nawawi Husni (Ong) selama ini di beberapa kelurahan terdahulu telah menimbulkan bentroka: dengan warga muslim, akan tetapi tidak ditanggapi, bahkan ketika diminta berdialog oleh kelompok Jamaah Tabliq tentang faham ajaran sdr. Nawawi Husni (Ong) justru tidak mencapai kesepahaman yakni kelompok Syiah Jafariyah ajaran sdr. Nawawi Husni (Ong) menolak memberikan penjelasan, sementara disatu pihak kelompok Jamaah Tabliq mendesak agar diperjelas tentang faham aliran yang dianut, situasi saat itu menunjukkan kurangnya keterbukaan dan respon serta sikap tidak kooperatif dari anggota kelompok sdr. Nawawi Husni (Ong) yang berada di Sekretariat, sehingga memicu kemarahan dari kelompok Jamaah Tabliq, kemudian terjadi perkelahian antar kedua kelompok tersebut, akan tetapi saat kejadian dapat diamankan dan sudah diselesaikan oleh pihak Polres Ternate.

A piece of Ternate City Government verdict, dated 19 November 2014, Number 450/83/2014 concerning activities of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a Group led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) in Ternate City.

In the document of Ternate City Government Number 450/83/2014 concerning the activities of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a Group. It is stated that the emergence of the conflict was motivated by a misunderstanding. The situation began when a Tanah Raja resident informed other residents about activities at a house which was used as the secretariat of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group. The recipient of the information, who is a follower of the Tablighi Jama'ah and several other residents, intends to clarify the activities and teachings of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group. But the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group was unwilling to explain their activities and teachings. Because both parties adhered to their respective principles—one party (followers of the Tablighi Jama'at group) requested the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group to convey its principles and teachings openly, and the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group did not object to the request. Hence, tension occurred, leading to physical conflict (fights).

The situation above shows that local people react when they obtain information or witness "new" things outside their preexisting habits. Such

a reactive attitude towards ignorance often triggers problems, especially when it deals with 'new' beliefs, teachings, or religious rituals. At this level, religion or belief is a force that is consciously or unconsciously capable of leading or directing individuals who believe in the absolute truth of their teachings as the single truth.

According to Nawawi Husni, his community is trying to adjust and hold back. He said that we are trying to adapt and restrain ourselves from government regulations, including the MUI fatwa, to respond to this conflict. The government did not make any special efforts to protect us. Instead, we were accused of being heretics and deceiving by the MUI. We are silent, even though if we are invited, we will come for dialogue.”<sup>29</sup>

Nawawi Husni (Ong), from this statement, tried to convey a message that his group had tried to respond to the rules issued by the MUI, such as making adjustments, restraint and willingness to dialogue. The adjustment effort was seen from the group's desire to implement the MUI fatwa. At the same time, self-restraint is in the form of efforts to avoid attitudes and decisions that can potentially complicate matters and the situation. Furthermore, the group also expressed a willingness to dialogue to keep conditions improving and stable again.

The response and steps taken by the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) to avoid this conflict were based on several reasons; first, to maintain their existence amid uncertain conditions. The 'clash' with other Muslim groups or communities (in this case, with the Tablighi Jama'at) in Kampung Tanah Raja prompted the emergence of initiatives to change the movement pattern. The place for religious forum, which was originally located in the residents' house, had to be moved to another place, or changing the forum's model by moving around. Both initiatives carry their respective potential risks. Moving the location can still trigger further clashes with the surrounding community, especially with groups or parties who disagree with the movement of the Shi'a group led by Nawawi

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with a leader of Ja'fariyah Shi'a, Nawawi Husni, in his house in Marikurubu, on Thursday, 2 Sep 2021.

Husni (Ong).

Meanwhile, the initiative to change the forum pattern by moving places is more capable of minimizing the occurrence of collisions. By changing locations, the movement of the Ja'fariyah Shia group led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) became camouflaged. However, changing or moving the place of the forum, on the one hand, makes movement easier. Still, on the other hand, it is potentially difficult for the government in terms of supervision. It even has the potential to trigger suspicion from the government and society and potentially trigger accusations of being a group that endangers or threatens the country's stability, primarily if it is known that there has been an increase in the number of their members and activities that aim to be carried out openly.

*Second*, to protect the internal group or members. This step, in addition to aiming to secure a position so that they can continue their activities but avoid unfavorable reactions from the internal group, as well as a political step so that in the future, it can be more accepted by society. In addition, this step is also one of the strategies that the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group can further develop. This is because various religious sects or groups that have managed to adapt themselves amid difficult conditions or conflicts after redefining goals and identity have often succeeded in attracting the sympathy and support of many parties. After that, many parties may later decide to become members (objects of da'wah), offers of cooperation (especially from parties who want to take advantage of the existence of the group, to break up the concentration of centralized religious authority or break government concentration), as well as parties who merely witness without deep curiosity (the general public or groups of fellow Muslims who are passive and perceive such religious movements as something commonplace), inspire other religious groups who have similar problems to learn to adopt steps and models of conflict management.

When facing this conflict, the principles and strategies of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a are seen by their followers as providing flexibility for the



group to carry out various activities; "they are more flexible and carry out the forum from house to house". In other words, the 'conflict' situations and conditions faced by the Ja'fariyah Shi'a made them more creative in engineering strategies in developing their da'wah models. This is where it can be seen that every religious group, when faced with a difficult situation, can find patterns to maintain the existence of the group and its teachings following the context of space and time. Various stimuli, both positive (inviting the interest of people or the public to join) and negative (parties who disagree and are reactive in responding to the existence of new religious groups or those that are different from the mainstream), are a form of treatment for each member of the group in conflict to reformulate the movement so that it is more acceptable to the public and the government.

In addition to calming down the internal conditions of followers, Husni (Ong), as the congregation leader, tries to always convey the aspirations of himself and his group through the media of local newspapers in Ternate City. One example of his writing in a newspaper that was shown to the author, it appears that the writer attempts to describe the chronology of the entry of the Shi'a version of Islam into the Ternate region. Apart from that, Husni (Ong) also seemed to want to reinforce his own and his group's identity as part of the followers of the Shi'a version of Islam as part of the followers of a historical religious group, the holder of power in the Kingdom of Ternate, before being displaced by the Sunni Islamic group.

Choosing this step to communicate through print media has several basic reasons. First, to lead public opinion. As a marginalized group, they are considered to have "deviated" from mainstream teachings. The Ja'fariyah Shi'a is a minority in the vortex of power, both in terms of government politics and the power of religious authorities, the majority of whom are Sunni. As a result, the voices and aspirations of minorities are often not heard. Hence, an alternative way to find sympathizers or just a desire to express anxiety or dissatisfaction is through public media, such

as newspapers. Public media, at least apart from being a space for expressing aspirations openly, is also a space for affirming the existence or identity of oneself and the group.

Choosing public media as an alternative space for expressing aspirations is based on the reason that constitutionally this step is the right of every citizen that has been guaranteed and protected by law. Of course, as long as it follows the code of ethics set by the media, such as not containing elements of defamation of a particular ethnicity, race, or religion. Meanwhile, from the management or owner's side, the media can disseminate news according to facts or first sources. In this context, the Ja'fariyah Shi'a is the party that feels discriminated against, repressed and intimidated by the existence of a heretical fatwa against their group from the MUI. The polemic over the fatwa also has a side that can benefit the media industry. This is where a mutually beneficial relationship (symbiotic mutualism) emerges between the media and individuals or community groups. As a minority group of concern to the government of Ternate City, the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group also benefited from conveying their aspirations to the public.

*Second*, the choice of the media as a space for public communication is due to the closing of dialogue space in face-to-face due to feelings of insecurity and intimidation. As a minority group, the Ja'fariyah Shi'a led by Husni (Ong) needs a space that feels more conducive and comfortable and can provide psychological support to convey the purpose of their existence. Because the government's approach has been considered too dictatorial, the negotiation and dialogue processes often need to find common ground. Third, situations and conditions (including government regulations) that are impartial or highly discriminatory towards minorities make minority groups lose direction and places to complain. As an alternative, they also choose to make public media a place and space to express their aspirations. The media is considered a place and space which is not only felt to be safer and can attract the sympathy and attention of many parties, but it is also legal.

## Socio-Political Conditions

As a minority group living in conditions that are still unstable, especially with the presence of verdict and heretical fatwas from the MUI, which limit their movements, the Ja'fariyah Shi'a also prefers to remain silent. According to Nawawi Husni, conflict management he likes is quiet, but (activities) religious forum continues to be carried out, never stop".<sup>30</sup>

This statement clearly shows that the response and adjustment steps taken by the Ja'fariyah Shi'a in facing government regulations and heretical fatwas from the MUI were to remain silent. Because the North Maluku MUI fatwa has become the government's reference material in issuing policies, this includes "actions" limiting Shi'a activities led by Husni (Ong). However, the silence of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group does not mean they are passive. They do not respond reactively, such as protesting or submitting a legal review, but remain silent while continuing to conduct door-to-door study activities for their members. This is where it is clear that the minority group has understood the legal status of the MUI fatwa, which is non-binding and does not enter into the realm of prohibiting freedom to continue to carry out activities such as studies.

The choice of attitude of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group shows the ability to understand the positive function of conflict for the group's internal existence. Their silence while continuing to strengthen the internal group by continuing activities proves that external conflict has succeeded in providing positive value to the internal group. This can be seen from the increasingly strong loyalty of group members, which is shown by the consistency of the members in defending the teachings. The group members' loyalty became increasingly tested due to the conflict. The process of filtering loyalty can also run naturally, thus facilitating the detection of each member's commitment level. In this context, the conflict provided positive values for the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group. In addition to successfully encouraging them to be more creative in managing strategies

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with a leader of Ja'fariyah Shi'a, Nawawi Husni, in his house in Marikurubu, on Thursday, 2 Sep 2021.

for disseminating or instilling teachings to their members, the conflict has produced loyal group members or cadres.

In addition to the situation above, the Ja'fariyah Shi'a also views the steps and government regulations issued based on the MUI fatwa as a provocation. The government's policies and actions actually made the atmosphere seem chaotic and unsettling, leading them to think that the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group needed to be treated:

To be honest, in our situation, there are government parties who take the opportunity to create a situation as if the society is restless, considered chaotic, called heretical, to get an allotment or a job.<sup>31</sup>

This statement at least provides an overview and an assessment of the government's performance regarding attitudes towards problems affecting minority groups in Indonesia. On the one hand, this member of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group acknowledged and, at the same time, confirmed that the government does have a work program which cannot be separated from budget allocations. However, on the other hand, this statement also shows an emotional expression of feelings of disapproval for being considered a "misguided and misleading" group.

When viewed from the chronology of the conflict, which resulted from misunderstanding and reactive attitude between groups of different religious sects, between Ja'fariyah Shi'a and Jama'ah Tabligh, which then expanded and involved members of other communities in the area, leading to the actions of the state apparatus. Considering the chronology of events, it is necessary to look at the steps for handling the conflict again as to the process of prosecution and supervision.

### **Government 'Disciplinary' Efforts**

The government is the party with authority to regulate systems and regulations so that the condition of society runs in a conducive, stable and

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with a leader of Ja'fariyah Shi'a, Nawawi Husni, in his house in Marikurubu, on Thursday, 2 Sep 2021.

comfortable manner. Various existing policies are a form of response and demand from situations and conditions that arise in society. However, the situation becomes more complicated and complex when policies are faced with demands to protect citizens' human rights.

On the one hand, the government has the obligation and authority to take actions deemed to deviate from the corridors of values, norms and rules of law. While on the other hand, there is a principle of fairness that the government must uphold in carrying out the rules. The community demands that any law enforcement action not give the impression of being "biased". Because every citizen has the same position before the law, suppose this principle of justice is not met. In that case, implementing and enforcing existing policies can trigger a sense of injustice, resulting in a situation that is not conducive and disturbs social cohesiveness. So that what is needed is a supervision over the implementation of policies on a national scale (security and order) while still taking into account conditions and situations in the local sphere, which are the area of authority of the regional government. So that the people can feel the presence of this country as an entity that has 'strength or power', not the other way around; they are often considered 'absent' because they cannot fulfil the citizens' sense of justice, comfort, and freedom.

In handling the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group, the state appears to have shown several attitudes; first, reactive as carried out by the Ternate City Police. The actions and efforts to resolve the conflict by the police are accidental. This can be seen from the verdict issued by Ternate City Government, Number 450/83/2014, concerning the Activities of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a Group under Nawawi Husni (aka Ong) in Ternate City. This verdict contains clarification efforts by the Regional Government of Ternate City as a follow-up to a report submitted by the Ja'fariyah Shi'a to the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights regarding allegations of human rights violations against their group. The Regional Government of Ternate City stated that a misunderstanding occurred in the field (between members of the Tablighi Jama'at and the Ja'fariyah Shi'a

group, but there were no cases of human rights violations. From this, two different perspectives emerged in response to an act of government officials, (1) physical actions in the form of efforts to stop the conflict in the form of mass dissolution or negotiations, and written actions (rules) as a legal basis that are notifications, appeals and clarifications on related cases. This attitude usually involves an in-depth study phase involving various parties to deepen the case. Third, the result of the decision is the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) of North Maluku Province Number 45 of 2015 concerning Heretical Teachings Spread by Nawawi Husni (Ong) On behalf of Ja'fariyah Shi'a in North Maluku Province. This fatwa becomes the basis for various parties to issue policies or actions.

Meanwhile, in terms of supervising beliefs or religious beliefs, the government has carried out the Coordinating Body for Supervision of Beliefs and Religious Sects in Society (Bakor-Pakem), established in 1952. In carrying out its duties, every decision is carried out according to respective levels of authority. Starting from giving written warnings (soft sanctions), disbanding activities or organizations (action and hard sanctions), to revoking permits (principal sanctions).

Soft or fine sanctions describe the form of sanctions that are reprimands, warnings and appeals not to carry out various activities within the corridors of applicable law. This can be seen from administrative alerts to belief or religious sects that are considered "deviate" to avoid continuing activities for a certain period. In the case of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group led by Husni (Ong), this has been done by the Ternate City Government. At this stage, the parties involved in efforts to resolve the conflict include the Kesbangpol and Linmas Kota Ternate, the Ministry of Religion of the City of Ternate, the Indonesian Ulema Council, the Kodim, the Police, the Sub-District and Lurah District Police, Islamic Organizations, Universities (IAIN Ternate), residents' community and the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group led by Husni (Ong).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibnu Hasan Muchtar, "Dinamika Lahirnya Fatwa Mui Provinsi Maluku Utara Tentang Sesatnya Syi'ah Ja'Fariyah Ajaran Nawawi Husni (Ong)", 272.

Action sanctions are in the form of physical action, such as disbanding activities. This form of sanction arose from public complaints, resulting in government action. In contrast, the principal sanction is the highest as a last alternative if conditions on the ground are no longer containable. These sanctions are in the form of banning, dismissal and revocation of organizational permits. From the government side, this sanction is based on consideration of the principles of legal rights and obligations. This means that the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group led by Husni (Ong) as citizens must obey the rules and regulations set by the government. Meanwhile, from the perspective of the Ja'fariyah Shi'a, they consider that as citizens, they have rights and freedoms guaranteed and protected by law.

## Conclusion

In responding to cases in minority groups, two perspectives often appear, which are understood from sides that constantly seem contradictory. Apart from being based on existing regulations, the government and the various efforts are often seen as the result of a majority vote push. While the minority party, in this context, is the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group, the point of ongoing government oversight is seen as a dilemma. The government is seen as if it continues to politicize issues of religious groups and minority sects. Minority groups are often considered incompatible with the spirit of nation and state because they do not align with the majority's understanding. Facing this situation, within the framework of avoiding a wider conflict, the Ja'fariyah Shi'a group led by Nawawi Husni (Ong) took alternative steps, i.e. 'silent' or 'non-reactive'. Still, they made various efforts to seek legitimacy for their existence. They try to bring back the history of the entry of Islam into Indonesia, where there is a role for the Shi'a in the process, to gain legitimacy for their existence in Indonesia. They make this pattern through the local mass media. However, the various efforts of both parties to resolve the conflict need to be studied in more depth so that similar conflicts sometimes recur

and become latent threats. What is clear is that the use of state power through hard power must be transformed into a smart power pattern. Government officials need to be equipped with soft skills in solving or acting on problems in the field. The principle of maintaining security and creating social order must not override the guarantee and protection of citizens' civil rights.

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