

The Da'wah Movement and Indonesia's Moral Crisis: Between Mental Revolution and *Akhlak* Revolution

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss the contestation of discourse in improving the nation's morality between two movements: the Mental Revolution—an initiative to reform the nation's character through modernization of mindset and work ethic, introduced by President Joko Widodo—and the Akhlak Revolution, a da'wah movement advocating the restoration of individual morality based on Islamic values, popularized by Habib Rizieq Shihab. The analysis in this article employs a political approach grounded in Michel Foucault's postmodern theoretical framework, which provides the basis for the discussion. The contestation between the two revolutions reflects ideological differences and power dynamics that shape the discourse on morality in society. Using a qualitative-interpretive research method, data were collected from YouTube using digital documentation techniques and analyzed through source triangulation validity testing, as proposed by Miles and Huberman. The findings reveal both conceptual and practical distinctions between the Mental Revolution and the Akhlak Revolution. The Mental Revolution is viewed as more pragmatic, grounded in state policies targeting civil servants and the bureaucracy, whereas the Akhlak Revolution emphasizes individual moral improvement through a religious framework. From a Foucauldian perspective, this distinction illustrates two forms of disciplinary power: the state exerts control through formal policy, while religious institutions influence morality through social norms and values. Although both initiatives offer responses to moral degradation, each has also faced criticism and resistance. This article argues for the need for synergy between state and religious approaches to promote more comprehensive moral transformation within society.

Keywords

Ethical Crisis, *Akhlak* Revolution, Mental Revolution, Da'wah Movement

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ethics is a central issue in democratic and political life (Gibbs, 2012a). Ethical issues colored the debate between the Indonesian Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates, and one of the presidential candidates went viral on social media because of his statement that was considered unethical, namely “etik, etik, ndasmu etik” (Fernhout, 2024; Ikhsan & Kurniati, 2023). Ethical issues in Indonesian political life are not new. Pancasila, the ideology of the Indonesian state, has been recognized as the system and source of political ethics in this country. The values contained in Pancasila provide the basis for a political ethics system that guides the behavior of politicians (Muchtarom et al., 2023). However, the reality on the ground shows a different picture. The moral crisis and erosion of ethical values, especially in the political aspect, have become a public concern in Indonesia and need to be resolved by state leaders. The role and importance of moral philosophy are underestimated and portrayed as just an “ivory tower” of intellectualizing complex problems that need to be addressed (Bietti, 2020).

Building the nation's character is a complex process that includes educational, cultural, moral, and political factors (Sofha et al., 2023). Many views and strategies can be applied to achieving goals, but sometimes, they differ from one view to another. Regarding building the character of the Indonesian nation, there are two major views: the *akhlak* revolution voiced by Habib Rizieq Shihab through the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) organization and the *mental revolution* carried out by President Joko Widodo. The *Akhlak* revolution refers to improving morals based on Islamic teachings through da'wah and social movements (Anwar, 2014). Meanwhile, the mental revolution emphasizes thinking, acting, and building a work culture with integrity in all social, economic, and political aspects. The *Akhlak* revolution can be understood as a normative foundation based on religious values (Majlis Alhanis_313, 2020; MerdekaDotCom, 2022; Tribunwow Official, 2020), while the mental revolution is more institutional and national-scale. Both reflect contrasting ethical approaches in shaping society's character and answering the nation's moral challenges (BeritaSatu, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d; Dewi et al., 2023; Widodo, 2014).

Joko Widodo's position as President of the Republic of Indonesia is undoubtedly critical, and he holds control of power and government, but Habib Rizieq Shihab's position is very interesting to review. Habib Rizieq Shihab voiced the *Akhlak* revolution through the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), a civil society organization based on Islamic values and doctrines (Maulana, 2020). FPI was founded by Habib Rizieq Shihab in 1998. As quoted by Rahim, Decker explained that the FPI is thought to have a close relationship with senior elements in the Indonesian army (Rahim, 2006). FPI is a da'wah organization oriented to *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (Anwar, 2014), which later transformed into a da'wah organization oriented towards politics (Al-Zastrouw Ng, 2006) and government policies. So it is not surprising that FPI used to sweep places of immorality and gambling often (Barker, 2016; Lahpan, 2019) but now commenting more on government policies and continuing to achieve its goals through peaceful means such as preaching, education, and general elections (Nakissa, 2020). This change in orientation also caused FPI to be in the ranks of non-party opposition throughout the administration of President Joko Widodo. This was started FPI, which declared itself as a counterpart government to the official Jakarta Governor Government in 2014 (Tempo Team, 2014). The government considers FPI as a religious organization that endangers and creates riots. Finally, the government declared FPI a prohibited organization by issuing a letter of dissolution of FPI (Sovianti, 2021) through a joint decree of six state ministers (Hermawan, 2020; <https://setkab.go.id>, 2020). However, FPI did not dissolve substantially; instead, it changed its name to the Islamic Brotherhood Front (Taufiq & Tsauro, 2024).

Research that explores the idea and implementation of ethics in political and state contexts is still limited. Several studies that examine ethics and politics include highlighting the ethical relationship of the medical profession with politics (Andrade & Campo-Redondo, 2020; Shao, 2024), ethics and politics in research (Ryen, 2023; Samyn et al., 2020), Business and Political Ethics (Oh & Park, 2017; Ben Khaled et al., 2022), Ethics and Individual Evolution (Sandler, 2017), Ethics and politics in the use of cannabis in the health sector (Philipsen et al., 2014), Political and religious ethics (Abellán, 2023), Ethical clarity and political courage for justice to get equal health (Kavanagh et al., 2020), ethics and politics for justice for all components of life on the planet (Hickey & Robeyns, 2020), Separation of ethics from politics (Spike, 2020), and the relationship of political decisions to social ethics (Carlsson & Rönnblom, 2022).

The novelty of this article lies in a holistic analysis of the concept and implementation of ethics in the realm of politics, religion, and the state. This article argues that the idea of a mental revolution by Joko Widodo and an *Akhlak* revolution by Habib Rizieq Shihab represent two competing political and ethical discourses in responding to the moral crisis of the Indonesian nation. Through Michel Foucault's postmodern theoretical approach (Foucault, 1988), this article shows that the two concepts not only reflect the difference in moral paradigms but also show the power dynamics and knowledge constructs that shape political identity and ethical practices in the space of the state and society. Foucault argues that power is repressive and productive through the formation of knowledge and social norms (Katz, 2001). This research compares the concepts between the mental revolution and the *Akhlak* revolution, analyzing public acceptance and finding common ground between the two paradigms. This article aims to explore holistically how the two revolutionary movements, each rooted in the discourse of power and knowledge, offer an alternative to dealing with the moral degradation of the Indonesian nation. Thus, this article seeks to make a new contribution to the discourse of political, religious, and state ethics while enriching the debate on strategies to improve the nation's morality in the contemporary era through the postmodern perspective of Michel Foucault.

2. METHOD

The research problem formulation, "How is the Confrontation of Ideas between the Mental Revolution versus the *Akhlak* Revolution? What is the public acceptance of the *Akhlak* Revolution and the Mental Revolution? What is the intersection of the Mental Revolution and the *Akhlak* Revolution?" The type of research used is a qualitative method (Mulyana, 2002; Nasrullah, 2014), which uses interpretive analysis of data sources, especially related to the mental revolution and the *Akhlak* revolution. In this study, data collection was carried out using a documentation study technique, where the primary data sources consisted of digital content published on the YouTube platform. The data was comprehensively analyzed to uncover relevant information related to the research objectives. *First*, the data on the *Akhlak* revolution was taken from a YouTube source that contained broadcast recordings of Habib Rizieq Shihab when discussing the *Akhlak* revolution that was still intact. The researcher took a video published by the mainstream media YouTube channel MerdekaDotCom, Fadli Zon Official. When the data was collected, Front TV, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) official media led by Habib Rizieq Shihab, could not be accessed. The researcher identified two videos, namely Video 1 with the title "*Habib Rizieq Shihab Serukan Revolusi Akhlak, Ingatkan Negeri Darurat Kebohongan*" (MerdekaDotCom, 2022), *Dialog Nasional 212 dan Revolusi Akhlak Habib Rizieq Shihab* (Fadli Zon Official, 2020), and "*Ceramah Habib Rizieq Syihab Kepimpinan Rasulullah SAW- Revolusi Akhlak*" (Majlis Alhanis_313, 2020). Nevertheless, two channels of Habib Rizieq Shihab's followers still published Habib Rizieq Shihab's first lecture, which appeared with different titles, namely *Revolusi Akhlak (Full Audio) Imam Besar Habib Rizieq Shihab* (Bang

Zaky, 2020), and *News... Ceramah Pertama Habib Rizieq Klarifikasi dan "Revolusi Akhlak" Setelah Pulang dari Arab Saudi* (Santri Berkemajuan, 2020).

Second, the primary source of data for the concept of mental revolution is taken from News Satu News Channel, which publishes four content that contains Joko Widodo's mental revolution in its entirety (BeritaSatu, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d). In addition, one article was published in the Kompas media (Widodo, 2014). Sources from other media that also contain video clips of Joko Widodo about the mental revolution are only a source of supporting data. Next, the researcher conducted a video transcript using anthiago.com and matched the transcript results manually. The transcript results are used as a data source that will be analyzed in writing. The data analysis technique goes through three stages, namely data reduction, data display, verification and conclusion drawn (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The validity of the data is tested through source triangulation by comparing sources between different content and between media, including comparing the primary data source with supporting data. This is done to avoid using fake data from fabricated content or content containing hoax information. The author knows the potential bias from selecting YouTube video sources and interpretive limitations in analyzing the mental revolution and *Akhlak* revolution discourse. However, researchers have carefully selected the data and tried to present it and analyze it balanced, especially in presenting the concepts of the two discourses of the revolution and the public response to the two discourses.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Contestation of Ideas between Mental Revolution versus *Akhlak* Revolution

Mental revolutions emerged earlier than the *Akhlak* revolutions. The initial concept of Joko Widodo's Mental Revolution is contained in the Kompas media (Widodo, 2014). However, the concept was dissected by the Berita Satu media by dividing it into four sessions. In the first session, Joko Widodo explained that the mental revolution is the identity of the nation, such as politeness, friendliness, politeness, ethics, mentality, and seniority or respecting the elders and a productive work ethic (BeritaSatu, 2014a). The mental revolution initiated by Joko Widodo has the background that the Indonesian nation has lost the character of the nation (BeritaSatu, 2014a). Not only that, Joko Widodo considers leaders incapable of being an example (BeritaSatu, 2014b). In a report released by the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia in 2015, it is explained that the mental revolution is a collective movement that aims to change people's perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors to be more progress-oriented based on the values of integrity, hard work, and cooperation. This movement is based on Pancasila and the Trisakti principle to strengthen political sovereignty, economic independence, and cultural personality to build a superior and competitive nation at the global level (Directorate General of Information and Public Communication, 2015). Therefore, Joko Widodo felt inspired to change these conditions to make the Indonesian nation with character. Joko Widodo attributes the mental revolution to good deeds, the same between words and deeds and thoughts. In Joko Widodo's idea, the mental revolution is the foundation for development in all fields of education, health, agriculture, marine, and infrastructure.

The concept of Joko Widodo's mental revolution is clearly contained in Kompas Media published on May 10, 2014 (Widodo, 2014). In the article, Joko Widodo explained that reform in Indonesia is only about institutional reform. Reform has not touched the aspects of mindset and paradigm; achievements in development and politics also show positive achievements. However, the nation's culture does not show its value and character. Cultures of corruption, greed, instant wealth, intolerance, self-gain,

violence, legal harassment, and opportunistic nature continue to grow and develop. In addition, Joko Widodo linked the mental revolution with several behaviors of government officials within the framework of bureaucracy, example, and public service.

"I see in our bureaucracy happening ... a habit that, for example, does not appreciate that the budget belongs to the people and that it should be used as much as possible for the development of the people... Many of our bureaucracies and leaders cannot be role models... The Regent is indeed a good person... Every morning, every night always comes to us..." (BeritaSatu, 2014b; Widodo, 2014).

Based on this question, Joko Widodo emphasized the importance of leaders who are close to the people. This statement can be interpreted as an example of ideal behavior in serving the community, which certainly applies to all government employees. Some information describes a discrepancy between public expectations and the realization of services from government officials. For example, media reports about the lack of transparency of officials, violations of rules, and unprofessional attitudes of government officials reflect that the service and integrity of employees are not optimal and have experienced many challenges in terms of ethics, transparency, and accountability (BeritaSatu, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d; Widodo, 2014). This condition prompted Joko Widodo to call for the importance of a mental revolution.

Joko Widodo explained that the form of mental revolution that he carried out was a form of the Tri Sakti, namely a politically sovereign Indonesia, an economically independent Indonesia, and an Indonesia with a socio-cultural personality (Widodo, 2014). Joko Widodo targets the mental revolution among political officials, bureaucracy, and other state institutions. All components of the nation must support the mental revolution movement so that a truly independent, just, and prosperous Indonesia is realized. "Starting from yourself, the family environment, society, nation, and state," said Joko Widodo (2014). The researcher notes that the concept of Joko Widodo's mental revolution in Kompas media is based on the values and morality of religion in Indonesia. This is directly strengthened by Joko Widodo's statement in an article published on Kompas.com, as shown in the following excerpt.

"The mental revolution must be a national movement. Our joint efforts to change the fate of Indonesia into a genuinely independent, just, and prosperous nation. We must have the courage to control the future of our nation with the blessing of Allah SWT. Indeed, Allah does not change the fate of a nation unless it changes what is in them (Widodo, 2014).

On the other hand, the Akhlak revolution is the antithesis of the mental revolution movement, which is considered to have failed (Awaludin, 2020; Setiawan, 2020). Although Habib Rizieq Shihab did not specify the indicators assessed, he concluded that the Mental Revolution had failed. However, on several occasions, Habib Rizieq Shihab said that the occurrence of violations of the law by the apparatus and the government, as well as the unlistening to the aspirations of the people in the establishment of the Omnibus Law, are some indicators to establish that the mental revolution has failed. A new *Akhlak* revolution emerged in 2020, spearheaded by Habib Rizieq Shihab (Amindoni, 2020). Habib Rizieq Shihab explained that the revolution was a drastic and fundamental change. The *Akhlak* revolution is believed to be able to save Indonesia from destruction. Habib Rizieq Shihab gave an example of how, with the *Akhlak* revolution, a person who likes to lie turns into an honest person who does not like to lie

(Tribunwowa Official, 2020). Habib Rizieq Shihab emphasized that the revolution is not about taking up arms, killing, and *gotong-gotongan* (fighting). Then, Habib Rizieq Shihab explained that the word *Akhlak* revolution was chosen because of religious terminology. The Prophet Muhammad as the main example in Islam used the word *akhlak* "*Innama bu'itstu liutammima makarimal akhlaq*". Habib Rizieq Shihab did not make a new idea of morality, but he only revived the doctrine of morality in Islam. Habib Rizieq Shihab, on various occasions of his da'wah, said that the morals that will be used as a guideline in the *Akhlak* revolution are the morals of the Prophet Muhammad Saw. He is the primary example of followers of Islam who have noble morals and the Qur'an.

Habib Rizieq Shihab assessed that Indonesia has experienced emergency conditions, namely the lie emergency, the corruption emergency, the economic emergency, and the debt emergency. The solution to all these emergency conditions is an *Akhlak* revolution. A person of good character will not be corrupt, will not commit *zholim*, will not trouble the people, and will not insult religion. A human being with good morals then uses all five senses for good. A man with good morals then an action that comes out of him is only good (MerdekaDotCom, 2022). The two ideas of revolution are considered paradoxical, opposite to each other, agreeing with Tronto that everyone has a different view of morality (Tronto, 1993). Various organizations affect religious life (Dulwahab et al., 2025). In the context of the state, President Joko Widodo is the head of state, and the head of government is the rightful holder of power. Anyone who has a different attitude from the President is considered an opposition group. Therefore, Habib Rizieq Shihab, who pioneered the *Akhlak* revolution, was considered to be in opposition to the government (Rakhmawaty, 2020).

Habib Rizieq Shihab is a religious and political figure who promotes the concept of *the Akhlak* revolution as an effort to build the nation's character. The *Akhlak* revolution emphasizes the importance of moral values and Islamic morals as the primary foundation in building a society with moral and ethical ethics. This approach focuses on the formation of individual character that is pious, honest, and with integrity, with the hope that this individual transformation will positively impact society as a whole. Habib Rizieq's approach is often considered a response to various moral and social problems the Indonesian nation faces. It is seen as an effort to bring society back to religious values considered eroding by modernization and globalization.

On the other hand, President Joko Widodo has carried the concept of mental revolution as one of his flagship programs since the 2014 presidential campaign. The mental revolution is a movement to change the way of thinking, attitudes, and behaviors of Indonesian people to be more progressive, productive, and progress-oriented. This revolution seeks to strengthen the nation's character by emphasizing the importance of work ethic, discipline, integrity, and mutual cooperation, as well as building a more open, innovative, and competitive culture in the midst of global challenges. The mental revolution emphasizes the importance of changing people's mindsets and habits to achieve sustainable and inclusive national development. Although the two concepts have the same ultimate goal of building a strong national character, they have very different approaches, basis of thinking, and implementation strategies. The *Akhlak* revolution focuses more on religious approaches and individual morality, while the mental revolution broadly emphasizes social, psychological, and cultural aspects. These differences create space for intense debate and discussion about which approaches are more effective or more appropriate to the context of Indonesia's pluralistic and diverse society.

The concept of the mental revolution promoted by Joko Widodo and the *Akhlak* revolution campaigned by Habib Rizieq Shihab can be analyzed from the perspective of Michel Foucault's postmodernism, especially in terms of discourse and power. Foucault argued that truth is not objective

but is shaped by the power structure dominating a society. In this context, the mental revolution carried out by President Joko Widodo can be seen as a hegemonic discourse that operates within the state power structure, where the transformation of society is directed through the narrative of nationalism and development. This discourse seeks to rearrange the people's mindset to align with the country's political agenda so that the ruling system controls the desired social changes. On the contrary, the *Akhlak* revolution put forward by Habib Rizieq Shihab is a form of counter-discourse that challenges state dominance by affirming religion-based morality as a solution to the nation's problems. However, in Foucault's logic, this discourse of opposition is not necessarily free from the mechanisms of power, for he also created his own regime of truth that seeks to enforce control over the individual through religious norms. The battle between the mental revolution and the *Akhlak* revolution is not only about the difference in values and approaches in building the nation's character but also a struggle for discourse and power in determining who has the legitimacy to define the direction of social change in Indonesia. The difference between the two revolutions, the *Akhlak* revolution, and the mental revolution, can be seen in detail in Table 1.

Table 1 Difference between Mental Revolution and *Akhlak* Revolution

Aspects	Mental Revolution (Joko Widodo)	The <i>Akhlak</i> Revolution (Habib Rizieq Shihab)
Core Principles	Transformation of mindset and behavior towards the values of nationalism, productivity, and work ethic	Changing individual character through strengthening Islamic values and morals
Purpose	Building Indonesian people with strong and progressive character as the foundation of national development	Saving the nation from moral crisis through the formation of an honest and pious person
Value Base	Nationalism, work culture, modernity, and social integrity	Religious morality, the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and Islamic values
Transformation Targets	A wider society with an emphasis on public officials, bureaucracies, and state institutions	Muslim individuals as agents of social and moral change
Social Implications	Encouraging a competitive, open, and globalized society	To form a moral, just, and free society from lies and tyranny
Character Change	Structural, systemic, and national	Personal, religious, and grassroots
Implementation Strategy	National movement through cross-sectoral development programs	Da'wah, religious narratives, and strengthening the Islamic community
Position in Discourse	Hegemonic discourse in state power structures	Counter-discourse against the dominance of state power

3.2. Public Acceptance of the Idea of the *Akhlak* Revolution and Mental Revolution

Public acceptance of a concept or idea is greatly influenced by various factors, such as cultural background, education, experience, and values embraced by individuals or groups (Apriani et al., 2022). For example, in the post-revolutionary Tunisian context, the public expressed their acceptance through humor to celebrate freedom, vent psychological tensions, and implicitly criticize socio-political conditions (Moalla, 2015). Meanwhile, a study of non-violent revolutions found that movements that prioritize peaceful ways are more acceptable to the public because they lead to more positive institutional outcomes, such as democratization and protection of human rights (Ammons, 2024). On the other hand, revolutionary ideas that are considered deviant from local values or manipulated by

political elites, as happened in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, actually trigger implicit rejection because they are considered a tool for a power struggle that undermines the legitimacy of the media and the state (Asante & Xie, 1983). Thus, acceptance of the revolution is not absolute but results from negotiations between public expectations, collective experience, and how the revolution is interpreted and carried out.

On the other hand, the rejection of revolution shows that the public does not always passively accept radical change. Society can resist when a revolution deviates from ethical, rational, or sustainable principles. In the Green Revolution, for example, criticism arose because an approach initially promised as a food security solution created ecological damage and exploitative agricultural practices (Lucas & Kebreab, 2024). This rejection can be read through the lens of Michel Foucault's theory, which emphasizes that power is always relational and contains the possibility of resistance. Foucault saw that the production of truth, such as the narrative of the success of the Green Revolution or the legitimacy of the media during the Cultural Revolution in China, was not neutral but rather the result of a specific configuration of power that could be criticized and resisted (Syahputra, 2017). When the media became a propaganda tool, as in the Cultural Revolution, resistance arose from the public who lost faith in the legitimacy of information (Asante & Xie, 1983), a form of resistance to the hegemony of discourse that is in line with Foucault's idea of "knowledge as an instrument of power." Even in the realm of science, the rejection of revolutionary narratives, such as in the quantum revolution (Taschetto, 2025), indicates a form of intellectual resistance to the dominance of a particular discourse—a practice that is in line with Foucault's historiographical approach that prioritizes a critical reading of the grand narrative (Vallois, 2015). Thus, rejecting revolution is part of the dynamics of power and discourse and manifests resistance to forced forms of truth.

Every society perceives new ideas differently, depending on their relevance to ongoing social, political, and economic conditions (Dulwahab et al., 2025). Some people may accept ideas with enthusiasm, while others may reject them because they feel they do not fit with their traditions or beliefs. Likewise, the concept and idea of the *Akhlak* revolution and mental revolution are not always universally accepted but through critical processes and considerations. Both concepts have received crucial criticism from several national figures, even though a president triggers *the mental* revolution while a high priest or cleric triggers the *Akhlak* revolution.

a. Public criticism of the Mental Revolution

During the first period of President Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla in office, the national agenda of the mental revolution was still ongoing. Joko Widodo convinced the public that the mental revolution must be gradual and that rapid and instant change cannot be expected. It is supported by public trust in Joko Widodo, which reached 46.3 percent in October 2017, while public satisfaction with the government reached 68-70 percent (Kompas TV, 2017). Criticism of the mental revolution movement arises in a political situation ahead of the 2019 presidential election to the 2024 presidential election. Harsh criticism came from Mr. Reformasi Amin Rais (detikcom, 2019), who said that the concept of Joko Widodo's mental revolution was unclear. The mental revolution has no out-of-the-box documents and no moral guidance. Amin Rais said that Joko Widodo's government does not have a moral compass.

Muhaimin, Surya Paloh, and Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono conveyed other criticisms. Muhaimin and Surya Paloh are national figures previously part of the Jokowi-Kalla government coalition (2014-2019). However, in the 2024 presidential election, these two figures oppose President Joko Widodo. AHY became a coalition ahead of the registration of Presidential Candidates and Vice-Presidential

Candidates in the 2024 Presidential Election. Criticism from Muhaimin Iskandar, who assessed that the mental revolution by Joko Widodo had failed. It is characterized by worsening poverty, reduced justice, and a poor system. Justice and equality must be upheld. Therefore, according to Muhaimin Iskandar, deteriorating conditions must be eliminated (*slepet*). *Slepet* can mean revolution, that is, change (Kompas.com, 2023). The same thing was conveyed by Surya Paloh, emphasizing that the mental revolution spearheaded by President Joko Widodo is the people's hope to improve the life of the nation and state, but "...What do we expect but a thousand times dear, dear, a thousand times dear, a thousand times dear, a hope has not come true yet..." (Kompas TV, 2023).

Indonesian President Soekarno once called for an Indonesian revolution towards socialism and a new world (Metro TV, 2023b). Joko Widodo wanted to appear as the reincarnation of Soekarno's thought by calling for a mental revolution. According to most national figures, the mental revolution is indeed significant. The same thing was expressed by Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (AHY). According to AHY, mental revolution is vital to restore the nation's character to its original form, but President Joko Widodo has ignored the concept. "When the government has succeeded in building thousands of kilometers of roads and hundreds of bridges and other infrastructure, we should ask what the News of the mental revolution is. We remember that the mental revolution was the concept of all Indonesian human beings' development, as President Joko Widodo promised. (KOMPASTV, 2018). The response from the media can be seen in the Media Indonesia Editorial aired by Metro TV (Metro TV, 2023a). Indonesian media declared that the mental revolution had failed. An event full of excitement to facilitate the movement of mental revolution but has lost no trace in the life of the nation and state. The central values of the mental revolution, namely integrity, work ethic, and mutual cooperation, have not been seen in real life in society. In fact, Indonesia received a red report card for handling corruption, which caused a decrease in the corruption handling index.

The phenomenon of betrayal in coalition politics can occur when interests are no longer aligned. At the national level, a study by De Micheli *et al.* (2022) shows that in the Latin American context, leaders can be impeached not because of a significant crisis but rather because of a failure to safeguard the interests of allies in the coalition, which prompts them to turn around in favor of impeachment for the sake of opportunism or personal political continuity (Micheli et al., 2022). Something similar is seen in the study of Keating and Abbott (2021) that developed the concept of "trust norms" and showed how its violation in the Gulf Cooperation Council triggers violent reactions such as treason, especially in the conflict between Qatar and Saudi Arabia (Keating & Abbott, 2021). In an international context, Holland and Staunton (2024) highlight how France feels betrayed as a result of being excluded from the AUKUS pact by its traditional ally despite previously having a history of close cooperation (Holland & Staunton, 2024). Similar tensions are also described by Pesu and Sinkkonen (2024), who find that NATO relations are fraught with a crisis of trust due to Europe's fear of being abandoned by the US, and conversely, US distrust of its allies' commitments (Pesu & Sinkkonen, 2024). In a political survival strategy, Rogers *et al.* (2023) show how Pakistan is breaking its traditional course with the US and turning to China as a strategic move amid geopolitical uncertainty (Rogers et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Akkoyunlu and Sarfati (2025) document how populist leaders such as Erdoğan and Netanyahu fueled ethnic conflicts to consolidate power, even when these actions undermined previous political coalitions (Akkoyunlu & Sarfati, 2025). On the other hand, Roessler (2011) highlights that in a personalistic system, distrust between elites encourages internal political purging that weakens coalitions and magnifies the risk of civil conflict, as happened in Darfur (Roessler, 2011).

b. Public criticism of the *Akhlak* Revolution

Rejection of an idea often arises not because of its substance, but because of a negative identity towards the person who conveys it. Studies by Areal show that negative political identification encourages hostile attitudes and systematic rejection of political opponents, regardless of the content of their ideas (Areal, 2022, 2024). The same thing, Eko Kuntadhi is included in the group that does not like Habib Rizieq Shihab. Eko Kuntadhi (Cokro TV, 2020) assessed the negative value of the *Akhlak* revolution pioneered by Habib Rizieq Shihab. He considered Habib Rizieq Shihab and his followers as a group that must be revolutionized in morality. FPI as an organization led by Habib Rizieq Shihab often commits acts of violence by sweeping, the case of Habib Rizieq Shihab's chat with Virza, Bahar bin Smith as a follower of Habib Rizieq Shihab who kicked a child, and Anies Baswedan who supported Habib Rizieq Shihab visited Habib Rizieq Shihab when the government carried out Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). Although Eko Kuntadhi did not convey it directly, he used a sense of irony towards the case that occurred. In the two-sided program of TV One, Eko Kuntadhi (TV One News, 2022) called for a *Akhlak* revolution for all components of the nation, not only state leaders but also citizens, including speakers such as Habib Rizieq Shihab. Eko Kuntadhi agrees with the *Akhlak* revolution, but everything must be revolutionized and not little by little. Including the moral of the speaker, Habib Rizieq Shihab. Eko Kuntadhi confirmed that Habib Rizieq Shihab called for "Indonesia's emergency lies" but Habib Rizieq Shihab was jailed for spreading fake news.

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Kapitra Ampera also criticized the morals of Habib Rizieq Shihab (TV One News, 2022), which he considered insulting to the leader. In Kapitra's understanding, if someone blamed their leader publicly, that person insulted the leader. Kapitra agrees with the *Akhlak* revolution, but the *Akhlak* revolution is not only aimed at specific groups. All components need to improve their morals until they become *Akhlak al-karimah*. Kapitra agreed with Eko Kuntadhi, who said that Habib Rizieq Shihab, as a preacher, should also improve his morals. It is in line with the religious purpose brought by the Prophet Muhammad, which is to perfect noble morals. In another case in the trial, the Public Prosecutor considered that Habib Rizieq Shihab's words and actions were contrary to his *Akhlak* revolution

program because he demeaned the public prosecutor in front of the trial by calling him barbaric, uncivilized, intellectually backward, stupid, and the like (detikcom, 2021). Kaufmann explains that an action is considered moral if found in the obligation of the action itself, not in its purpose and process. However, actions will be moral if goals have been achieved with existing rules (Kaufmann, 2015).

Habib Rizieq Shihab is in a cornered condition as the government's opposition. He and his group are in a confrontation with President Joko Widodo. State institutions under the government's control are certainly not happy with Habib Rizieq Shihab's harsh attitude (Maulana, 2020). Habib Rizieq Shihab is mapped to be a figure who must be eliminated. Pangdam Jaya and the National Police Chief unite to face Habib Rizieq Shihab and his followers (Bimantara, 2020; Ihsanuddin & Asril, 2020; Nugroho, 2020). People who tried to sympathize with Habib Rizieq Shihab received threats and were intimidated by the arrival of police and army members. Habib Rizieq Shihab's billboards were removed in all provinces and regions. In the end, Habib Rizieq Shihab's power to maintain the opposition's stance continued to be destroyed by ensnaring Habib Rizieq Shihab into the criminal realm, his followers were killed, and his organization was banned. Although it is not that simple to deduce a complex series of events, the reality is that one event and another are interconnected. It is a bitter historical record (black history) of the civil opposition in the journey of reform and democracy in Indonesia.

In Michel Foucault's perspective, public acceptance of a concept or idea—such as the mental revolution and the *Akhlak* revolution—does not occur in a vacuum but is constructed by social networks of power and discourse. For example, public acceptance of mental revolution is influenced by how the state produces and disseminates this discourse through the media, educational institutions, and public policy. Foucault emphasized that the dominant discourse will shape the way of thinking and acting of society so that despite the criticism of the mental revolution, this discourse still has legitimacy because the state apparatus supports it. On the other hand, the *Akhlak* revolution pioneered by Habib Rizieq Shihab faces challenges in public acceptance because it is positioned as a counter-discourse. The state and the mainstream media frame the *Akhlak* revolution as problematic, using narratives of violence and incongruity with the existing order to undermine its acceptance in society. In this regard, Foucault shows how power is repressive and productive—the state does not simply prohibit opposition discourse. Still, it creates alternative narratives that shape public opinion against it. Public acceptance of these two concepts does not solely depend on social relevance or societal needs but rather on how the discourse is regulated, disseminated, and controlled by the mechanisms of power. It shows that public acceptance is not neutral or natural but results from an ongoing discourse battle in political and social dynamics.

3.3. The Intersection of Mental Revolution and *Akhlak* Revolution

Some parties clash between the *Akhlak* revolution and the mental revolution. This group thinks that the presence of Habib Rizieq Shihab's *Akhlak* revolution is a counterpart to the mental revolution policy formed by President Joko Widodo. In chronological order, the concept of mental revolution was first popularized by President Joko Widodo in 2014, while the *Akhlak* revolution only emerged in 2020. In addition, Habib Rizieq Shihab, as the initiator of the *Akhlak* revolution, is the most vocal figure in opposition to the government of President Joko Widodo. Based on this fact, the group that thinks the *Akhlak* revolution is a counterpart to the mental revolution is considered a failure by many opposition figures. In addition, the direct expression of Habib Rizieq Shihab supports that the concept of *Akhlak* revolution that he popularized is a substitute for the concept of mental revolution, which he considers to have failed.

"Revolution is not just a small change, but a radical and comprehensive change. So, don't think of the revolution as just about violence, such as the use of weapons or murder. Why is the word chosen '*akhlak* revolution,' not 'mental revolution,' 'moral revolution,' or '*Budi pekerti* revolution'? That's because the term *akhlak* is used by the Prophet Muhammad SAW." (Bang Zaky, 2020).

The Mental Revolution became a national movement through Presidential Instruction Number 12 of 2016 concerning the National Movement of Mental Revolution. This movement is one of the Indonesian government's efforts under President Joko Widodo's leadership to transform the nation's character through an approach based on Pancasila values. It shows the government's commitment to improving and building the character of Indonesian society by implementing a series of programs to create new and better behaviors and cultures in various sectors of life. The National Movement of Mental Revolution is motivated by the need to improve the nation's character, which is seen as having experienced degradation in various aspects, including work ethic, integrity, and the spirit of mutual cooperation. The President's instruction requires strong coordination among relevant institutions and ministries in implementing five main programs, namely the Indonesia Serve movement, the Clean Indonesia movement, the Orderly Indonesia movement, the Independent Indonesia movement, and the United Indonesia movement (Dewi et al., 2023; Humas Pusdatin, 2017b, 2017a; Sulistyawan, 2020).

The researchers put forward a different view with the group. Mental revolution and *Akhlak* revolution are two different terms but have the same purpose. *Akhlak* and mental have the same object: human attitudes and behaviors (Danaher & Hopster, 2022; Edwards & Hedegaard, 2021; Gibbs, 2012b). Although in language between morality and mentality can be distinguished, they are two identical terms and the same. The purpose of the *Akhlak* revolution is to improve morals, while the mental revolution aims to improve the mental. The *Akhlak* revolution makes human beings with noble character (*akhlakul karimah*), while the mental revolution also aims to improve mentality and behavior in accordance with the character of the Indonesian nation.

Although the two concepts are identical, they have different areas of implementation. Different does not mean contradictory but can be seen as something that complements each other. The mental revolution, because President Joko Widodo initiated it, this concept has a strong policy basis to be implemented for civil servants and government officials. On the other hand, the *Akhlak* revolution is driven by Habib Rizieq Shihab with his religious organization, so the target audience and implementer of the idea is the congregation (*mad'u*) across professions and ages (Francis, 2021). In this case, it can be understood that the mental revolution targets civil servants and government officials in formal organizational units. In contrast, the *Akhlak* revolutions target the general public in informal organizational units.

Finally, it can be understood that the *Akhlak* revolution and the mental revolution, although rooted in different ideologies—religion and state—actually have a common point in efforts to rebuild the morality of the nation. Both emphasize the importance of individual spiritual transformation as the foundation of social change. In the context of the ethical crisis that Indonesia is currently facing, the reconciliation between the religious values championed by the *Akhlak* revolution and the national values emphasized in the mental revolution is becoming increasingly relevant. This approach not only opens up space for dialogue between moral actors from the two polarized poles but also allows for a more inclusive and collaborative political ethics in facing the challenges of the nation-state. This vision is not impossible to combine because nothing is absolute in the context of politics and power; Everything is

always in the flow of dynamics and negotiation of interests. Similar to the political reconciliation between Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto after the 2014 and 2019 elections, which had divided the voters, their government cooperation shows that the nation-state's interests can go beyond ideological differences and political rivalries. Thus, integrating these two movements, the mental revolution and the *Akhlak* revolution can be a strategic foothold for improving public morality and a new direction in the lives of the nation and state.

3. 4. *Akhlak* and Mental Revolution in the Perspective of the Islamic Da'wah Movement

The da'wah movement brought by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH shows that Islam has brought fundamental and comprehensive changes from the beginning, starting from the theological revolution in Makkah to the sociological revolution in Medina (Ishaq & Rahman, 2015; Rahman, 2020; A. Riyadi et al., 2021). It shows that Islamic teachings do not only focus on the spiritual aspect but also include broad social transformations. In the current context, as Rahiem (2024) stated, religion—including Islam—has an essential role in encouraging inclusive and sustainable future development (Rahiem, 2024).

The da'wah movement is a systematic and organized effort to spread Islamic teachings to the community, both individually and collectively, aiming to strengthen religious understanding, improve morals, and create positive changes in the social and cultural life of the community. Various studies show the various transformations of the da'wah movement in Indonesia. Some focus on digital da'wah, such as the Baitul Hidayah Islamic Boarding School, which builds digital infrastructure through productive waqf (Suhendi & Sholeh, 2021), IRSSAT in Jember with tolerant content on YouTube (Purnomo, 2021) and Ustadz Syam on TikTok which showcased the new authority of creative da'wah (Naamy, 2023). Women's da'wah is also developing in the digital space, such as the Ngaji KGI and Hijabographic communities (Ummah, 2021; Nugrahani et al., 2021). LDII has also transformed through technology to continue to exist (Wiendyarti et al., 2024). In the institutional realm, PCNU Bantul moves da'wah through social programs (Herman et al., 2024), Aisyiyah through the preaching of *al-lisan* (speech), and *al-hal* (action, set a good example) (Alifuddin, et al., 2024), and Muhammadiyah through the empowerment of the ummah and tajdid Riyadi et al., 2024). The cultural approach is seen in Bayt al-Qur'an al-Akbar and Ustadz Fadzlan in Papua (Pahlevi, 2023; Ramadoni et al., 2023). Islamic boarding schools and institutes such as KH Ali Tungkal also play a strategic role in international moderate da'wah (Usman et al., 2022), while Salafi da'wah emphasizes the purity of teachings (Faizin & Afridawati, 2023). Gender and statehood issues are also present in the da'wah studies of Khadijah RA, the Prophet Muhammad, and nationalist da'wah (Riyadi et al., 2021; Aswar & Afifi, 2024; Hamid, 2024). In contrast to the existing literature, this study raises the da'wah movement as a response to the decline of Indonesia's national morale through the contestation between the Mental Revolution and the *Akhlak* Revolution, with a focus on the ideological dimension and national policies. It significantly differs from other literature focusing on institutional, digitalized, cultural, or gender-based da'wah practices. Another study emphasizes the methods, media, and targets of a particular da'wah community, while this study highlights the discourse battle between two approaches to da'wah on a national scale in shaping the nation's character.

The *Akhlak* revolution is viewed from the perspective of Islamic da'wah as an individual moral transformation to live by Islamic teachings that prioritize the values of humanity, justice, and goodness (Kuntowijoyo, 2007). *Akhlak* revolution and mental revolution are critical concepts in Islamic da'wah that seek to change individuals and society profoundly. These changes are not just physical changes or social structures but a renewal in attitudes, behaviors, and understandings rooted in Islamic values. In

Islamic da'wah, the *Akhlak* and mental revolution is not just a theoretical concept but a realization every Muslim must realize daily. It is in harmony with the literature on da'wah, especially *Ahsanu Amalan* and *Ahsanu Qaulan*, which are the leading indicators of da'wah activities (Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2022). *Akhlak* in Islam has a very high position. *Akhlak* is more important than knowledge. The Prophet Muhammad revealed that his purpose as a messenger was to perfect human morality. The Quran also mentions that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH had great morals. Good morals are a reflection of the depth of one's faith. Therefore, the *Akhlak* revolution in Islamic da'wah involves a change in behavior and a profound spiritual transformation. From the Islamic perspective, morality is a behavior driven by faith and piety towards Allah. Any change in a person's morals should reflect an improvement in the quality of his worship.

The *Akhlak* revolution, in the context of da'wah, is an effort to change individuals' mindsets and ways of life so that they are always oriented to the values of goodness and virtue. In line with Cak Nur, da'wah is *Al-Khair*, goodness (Madjid, 2008; Pirol, 2012). An example is the transition from bad habits, such as lying, stealing, or spreading slander, to good habits that focus more on honesty, trust, and mutual respect between others, in other words, Da'wah through *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (Murodi, 2007). The process of the *Akhlak* revolution is not easy and requires hard work and sacrifice, both in terms of time, energy, and thought. One of the biggest challenges in realizing this *Akhlak* revolution is the mentality of people who are often trapped in traditions or cultures that are not in line with Islamic values. For example, dishonesty is common in some layers of society, and social norms consider it normal to speak ill of others. It is where the importance of Islamic da'wah is to provide a correct understanding of Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of good morals.

In addition to the *Akhlak* revolution, the mentality of Muslims is also no less critical in Islamic da'wah. The mentality referred to here is the mindset and perspective of life, the world, and the hereafter. A Muslim with a strong mentality is someone who can face life's trials with patience, tawakal, and full conviction that everything that happens is the destiny of Allah. Revolution is a change in the way of life that prioritizes faith and makes religion the primary foundation in all aspects of life. Mental revolution is closely related to efforts to free Muslims from backward mentalities, such as dependence on outsiders, weakness in entrepreneurship, and pessimism towards change. In Islamic da'wah, this mental change leads to the formation of individuals who are confident, independent, and oriented towards the common good (*Al-Khair al-ummah*) (Abdullah, 2015; Aziz, 2017; Fahrurrozi et al., 2019; Ridla et al., 2017). It is a continuous process and cannot be achieved in just a short time. Effective Islamic da'wah will create people with strong and positive mentalities committed to achieving happiness in this world and the hereafter (Salmadani, 2003, 2010). The *Akhlak* revolution popularized by Habib Rizieq Shihab can be understood as an expression of the da'wah movement that goes beyond the limits of conventional da'wah. It is a religious, moral appeal and a socio-political movement that places Islamic values as the basis for criticism of power. In this context, the *Akhlak* revolution indicates the presence of the *da'wah movement*, which is active in the public sphere and opposes the state when the state is considered to have failed to maintain morality.

The *Akhlak* revolution and the mental revolution cannot be separated from the social and cultural context of the people. Islamic da'wah must be adjusted to the existing conditions of society so that the message conveyed can be well received. In this case, the role of ulama and da'i is vital because they must understand existing social challenges and provide appropriate solutions per Islamic teachings (Dianto, 2022; Hasjmy, 1974). Islamic da'wah, which touches on moral and mental aspects, can motivate individuals to change external behavior and improve their inner qualities. The *Akhlak* and mental

revolution is a deep and systematic effort to form pious individuals, noble character, and positive mentality. This process requires seriousness from all elements of society and support from da'wah institutions that can guide Muslims in achieving the best change. Therefore, the *Akhlak* revolution and mental revolution have a crucial position in da'wah, which is the primary foundation for building a strong, civilized, and ready people to face the challenges of the times.

3. 5. Discussion

The mental revolution targets changes in the mentality of the bureaucracy, civil servants, and employees of state-owned enterprises, the TNI-Polri. The mental revolution was initiated by Joko Widodo, who was in power. He became President of the Republic of Indonesia from 2014 to 2024, during two terms. As President, he has set policies for the mental revolution program. Meanwhile, the *Akhlak* revolution reaches the target of civil society. Habib Rizieq Shihab, a preacher from the Islamic Defenders Front community organization, initiated the doctrine of the *Akhlak* revolution. He does not have access to power and government, so the idea of the *Akhlak* revolution can only be massively mobilized through the da'wah of his community. It can be affirmed that the *Akhlak* revolution is only an Islamic da'wah movement spearheaded by Habib Rizieq Shihab. The author sees that the two doctrines are not opposite; on the contrary, a relationship mutually reinforces one doctrine with another. Joko Widodo changed the character of bureaucrats and employees, while Habib Rizieq Shihab changed the general public's or citizens' character. Both figures realize that there are moral problems in the life of the nation and state. Both offer fundamental changes that have a substantial amount in common. The difference is only in terms. However, the difference in terms became a delicious dish for the haters: the palace buzzer.

Both President Joko Widodo and Habib Rizieq Shihab are religious people, especially Muslims. The idea born from the two figures is an expression of a religious human being. Postsecularity refers to the re-recognition of the role of religion and spirituality in the public sphere, having previously been considered lost or marginalized by modern secularization (Cloke et al., 2020). Religious beliefs influence individual attitudes in social and political contexts (Abellán, 2023). According to Abellán, it is revealed that the important role of religious beliefs in shaping social norms and attitudes is mainly related to beliefs and interactions among individuals in society. Abellán's research indicates that attitudes toward democracy, political violence, and redistribution are influenced by religious heritage. These findings challenge the notion that the development of modernity and the values of rationalism can completely ignore the influence of religion. On the contrary, the influence of religion continues and is evident in people's political attitudes and preferences. The return of religion to the practical political stage and the mobilization of the masses in the name of religion (Telle, 2013).

Political ethics cannot be separated from democracy. A strong and well-functioning democracy in Indonesia requires leaders and political parties that uphold ethical values such as integrity, transparency, and accountability. If ethics are ignored, then democracy can turn into a corrupt tool of power, which serves only the interests of individuals or certain elite groups, and ultimately undermines public trust and threatens socio-political stability in the country. For Habib Rizieq Shihab, Joko Widodo's government has violated religious doctrine. Habib Rizieq Shihab assessed that Joko Widodo's leadership was a tyrannical government. Moreover, the criminalization of clerics that occurred during the administration of President Joko Widodo has become a historical fact that strengthens the assumption that Habib Rizieq Shihab and his followers judge the Joko Widodo government as a

tyrannical government. The regime's forces that discriminate must be fought until equal civilian life is achieved (Arnesson, 2023; Basit, 2016; Dianto et al., 2021). In this context, opposition groups need moral clarity and political courage to create real change. It is what encourages hardline Islam, such as FPI, to take a role in elections and be affiliated with one of the presidential candidates (Toha et al., 2021).

Kavanagh et al emphasized the need for a more comprehensive ethical approach to addressing injustices in the life of the nation and state (Kavanagh et al., 2020). An inclusive and critical ethical approach is essential to meet moral and social challenges in an increasingly complex world (Spike, 2020). Joko Widodo's thoughts on the mental revolution can be understood as the importance of universal ethics in the life of the state. A mental revolution that is not tied to a particular religious context emphasizes that morality is universal and rational. In this view, morality is not only recognized by certain groups but rather the search for generally acceptable values. It shows that ethics improves and challenges existing social norms, especially those related to issues such as sexism, racism, and colonialism. Universal ethics underlines the existence of moral demands to overcome the injustices that may occur in social structures.

The *Akhlak* revolution is an Islamic da'wah movement. Da'wah, which focuses on improving morals, is very relevant to be disseminated through social media, especially YouTube (Zaman & Assarwani, 2021), in a podcast format. The platform allows preachers to reach a wider audience without being bound by geographical and time constraints. However, the presence of podcasts through YouTube channels owned by civilians reflects the growing relationship between technology, democracy, and politics while also showing how civilians can maintain their existence amid the tide of change. With technological advancements that allow anyone to speak and spread opinions widely (Zulkarnain et al., 2024), podcasts are a very effective platform to fight for freedom of opinion. Although academics from the campus tend to keep their distance from politicians, their existence is indispensable to critically analyze the political phenomena that develop in society and the state. Academics, with their ability to conduct objective research and studies, have an essential role in providing deeper insights and perspectives, as well as being supervisors of government policies that have the potential to deviate. Their presence in the public space significantly impacts, especially in providing enlightenment to the community. The strength of the civil opposition must be supported by higher education institutions, as well as the mass wave that was ultimately able to overthrow the hegemony of New Order power in Indonesia. With this support, it is hoped that there will be improvements in the quality of democracy, the strengthening of civil rights, and the increase of people's political participation in the decision-making process.

The contestation between the *Akhlak* Revolution and the Mental Revolution can be understood as a struggle for meaning in the public space mediated by the language and rhetoric of da'wah (van Dijk, 1994). The discourse of the *Akhlak* Revolution, which Islamic groups often echo, emphasizes the moral transformation of the individual as the foundation of social change. At the same time, the Mental Revolution, which is more associated with state policies, highlights the structural change in the mindset of society. In da'wah, the use of diction, narrative, and persuasive strategies is the main instrument to form collective awareness and mobilize the support of the people. Van Dijk argues that language not only reflects reality but also builds and maintains power so that the dominant discourse in the public sphere has the potential to define the direction of social change (van Dijk, 2023). Suppose the *Akhlak* Revolution is emphasized in da'wah lectures as the leading solution for the betterment of the nation. In that case, this can form the perception that social change must start from the individual, not structural policies. On the other hand, if the Mental Revolution is positioned as a more rational and policy-based

national development agenda, then the da'wah movement that carries the *Akhlak* Revolution can be seen as a form of resistance to the dominance of state discourse.

The *Akhlak* Revolution was not born from the formal power structure of the state but from the symbolic and cultural power of civil society groups that had moral authority. In Foucault's terminology, this can be understood as the practice of power that works through the authority of religious knowledge and the people's belief structure. On the other hand, the Mental Revolution initiated by President Joko Widodo is a national character transformation project based on the values of modernism, rationality, and nationalism. This discourse operates within state power and is distributed through bureaucratic policies, character education programs, and other formal institutions. Mental revolution can be read as forming ideal, productive, orderly, and loyal citizens of the state. The state no longer uses power coercively but shapes behavior through the internalization of norms through the state's ideological apparatus. In line with that, moral behavior is determined by external norms and depends on internal self-regulation mechanisms, such as moral identity and self-control. Both the mental revolution and the *Akhlak* revolution show that the success of moral transformation depends heavily on internalizing the value and capacity of individual self-regulation (Al Halbusi et al., 2023).

In response to the limited analysis of the operationalization of the Mental Revolution in state institutions, researchers realized that there is not much literature or official reports that detail the internal practices of institutions in implementing this program. However, several implementation efforts can be traced through bureaucratic reform policies, strengthening the integrity of the state civil apparatus, and establishing the Presidential Work Unit for the Development of Pancasila Ideology (Kuwado, 2017; Setneg.go.id, 2018) one of which has a mandate to socialize the values of the Mental Revolution. Regarding President Joko Widodo's leadership style, the Mental Revolution reflects a populist leadership approach that emphasizes simplicity, honest work, and closeness to the people. This style has a substantial symbolic impact, although the effectiveness of program implementation in substance still faces convoluted bureaucratic challenges. The researcher also acknowledges that resistance to the Mental Revolution, both implicitly from status quo institutions and explicitly from certain groups of society, suggests that changes in values and culture are not only a matter of policy but are also closely related to the dynamics of power and social legitimacy. The Mental Revolution should be understood as a long-term process that requires multi-sector involvement, policy consistency, and a broader participatory approach.

Within the framework of Michel Foucault's theory of postmodernism (Foucault, 1988; Katz, 2001), the contest between the concept of mental revolution and the *Akhlak* revolution reflects the struggle for power in defining the subjectivity of society, where each discourse seeks to shape individuals according to the norms and values they consider legitimate. Public acceptance of these two concepts is determined not only by the idea's substance but also by the network of powers that frame how they are perceived, distributed, and internalized in society. With its policy instruments and hegemony, the state encourages mental revolution as a social control strategy oriented towards national stability and character development based on Pancasila. Meanwhile, the *Akhlak* revolution emerged as a resistance that renegotiated the role of religion in the public sphere and offered an alternative form of moral discipline based on Islamic values. Da'wah, in this context, is not just the delivery of religious teachings but also a discursive practice that intersects with the mechanism of power, where the truth is not absolute but the result of the production and reproduction of discourse that continues to be negotiated in the public sphere by preachers.

Foucault states that modern power works through disciplinary mechanisms, i.e., techniques of

supervision and control that make individuals voluntarily conform to the prevailing norms (Foucault, 1977). Both the *Akhlak* Revolution and the Mental Revolution show how power works productively – not by physical violence, but by shaping how society thinks and acts. Both used different instruments: da'wah and religious communities in the *Akhlak* Revolution and regulations and policies in the Mental Revolution. However, both have the same goal: to create an ideal subject according to their respective perspectives. Furthermore, Foucault invites us to question who has the authority to speak. In the context of the *Akhlak* Revolution and the Mental Revolution, differences in social position and access to power are key. The *Akhlak* Revolution was born from the periphery of power and thus can be read as a form of resistance to the hegemony of state discourse. On the contrary, the Mental Revolution is an official discourse of the state with institutional support. However, according to Foucault, power is not always in one center but distributed and works through various social relations. Thus, the contestation between these two discourses shows the dynamics of power that continue to process in the Indonesian public space.

However, the *Akhlak* revolution and the mental revolution do not solely reflect the power competition between the two ideological axes but also reflect the dynamics of moral meaning in a constantly changing society. Within the framework of postmodernism, especially as thought by Michel Foucault and other poststructuralist thinkers, no single truth, absolute authority, or grand narrative is final. On the contrary, postmodernism emphasizes the importance of the plurality of truth, the deconstruction of established power relations, the dismantling of fixed identities, and the opening of space for the negotiation of meaning in social and political discourse. Reading the *Akhlak* revolution and mental revolution as part of the postmodern landscape can be understood as parallel attempts to reformulate moral codes, collective identities, and power structures in the context of a nation seeking a new form of public ethical integrity. Instead of affirming each other, the two open up the space of possibilities for synthesis and reconciliation within a more reflective and inclusive framework of nationalism.

4. CONCLUSION

The Mental Revolution and the *Akhlak* Revolution are two significant alternative responses to moral deterioration in Indonesia. Although it is often understood as a competing movement due to the opposing socio-political positions between its initiators – President Joko Widodo and Habib Rizieq Shihab – both have the same aspiration, namely to rebuild the character and moral integrity of the nation. From the perspective of Michel Foucault's postmodernism, these two movements can be understood as competing discourses in a power network to define and control the moral landscape of society. Although different in approach and execution, they form a moral construct that, in Foucauldian analysis, is part of the production mechanism and the regulation of power over the individual. Both revolutions received mixed responses from the public, with some groups providing support and others criticizing. Regardless of their strategy, institutional basis, and ideological foundation differences, the Mental Revolution and the *Akhlak* Revolution can be positioned complementarily. The Mental Revolution offers a top-down approach based on state policies to reform the culture of the bureaucracy and the government apparatus. On the contrary, the *Akhlak* Revolution prioritizes a bottom-up approach that is religious and participatory, targeting the general public through the da'wah movement. This recognition of this complementary dynamic opens up opportunities for integrating the two movements to achieve a common goal: improving the nation's morals.

This research recommends policymakers consider the synergy between these two revolutions in

developing the nation's character. The Mental Revolution can be strengthened by forming structured task forces in state institutions. At the same time, the *Akhlaq* Revolution was encouraged by the strengthening of revolutionary da'wah, which preachers carried out at the grassroots level. By combining these two approaches, Indonesia can potentially build a more complete transformation—both in terms of institutional reform and the moral awareness of individual citizens. This research offers practical solutions and broadens the understanding of how power mechanisms work in shaping moral and social narratives in Indonesia. Follow-up research can explore concrete case studies on implementation, resistance, and negotiation in various social and institutional domains to enrich the theoretical and practical insights offered.

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