

History of Muhammadiyah Politics as a Neutral Organization

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui sejarah perpolitikan Muhammadiyah termasuk ideologi politik Muhammadiyah, pola hubungan Muhammadiyah dengan partai politik, pandangan Muhammadiyah terhadap demokrasi, dan partisipasi Muhammadiyah dalam kancah perpolitikan nasional sejak pendirian Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode historis dengan beberapa tahapan sebagai berikut; (1) memilih topik, (2) mengumpulkan sumber, (3) memverifikasi, (4) menginterpretasi, dan (5) melakukan penulisan. Kemudian, teknik pengambilan data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teknik kepustakaan. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Muhammadiyah menjadikan khitah politiknya seperti Khitah Ujung Pandang 1971 dan Khitah Denpasar 2002 sebagai pedoman menjalankan politik. Dalam sejarahnya, Muhammadiyah memiliki tiga pola hubungan dengan partai politik yaitu pola hubungan langsung, pola hubungan tidak langsung, dan pola hubungan netral. Lebih jauh, Muhammadiyah tidak anti dengan politik, bahkan Muhammadiyah mendukung demokrasi yang berlandaskan etika. Keterlibatan Muhammadiyah dalam politik sudah dimulai sejak keikutsertaannya dalam MIAI, PII, Masyumi, dan Parmusi.

Kata kunci: politik, demokrasi, muhammadiyah, partai politik.

Abstract

This study aimed to discover the history of Muhammadiyah politics, including Muhammadiyah's political ideology, the pattern of Muhammadiyah relations with political parties, Muhammadiyah views on democracy, and Muhammadiyah's participation in the national political constellation since the founding of the MIAI. The study used historical method with the stages of (1) choosing a topic, (2) gathering sources, (3) verifying, (4) interpreting, and (5) writing. Further, data collection techniques in this study used library techniques. This study showed that Muhammadiyah uses political strategies, such as the Khitah Ujung Pandang 1971 and Khitah Denpasar 2002, as political guidelines. In its history, Muhammadiyah has three relationship patterns with political parties: direct relationship patterns, indirect relationship patterns, and neutral relationship patterns. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah is not anti-politics, Muhammadiyah even supports democracy based on ethics. Muhammadiyah's involvement in politics has started since it participated in MIAI, PII, Masyumi, and Parmusi.

Keywords: politics, democracy, muhammadiyah, political parties.

INTRODUCTION

To modernize or purify Islamic teachings, KH. Ahmad Dahlan formed Muhammadiyah in 1912, one of Indonesia's most well-known Islamic organizations (Setiawan, 2023; Suryana, 2009). Muhammadiyah presents itself in the political sphere as an impartial organization that is unaffiliated

with any political force and refrains from engaging in overtly political activities.

However, at certain moments, it seems that Muhammadiyah cannot be separated from political issues, either directly from the Muhammadiyah organization or through its cadres (Boty et al., 2023; Haedar Nashir, 2017). It shows

that Muhammadiyah sees politics as something that is acceptable and should not be avoided. According to Muhammadiyah, politics can be used as a platform for the proclamation of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*. It indicates that participating in politics can be a tool in the struggle for *da'wah*.

Additionally, political issues frequently result in energy-draining conflicts between politicians, parties not directly involved, societies, and non-political organizations (Jurdi, 2010). Conflict in the organization can occasionally be influenced by political issues on both internal and external aspects. Therefore, viewing political matters as crucial to be regulated is necessary.

Muhammadiyah has demonstrated a variety of political views throughout its history. At first, Muhammadiyah seemed closely connected to politics by establishing several political parties, participating in political activities, and making its cadres central figures. At one time, Muhammadiyah considered that an Islamic organization must uphold neutrality on political issues.

Even though Muhammadiyah is impartial, it does not simply ignore political matters. Muhammadiyah is an organization that monitors public policy from the outside. Muhammadiyah will support government initiatives that

advance the people's interests and oppose initiatives that do not.

Muhammadiyah frequently deals with political concerns. Muhammadiyah now faces several internal issues as a result of this matter. Muhammadiyah's cadres disagreed with Muhammadiyah's political activity. One side believes Muhammadiyah must continue its political activity, while the other believes Muhammadiyah should avoid politics. Ultimately, the idea and desire to rejoin the *da'wah* movement and abandon *realpolitik* evolved, which was made possible by *Khitah Ujung Pandang* in 1971.

This study tried to find several things related to the history of Muhammadiyah's political journey, which aimed to find out Muhammadiyah's political ideology, the relationship between Muhammadiyah and political parties, Muhammadiyah's views regarding democracy, and Muhammadiyah's participation in the national political constellation.

METHOD

The historical method was used in this study to reveal events that occurred in the past systematically. Historical methods guided research into historical events and their problems (Cipta, 2020). Kuntowijoyo (2013) formulated five steps for historical research, namely: (1) selecting a topic, (2) collecting sources, (3) verifying the validity of the sources, (4) interpreting,

and (5) writing. The data was collected using library techniques. It is a systematic action taken to collect, process, and conclude data using particular methodologies or techniques to identify solutions to issues encountered during library research (Khatibah, 2011). The researchers searched and collected data sources, such as textual sources, in the form of books and journals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Muhammadiyah Political Ideology

Muhammadiyah has played an active role in Indonesian politics since the Dutch East Indies era; it tried to resist the colonial government through various efforts, such as by mobilizing Muslims to demand independence (Suryana, 2009). However, Muhammadiyah's political involvement ultimately changed to an organization unaffiliated with any political party.

Systematic basic concepts of Muhammadiyah thought related to politics were difficult to find (Haedar Nashir, 2000). This thought was fragmented in various documents. Several documents were the primary reference for Muhammadiyah in determining its political stance, namely *Khitah* Ujung Pandang 1971 and *Khitah* Denpasar 2002. Both *Khitah* were used as the primary reference by Muhammadiyah in determining its political stance, including regulating the relationship between Muhammadiyah and political parties.

Khitah Ujung Panjang was very popular and used as the primary reference and point of reference in determining Muhammadiyah in viewing political issues. In essence, there are two lines of Muhammadiyah struggle in the *Khitah* Ujung Pandang, as follows:

1. Muhammadiyah, an Islamic organization that carries out its movements in various fields, does not maintain relations with political parties or forces.
2. Muhammadiyah provides freedom for Muhammadiyah cadres to be involved or not in certain political parties by obeying predetermined rules.

Muhammadiyah has been a non-partisan organization since *Khitah* Ujung Pandang was set in 1971. As an organization, Muhammadiyah was not connected to any political entity. In contrast, Muhammadiyah formerly had a definite affiliation with political parties, where it most recently took part in the political activity of Partai Muslimim Indonesia (Parmusi). However, Muhammadiyah never prohibits cadres or members from engaging in politics or supporting any political party.

Then, the next *Khitah* containing political thoughts was *Khitah* Denpasar 2002. This *khitah* consists of nine main statements (Haedar Nashir, 2008), essentially containing the relationship

between Muhammadiyah and national issues.

This *Khitah* showed Muhammadiyah's action in determining its political principles. Muhammadiyah plays its political role by controlling state policies to align with the agreed constitution. As an organization, Muhammadiyah does not maintain relations with any political forces. However, Muhammadiyah does not prohibit its members from exercising their political rights according to their choices. Then, Muhammadiyah emphasized to its members who are active in politics to be earnest in carrying out their responsibilities. These two *Khitah* are essential for Muhammadiyah's political policy to uphold neutrality in practical politics. These *Khitah* are also guidelines for Muhammadiyah members to respond to political issues.

Muhammadiyah and Political Parties

Muhammadiyah has demonstrated various relationships with political parties. There are at least three patterns of Muhammadiyah's relationship with political parties, namely: (1) Direct relationship pattern, (2) Indirect relationship pattern, and (3) Neutral relationship pattern (Haedar Nashir, 2000).

Direct Relationship Pattern

This pattern of direct relations indicates active engagement between the

Muhammadiyah organization and political parties. Muhammadiyah was directly involved in the founding of parties, political activities, and struggles in practical politics. We can see this in the long political history of Muhammadiyah, where it was involved in the establishment and political activities of several political parties, such as involvement in political activities in Partai Islam Indonesia (PII), Majelis Syura Muslimin Indonesia (Masyumi), and Partai Muslim Indonesia (Parmusi) (Shobron, 2003). Moreover, Muhammadiyah became its core strength in these parties' political activities.

Indirect Relationship Pattern

This relationship pattern does not involve Muhammadiyah as an organization in politics. However, it involves Muhammadiyah figures who receive great support from Muhammadiyah members to establish political parties, struggle in political constellations, or support particular political parties (Fatwa, 2000).

This relationship pattern could be found in one of the figures who fought for reform, Amin Rais. He received much support from Muhammadiyah members to enter the world of politics because he felt he could channel people's aspirations. Apart from being the founder of Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN), He also served as general chairman of PAN. This relationship pattern did not involve Muhammadiyah as

an organization but involved its members in political participation.

Neutral Relationship Pattern

This relationship pattern shows Muhammadiyah's attitude to remain neutral and not get involved in practical political activities. Nashir (2010) views Muhammadiyah as an organization that operates in education and socio-culture. He argues that Muhammadiyah should keep it separate from actual political matters. It means that Muhammadiyah must prioritize the development of political morals rather than direct involvement in practical politics.

Muhammadiyah's neutral attitude began with the birth of the *Khitah* Muhammadiyah Ujung Pandang 1971, which was used as a guideline in regulating Muhammadiyah's political activities and Muhammadiyah cadres in politics. Moreover, it is essential to maintain the relationship between religion and the state to maintain Islamic teachings in society (Maarif, 2009).

Muhammadiyah and Democracy

Muhammadiyah views democracy as a good system if it is based on ethics and does not violate Islamic teachings. This democratic process aims to get reliable leaders at the regional and central levels to improve the welfare of the people economically (Jurdi, 2011).

In a democratic system, everyone has the same opportunity to participate and be involved in making fair decisions (Maarif, 2009). In principle, Muhammadiyah is not affiliated and is involved in practical political activities. However, Muhammadiyah cadres can utilize this democratic system to improve the quality of Indonesian democracy and benefit the societies.

The role of selected Muhammadiyah cadres in this political constellation contributes to the regions currently being led and post-led. We can see this from the figure of Ali Mukhni, former Regent of Padang Pariaman. In the 4 years of his leadership, there was a significant improvement in the society's economy (Putri et al., 2021).

The role of Muhammadiyah cadres manifests *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* movement by presenting Islamic values in action (Putri et al., 2021). These values are attached as an identity for Muhammadiyah cadres, which increases public trust and avoids fraud.

Muhammadiyah on the National Political Stage: Participation and Reform

Muhammadiyah entered politics on September 21, 1937, when it founded Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI) with *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU). K.H. Mas Mansyur represented Muhammadiyah, while K.H. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah represented NU. MIAI was not a political movement, but

this organization later became the forerunner to the birth of the Masyumi party.

A year after the founding of MIAI, precisely on December 4, 1938, Muhammadiyah elites, namely Mas Mansyur and Sukiman Wirjosanjaya, founded Partai Islam Indonesia (PII) (Alfian, 1989). Muhammadiyah figures dominate the central leadership of this party, including Mas Mansyur himself, as the general chairman. Also, as chairman of the Muhammadiyah, Mas Mansur has the capacity as a leader, a reformer figure, and an Indonesian freedom fighter (Kiptiyah, 2018; Suciati et al., 2023).

However, because Mas Mansyur held concurrent positions as chairman of PII and chairman of the Muhammadiyah, various internal polemics occurred in Muhammadiyah. In the end, Mas Mansyur was permitted to serve as PII's chairman through the *Tanwir* Muhammadiyah in 1939. However, Mas Mansyur prioritized the organization's integrity by resigning from the central leadership of PII in 1940.

From 1945 to 1959, during liberal democracy, Muhammadiyah maintained very close relations with political parties. Muhammadiyah founded a relatively big Islamic party in 1945, Partai Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia (Masyumi), and became a special party member. Apart from that, the management of the Masyumi party is dominated by Muhammadiyah cadres.

Table 1. The proportion of Muhammadiyah representatives in Masyumi central leadership (Syaifullah, 1997)

Year	Number of Members of the Masyumi Central Leadership	Number of Muhammadiyah Representatives	Average Percentage
1945	24 people	11 people	45.83 %
1949	14 people	4 people	28.57 %
1951	16 people	9 people	56.25 %
1952	13 people	7 people	53.85 %
1954	15 people	8 people	53.33 %
1956	19 people	12 people	63.16 %
1959	19 people	13 people	68.42 %
Amount	120 people	66 people	55 %

Table 1 shows that from 1945 to 1959, the Masyumi party was dominated by Muhammadiyah members, especially from 1951 to 1959, when the percentage was 50% and above. However, Muhammadiyah decided not to join the Masyumi party again through a plenary session in 1959.

Indonesia's democratic environment was not particularly good during the Guided Democracy era (1959-1966), when national leadership concentrated entirely on the President. Politicians, especially those from Muhammadiyah, were not comfortable with this condition.

However, in the second half of the Guided Democracy period, there were various upheavals of rejection of the national system and leadership, including the G.30/S/PKI chaos. It also ousted Soekarno from his position as President of Indonesia in 1965.

During the New Order regime, socio-political organizations were simplified because the development paradigm prioritized economic development over

politics. So, this policy has an impact on marginalizing the role of political parties in the development process.

At this time, Golkar, which was seen as the most powerful party, had a dominant power in politics. However, as an organization, Muhammadiyah was impartial and did not keep close relationships with some parties, like Golkar. This circumstance impacted national politics because Muslims have no affiliation with any political party.

Furthermore, President Soeharto's Decree No. 70 of 1968 finally approved the birth of a new Islamic political party, namely Partai Muslimin Indonesia (Parmusi), where Muhammadiyah participated in strengthening the founding of this party. This party is led by Djarnawi Hadikusumo (chairman) and Lukman Harun (secretary). They are both Muhammadiyah cadres.

However, Parmusi was increasingly hit by endless internal conflict. Thus, Muhammadiyah considered that Parmusi could no longer be used as a tool for *da'wah's* political struggle and decided to disassociate itself from the political activities of this party. Besides, Muhammadiyah has neutral principles and is not affiliated with particular political forces. This political decision was formalized at the 38th Muhammadiyah Congress in Ujung Pandang in 1971, also known as *Khitah* Ujung Pandang 1971.

1998 was a historic moment when power transitioned from the New Order era to the Reformation era (Al-Hamdi, 2012). In the 1998 reform era, Amin Rais and his colleagues founded a party, Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN), which still exists in the national political arena. This party is inclusive and accepts participation from all parties. Muhammadiyah had nothing to do with the announcement of PAN's establishment. It was due to Muhammadiyah's stance, remaining impartial by avoiding engaging in politics. (Arfandi, 2016). However, the relationship is more of a personal and indirect relationship (Haedar Nashir, 2017).

It needs to be emphasized again that Muhammadiyah is not organizationally involved with any political party; however, Muhammadiyah members who wish to participate and support specific political parties are welcome. It was seen in the 2004 elections, where many Muhammadiyah cadres participated as legislative candidates. Apart from that, many Muhammadiyah members also supported one of the Muhammadiyah figures, Amin Rais, to participate for President in the 2004 presidential election. Nevertheless, ultimately, only a tiny number of Muhammadiyah candidates won seats in the legislature. Further, Amin Rais also failed to be elected in the presidential election.

CONCLUSION

Muhammadiyah and politics have an inseparable relationship. Thus, Muhammadiyah established its political mechanisms or guidelines through *Khitah*, such as *Khitah Ujung Pandang 1971* and *Khitah Denpasar 2002*. In its political history, there are three relationship patterns between Muhammadiyah and political parties: the direct relationship pattern, the indirect relationship pattern, and the neutral relationship pattern. Muhammadiyah's participation in Indonesian politics began with Muhammadiyah's involvement in the founding and political activities of MIAI, PII, Masyumi Party, and Parmusi.

Khitah Ujung Pandang 1971 and *Khitah Denpasar 2002* became Muhammadiyah's reference in determining its political stance, which upholds political neutrality. However, Muhammadiyah does not prohibit its citizens from getting involved in politics. Muhammadiyah has never been against politics. Muhammadiyah supports an ethical, democratic system and invites all Indonesian people to build a national and regional leadership succession system that aims to build a democratic system that will prosper the people economically.

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