



Dynamics of Islamic Politics in the Early Period of the New Order

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to review the relationship between proponents of Islamic politics and the New Order government. This article uses historical methods, namely heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The research results show that the emergence of the New Order government cannot be separated from the support of military groups and Islamic political forces. The Islamic group's support for the New Order government was related to this group's desire to be involved in implementing state policies, especially in the field of government politics. This desire turned out not to be as expected, because the struggle of Islamic groups in political channels received restrictions and pressure from the government because it was considered to threaten national integration and development

INTRODUCTION

How is the relationship between religion, politics and the state thought about? The study of the triangular relationship between religion, politics and the state continues to change over time. Not only are changes in pressure caused by developing assumptions and perspectives, but there are also effects of changes in the context of changes in the substance of the problems that arise. In short, it can be assumed that the encounter between religion, politics and the state began as a meeting of three independent, monolithic and stagnant things. However, entering the 20th century, religion, which was assumed to be something sacred and subject to the sole interpretation of religionists, has turned into an institution that is widely discussed, because it has experienced rapid and almost uncatchable changes in terms of interpretation and practice (Ayoob & Lussier, 2020).

Religious and political discourse, especially regarding the governance of power, has basically been developing for a long time. Donald Eugiene Smith divides religious and political thinking dichotomously into a typology of organic religio-political power on the one hand and secular on the other. The pioneers of the organic perspective argued that religion and the state must be united because religion can reach all aspects of human life. However, supporters of secularism argue that religious affairs must be separated from state affairs in order to maintain the dignity of religion itself as a sacred doctrine (Berlinerblau, 2021).

In general, countries where the majority of the population adheres to Islam, including what is known as the third world, are almost always, directly or indirectly, dominated by Western colonial powers. In fact, these third countries still depend on the powers of the former countries that once invaded them economically and politically to carry out economic development or to preserve the political power of their rulers. However, these former imperialist countries, through their intellectuals, have taken an important role in projecting a certain image of Islam related to state politics and economics (Kumar, 2021).

Based on Robert W Hefner's assessment, in the context of the Indonesian political scene, there appears to be a separation between religion and state. This is of course even more surprising for Hefner as an Indonesianist because it turns out that the cynical and even Islamophobic judgments that have hit some European nations cannot be proven empirically. On the other hand, the Indonesian political scene, which is largely dominated by Islamic political forces, shows that democracy can work well. It's just that there were limited spaces for democracy when Indonesia was under the control of the New Order government led by General Soeharto (Hefner, 2020). Sometimes the New Order government carried out repressive and dominative actions so that society could not do much. However, this cannot be used as a measure that the New Order has killed the space for political participation of Muslims, because several groups of politicians, intellectuals, ulama and intellectuals have also influenced the New Order government's policy making in the process of policy making and governance of the constitutional system (Rosidi, 2022).

Discussing the relationship between Islam and politics is something that never ends in Indonesia. Islam from a theological perspective is placed as a religion and is a holy doctrine that has no equal, containing elements of truth,

commands and prohibitions that cannot be bargained with. However, if Islam is understood as civilization, then this is where Islam is intertwined with all worldly affairs including political affairs. It is understood that in Islam there is a concept of *siyasa*. In general, *siyasah* is understood as managing the benefit of humanity based on *sharia*. Based on Abdul Munir Mulkhan's ideas, religion, in this case Islam, at the modern world level must function as a liberator from oppression, unfair treatment and poverty as the basis for a more prosperous, just and democratic life. Interpreting the sacred texts of the Islamic religion is important for humanity and has become a necessity for Muslim intellectuals. The holy books of the Koran and Hadith must be revived and read in their original texts, not left as dead texts that can only be understood according to the version of classical scholars which is far from the problems of humanity in the contemporary era. Only with this critical reinterpretation can Islam be expected to offer hope for humanity and the benefit of the people (Mulkhan, 2020).

The benefit of the people in question is closely related to welfare and prosperity. It is a common awareness that the Islamic world, including Indonesia, is still struggling with poverty, ignorance and backwardness. In the Indonesian context, according to Moehtar Mas'oe'd, Islamic leaders in this country have long been trying to find a way out of the problems that surround most of their people, namely poverty and underdevelopment (Mas'oe'd, 2021). After being confined for a long time by discriminatory policies as a colonized nation, the presence of independence indeed gave Muslims the opportunity to develop themselves to achieve economic independence, proper education and proper health. It is a common awareness that the Islamic world, including Indonesia, is still struggling with poverty, ignorance and backwardness.

These ideals certainly require struggle, especially political struggle, namely trying to achieve power. The struggle of Muslims to free themselves from poverty requires support and policies through power channels. However, when pursuing political struggles, Islamic leaders and activists apparently came up with different strategies and even tended to be contradictory. On the one hand, there is a group of Muslims who want the Islamization of the state for the sake of society, and on the other group they want the Islamization of society within the national state. The first group became better known as political Islam, namely a group that fought through political channels to implement Islamic *sharia* in regulating the state administration system because the secular system was deemed unable to liberate the people from backwardness. The second group is better known as political Islam, namely a group of people who fight on political lines for the interests of Muslims within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia which is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. It is this Islamic political group that will be reviewed in this article.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this article is to try to reconstruct the movements of Islamic politics during the New Order era. Thus, this study is categorized as contemporary history which places Islam and politics as the focus of the study. Regarding the topic of study, this article is closely related to historical data. Therefore, this paper uses a historical method which consists of four stages, namely, heuristics, criticism, interpretation and historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2003). Heuristics are carried out by conducting a study of literature, both books and journals related to the study topic. Criticism is intended as an effort to filter and question the credibility of the literature. Next, the data obtained is interpreted by describing or analyzing and combining the data. The final stage is Historiography, namely presenting the data in written form or a systematic series of sentences (Zed, 2008).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Emergence of Islamic Politics

The political unrest that hit the Republic of Indonesia at the end of 1965 and reached its culmination point when the murder of a high-ranking Indonesian National Army officer, better known by the New Order government as the 30 September Movement of the Indonesian Communist Party (G30S/PKI), gave rise to widespread anger among Indonesian society, especially students and Islamic groups. This anger was colored by demonstrations demanding that prices be immediately reduced, the cabinet be dissolved, and the PKI be disbanded as an Indonesian political force. Sukarno as president could not fulfill these demands, in fact the community movement was increasingly rampant.

Seeing this reality, Soeharto was appointed by issuing the March Eleventh Order (Supersemar 1966) to take steps that were considered important to save the country from disunity. The first step taken by Soeharto was to disband the PKI as an element of political power which was initiated by Soekarno in the Nasakom concept. With the dissolution of the PKI, one of Sukarno's supporters disappeared from the political scene. This made Soekarno's position even weaker politically, coupled with the rejection of Nawaksara's speech by the MPRS. In the end, Soekarno was dismissed as President and appointed Suharto as President in March 1968 (Indra, Ritonga, & Santosa, 2023).

The emergence of Soeharto as the new president of the Republic of Indonesia involved the active participation of a number of social groups and forces that were rarely heard of anymore at the end of the 60s. In Jakarta, student and youth organizations were formed with the specific aim of opposing first communism and then Sukarno. The organizations soon attracted significant supporters. Many of these groups are strongly Islamic-oriented and rely on organizations affiliated with NU or previously associated with Masyumi. Several other groups were formed by student leaders with no religious affiliation, but their political views had many similarities with the Islamic Sarikat Party (PSI). These groups played a fairly important independent role in the political process, namely by overtaking the TNI Army leadership in determining and managing propaganda and then using mass demonstrations to pressure the Soekarno government. Also in the villages new political activities emerged when NU,

Masyumi, and other party leaders, as well as youth groups mobilized the masses to suppress PKI followers and sympathizers (Chandra & Zhang, 2023).

The collapse of the Old Order and the emergence of the New Order at the end of the 1960s marked the growth of hopes for improvements in social, economic and political conditions. In this context, various groups hope for democratization in the management of state politics. The most dominant hope is a change in the pattern of power relations between the state and society. It is hoped that the political power of society will experience growth and gain a proportional place in the political and government process, especially in the context of formulating policies in the new political order. It is hoped that pluralism of power can develop to shift the Old Order government's pattern of power which tends to be accumulated and centralized (Fatah, 2000). This hope is also shared by Islamic groups who have played a large role in the process of national leadership succession towards a new era for Indonesia under the Soeharto government.

Theoretically, the relationship between religion and politics in the Sunni tradition, which is generally adhered to by Muslims in Indonesia, is basically ambiguous or ambivalent. Meanwhile, Sunni ulama often say that in Islam there is basically no separation between religion and politics. In this framework, politics is seen as an integral part of religion, and therefore Muslims do not need to stay away from politics, in fact they must take a role in politics (Azra et al., 2020). Politics is a way for Muslims to fight for Islamic interests as well as a vehicle for spreading goodness and preventing evil. From a theological perspective, Islam has been closely related to politics since the beginning of its development (Barton, Yilmaz, & Morieson, 2021). This happened, among other things, because the Prophet Muhammad, in the last almost ten years of his life, led a people who had the characteristics of a country. Over time, people with the characteristics of this state continued to develop their state characteristics and became one unit until they entered the modern century .

The dream of Islamic groups to appear to take a political role in state administration on the New Order stage cannot be separated from the doctrine that Islam is a universal religion that is not bound by time and space. Islamic teachings are a perfect and comprehensive conception, because they involve and regulate all lines of human life, both worldly and spiritual. Therefore, theologically, Islam is a system of values and teachings that are divine and transcendent. Islam regulates human life, both sacred and sacred. From a sociocultural perspective, Islam is a civilizational, cultural and social reality phenomenon in human life (Haron, Jamil, & Ramli, 2020).

As a universal religion, as believed by its adherents, Islam is indeed a complete teaching system that covers all aspects of life. However, in the realm of implementation, the teaching system still needs various interpretations in accordance with the demands of space and time. Such political ideas of Muslims, as desired and interpreted by reformists in the Middle East region, never provide a guarantee that they will be implemented among Indonesian society. One of the groups that hopes for involvement in the political arena is Masyumi. The Masyumi group, which feels that it has been treated unfairly by the Old Order

regime, really hopes to be restored to its position as a political player representing the modernist group by rehabilitating its good name (Indra et al., 2023).

Masyumi's hope of gaining recognition and involvement in the power of the New Order government certainly has sufficient grounds. Masyumi felt that it had become an important part along with coalition forces such as the military, students, student unions, other socio-religious organizations in destroying the political power of the PKI and removing Soekarno from the presidency. Masyumi estimates that Islamic groups will have the opportunity to color the national political stage which has changed eras, from the Old Order era to the New Order era. The actions of the New Order authorities in freeing political prisoners from the Masyumi group such as HAMKA, Mohammad Natsir, Syafruddin Prawiranegara, Kasman Singodimedjo, Mohammad Roem, and Prawoto Mangkusasmito further increased Masyumi's hopes of getting their good name restored (rehabilitation). As a follow-up, Masyumi formed a rehabilitation committee known as the Muslimin Charity Coordinating Board. However, this hope faded when Suharto said in 1967 that the military did not agree to restore Masyumi's good name (Rachmanto & Nabila, 2023).

The New Order government's refusal to restore Masyumi's good name was seen as an attempt to distance itself from Islamic groups. The New Order government was considered unfriendly towards Islamic movements. Problems with parties, the Marriage Law, GBHN, and religious beliefs have heated up the Islamic movement. Moreover, after so many Muslims sacrificed to win the New Order, mass slaughter of communists was inflicted on Muslim youth. With the marginalization of the Islamic movement from the political arena of the New Order, the Islamic movement was divided into various camps. In this camp there is a conformist integrationist group, namely Islamic leaders who sit in the government and the Karya Group, a non-conformist integrationist group, namely those who sit in Islamic political parties, a conformist isolationist group, namely those who do not believe in established Islamic institutions or mainstream politics but accept the social and governmental system, and non-conformist isolated groups, namely those who reject both established Islamic institutions and mainstream politics as well as social and governmental systems (Razuni, Halim, & Mulyadi, 2023).

After Masyumi failed to appear in New Order politics, the struggle of the Muslims did not stop. One of Masyumi's main figures, namely Mohammad Natsir, gathered strength. Around 1967, Mohammad Natsir invited preachers, teachers and political leaders to meet in the Tanah Abang area, Central Jakarta to discuss the formation of a new Da'wah Council. The organization was then inaugurated on May 9 1967 under the name Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII). From the start, DDII leaders made no effort to hide their belief that da'wah was both a political activity and a religious organization. The idea that religion cannot be separated from politics is of course a common statement in Islamic discourse and can be interpreted in very different ways, including in liberal ways or democratic civil ways. One of the main goals of DDII was to respond to what they and many other Muslims considered to be a serious religious disaster. The disaster in question is the conversion of a group of

Muslims to Hinduism, spiritual mysticism and even to Christianity (Mamahit, 2021).

On the other hand, apart from the rise of political movements from Islamic circles, the New Order era was also marked by the rise of movements for the renewal of Islamic thought which were spearheaded by young Islamic generations such as the Islamic Student Association (HMI), Indonesian Islamic Students (PII), and the Indonesian Islamic Youth Movement (GPII). This movement emerged as a reaction to the increasing pressure on Islamic politics and because of the realization that the arena of Islamic struggle was not only limited to the political arena, but had to be expanded to include the socio-cultural realm, better known as the Cultural Islam movement. The cultural Islamic movement was marked by the founding of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the Indonesian Muslim Scholars Association (ICMI) (Kayane, 2022).

Efforts to Confront Islamic Politics

Since its birth, the New Order attempted to emphasize national stability to build a strong government and political economy. To create strong national stability, the New Order then built a national consensus, namely trying to implement Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution in a pure and consistent manner. The New Order government understood that Pancasila was a collective agreement to serve as the basis of the state. Pancasila is an ideology or view of life together which is used as a unifying tool for the diverse Indonesian nation (Rahawarin, 2021). Pancasila is considered as a reflection of a common personality, because Pancasila gives a unique style or characteristic to the Indonesian nation. Based on Pancasila, the New Order emerged as a strong government under the main support of the military. At that time, the military had a great opportunity to dominate and control political processes in Indonesia, but they did not use it because doctrine was developing among the military to avoid the nature of military dictatorship and oligarchy (Salam, 2021).

In historical records it is known that at the end of 1965, the military succeeded in seizing power and getting rid of the Communist political forces which were quite influential in the Soekarno era, but the military was not tempted to form a military junta government (Trnquist, 2020). The New Order government did not exercise full military power even though the military was the main political force at that time. The birth of the New Order was not exactly like what happened in Latin American and African countries. In these countries, the military seized power through coups and created military junta governments. According to Subandrio, the transfer of power from Sukarno to Suharto is more appropriate to use the term crawling coup which consists of four stages, namely (1) the kidnapping of the main Army officers on October 1 1965 which was followed by the dissolution of the Dwikora cabinet by Lt. Col. Untung, (2) the dissolution of the Communist Party Indonesia by Soeharto after receiving the Eleven March Order, (3) Arrest of 16 Ministers of the Dwikora Cabinet on March 18 1966 on Soeharto's orders, (4) revocation of mandate from President Soekarno on March 7 1967 through the MPRS session chaired by General Abdul Haris Nasution (Cipta, 2020).

The inauguration of General Soeharto on March 27 1968 at the MPRS session marked the strengthening of the military as an Indonesian political force

by suppressing the two main forces on the Old Order political stage, namely Soekarno and the PKI. In running the New Order, the government did not use a guided democracy system, as was done by Soekarno during the old order, but Suharto's government was centralized where policy and decision making was centered on the President. The president and his attributes occupy the top position of the pyramid of power and make the bureaucracy or ABRI a political machine. The president has full authority to determine government bureaucracy from the central to regional levels. Most of the bureaucracy, starting from Ministers, Governors and Regents, come from Golkar loyalists and ABRI circles (Toha, 2021).

The New Order government had such methods and facilities to suppress figures and groups that were considered to be able to damage the state order it managed. The Political Laws have led Soeharto to dominate the legislative body. Likewise, the position of the judiciary has a weak position because it is easily regulated and determined by the executive commanded by Soeharto. In the international environment, since the beginning the New Order received absolute support from superpowers with liberal capitalist tendencies, especially Britain and the United States, in a relationship that is difficult to call an asymmetric-exploitative relationship. The New Order government had quite large funds as a benefit from the effects of the oil boom as well as the disbursement of large funds from tributes from entrepreneurs or state-owned funding sources/facilities outside the APBN to foundations under Soeharto's control (Farchan, n.d.).

After Soeharto felt that his position was strong both politically and economically and had received support from the international community, he took the next political steps. One of the efforts to create political stability was in 1973, through the MPR general session, the New Order government simplified political parties. The political party in question is the United Development Party (PPP), which is a fusion of Islamic-based parties, namely NU, Parmusi, PSII and Perti. Meanwhile, parties representing nationalist groups, namely PNI, Parkindo, Catholic Party, Murba Party and IPKI are under one party, namely the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). Meanwhile, Golongan Karya, which was originally called sekber Golkar, did not want to use the term party, because at that time the party's image was bad in some parts of society due to the actions of the Indonesian Communist Party (Nikmah, 2023).

Another step taken by the New Order to strengthen its political position in facing the movement of Islamic mass organizations was the implementation of the single principle of Pancasila. When forming a new cabinet in 1983, President Soeharto handed over the position of Minister of Religion to Munawir Sjadzali. This figure is known as a modernist Muslim who is accepted by all Islamic circles, especially the NU and Muhammadiyah groups. One of his tasks was to try to convince NU figures to accept Pancasila as a single principle. One of the charismatic clerics he met was K.H. As'ad, a well-known NU cleric who was famous throughout East Java and Madura Island. The Minister of Religion's efforts were successful with the release of a statement from K.H. As'ad said that implementing Pancasila is an obligation for all people. K.H.'s reputation As'ad

also spread to all provinces in Java and then spread to all corners of Indonesia. This is the key to accepting the single principle of Pancasila (Fridiyanto, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

The political interaction between the New Order government and Islam as a political force was also full of romance. There are three variants of the relationship model between the two, namely honeymoon, confrontation and accommodation. The honeymoon was marked by a celebration of the victory achieved by the Islamic group and the army after a long period of feuding with the Communist group led by the PKI. In fact, the good cooperation between Islamic groups and the army, especially the army, has destroyed the social and political power of the PKI in state relations. However, the honeymoon period did not last long, because Islamic political groups began to confront the New Order which was supported by ABRI and Golkar. The Islamic group forces represented by PPP were not given the opportunity to occupy strategic positions in the executive and judiciary. They are only allowed to have a career in the legislative body, but only in insignificant numbers. This confrontation ultimately led to the accommodation stage. When Islamic groups are not given a platform in politics, they choose another path by actively engaging in think groups that enlighten society. This movement, which is familiarly known as cultural Islam, is considered by the government to have the potential to threaten its position. Therefore, they were then embraced and approved in establishing the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI). Along the way, many ICMI figures were later involved in the New Order government.

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