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Religion, The State and Da'wa: Islamism and Modern Nation–State ² in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines the emergence of Islamism and the dynamics of relations between Islam, *da'wa* and the state in Indonesia. It particularly analyses the reasons, modalities and the extent to which these developments and dynamics have been shaped by the evolving political landscapes and systems within Indonesia. Based on extensive observation during my initial fieldwork in 2018 and subsequent research in 2021, including in–depth interviews with members of Islamist group and informed by social movement theory, this study shows that the emergence of Islamism in Indonesia can be traced back to the milieu of revivalist Muslims during a period in which early Indonesian leaders were competing to build a nation–state. Subsequently, it was gained strength within the more democratic political system after the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998. The result of the study highlights the enduring significance of the relationship for the Indonesian Islamists, who persistently committed of conducting *da'wa* in both the private and public spheres of Indonesia.

Artikel ini mengkaji munculnya Islamisme dan dinamika hubungan antara Islam, dakwah dan negara di Indonesia. Artikel ini secara khusus menganalisis alasan, cara, dan sejauh mana perkembangan dan dinamika telah dipengaruhi oleh perubahan lanskap dan sistem politik di Indonesia. Berdasarkan pengamatan yang luas selama penelitian lapangan awal saya pada tahun 2018 dan penelitian lanjutan pada tahun 2021, termasuk wawancara mendalam dengan anggota kelompok Islamis serta didukung oleh teori gerakan sosial, penelitian ini

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menunjukkan bahwa munculnya Islamisme di Indonesia dapat ditelusuri kembali pada milieu muslim revivalis selama periode dimana para pemimpin Indonesia awal bersaing untuk membangun negara bangsa. Selanjutnya, kekuatannya semakin bertambah dalam sistem politik yang lebih demokratis setelah kejatuhan rezim Orde Baru pada tahun 1998. Hasil dari penelitian ini menggarisbawahi bahwa hubungan antara Islam dan negara bagi para Islamis di Indonesia tetap menjadi isu paling penting, dan mereka tetap berkomitmen melakukan dakwah di ranah privat dan ranah publik di Indonesia.

Keywords: *Islamism; Nationalism; Muslim; Politics; Indonesia*

Introduction

Despite great advance of academic literatures on Islamism in Indonesia in recent years, studies on the emergence and growth of Islamism as an outcome of modernization and mobilization of Indonesian Muslim societies still need to be analyzed and developed. The emergence of Islamist movements in Indonesia was influenced by a response to the form of modernity brought to Indonesia during the colonial and postcolonial periods.¹ Numerous Indonesian leaders that graduated from Western educational institutions and holding visions of a modern and secular–nationalist Indonesian state and society, were part of the structure of the state established in modernity.² Their visions and reforms led to the gradual removal of Islam from the state, which led Islamic leaders from pre–colonial

¹ Said Mentak, “Islam and Modernity: Islamist Movements and the Politics of Position,” *Contemporary Islam*, Volume 3, Number 2 (July 2009), 113–119, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-008-0066-7>.

² Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor dan Muhammad Khalis Ibrahim, “From Separation Between State and Religion to Religion–Freeing State: The Changing Faces of Secularism in Turkey,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 13, Number 1 (Juni 2023), 85–114, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v13i1.85-114>.

and colonial periods to the New Order era until now have been responding critically to these changes.

This study contributes to the literature on th contexts and influences shaping the dynamics of Islamism in Indonesia. Firstly, it delves into Islamic movements during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, highlighting how Dutch colonialism contributed to a breakdown of the Islamic kingdoms that had been established a hundred years earlier. Secondly, it explains the conceptualization of the modern Indonesian state by its leaders. Thirdly, it investigates the stance of the New Order government (1966–1998) towards the Islamist factions. Lastly, it explores the evolution of the Islamist movement in the post New Order era (1998–present day), coinciding with the Indonesia’s transition to a more democratic political system.

Muslim Struggle for the Independence of Indonesia

There is a historical precedent for the contemporary Islamist struggle to implement *shariah* in both individual and public spheres. The roots of the struggle for *shariah* and Islamic values date back to the colonial period. Muslim traders from the Middle East, China and India had been present in some Indonesian islands for several centuries before Islam became established in the thirteenth century.³ These Muslim traders played an important role as a channel for disseminating Islam (*da'wa*) to the Indonesian archipelago through sea routes.⁴

At the end of Nineteenth and the beginning of Twentieth century,

³ Dong Sull Choi, “The Process of Islamization and Its Impact on Indonesia”, *Comparative Civilizations Review*, Volume 34, Number 34 (1996), 11–26.

⁴ Gerardus Willebrordus Joannes Drewes, “New Light on the Coming of Islam to Indonesia?”, *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-En Volkenkunde*, Volume 124, Number 4 (1968), 433–59, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90002862>.

Muslims played an integral role in the development of the nationalist movement in Indonesia.⁵ Nationalism was propagated, and new Islamic ideas spread through the journalists and the technological innovation of the printing press. Newspapers such as *Wazir Indie and Al-Imam* spread Islamic ideas. They promoted a shared feeling of suffering and struggle against the colonisers, and became a unifying source for nationalism through Islam.

During the beginning of the Twentieth century, Islamic leaders established several organisations that aimed to empower and enlighten Muslims in terms of their political rights, economic opportunities, and education. These included the 'proto-Islamist' *Sarekat Islam* (SI) in 1911,⁶ Muhammadiyah in 1912, *Persatuan Islam* (PERSIS) in 1923, and Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) in 1926. These organisations also implicitly demanded and mobilised support for Indonesian independence from colonial rule.⁷ Muslims played an important role in the social movements of these organisations for establishing national unity. The unity of nationality is part of a strong collectivist culture in Indonesia.⁸

A political agenda demanding the independence of the Indonesian state was most strongly expressed by the *Sarekat Islam* (SI) movement, with

⁵ Chiara Formichi, "Pan-Islam and Religious Nationalism: The Case of Kartosuwiryo and Negara Islam Indonesia", *Indonesia*, Volume 90 (2010), 125–46.

⁶ Greg Barton, Ihsan Yilmaz, and Nicholas Morieson, "Authoritarianism, Democracy, Islamic Movements and Contestations of Islamic Religious Ideas in Indonesia", *Religions*, Volume 12, Number 8 (2021), 641, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080641>.

⁷ Robert E Elson, "Disunity, Distance, Disregard: The Political Failure of Islamism in Late Colonial Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, Volume 16, Number 1 (2009), 1–60.

⁸ Nur'aini Azizah, Hamdi Muluk, dan Mirra Noor Milla, "Pursuing Ideological Passion in Islamic Radical Group's Insurgency: A Case Study of Negara Islam Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 13, Number 1 (June 2023), 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v13i1.1-27>.

the main objective of SI during 1912–1929 being to spread an Islamic form of nationalism.⁹ In contrast to the SI, Muhammadiyah and NU were more concerned with purification and Islamic education than with politics. Since their inception, the leaders of NU and Muhammadiyah were covertly involved in campaigning for nationalism, either within their respective organisations or through the SI. The Muhammadiyah and the NU were part of the Muslim struggle in pre-independence Indonesia.¹⁰

The consolidation of Islamism during Indonesian independence

The idea of the nation–state insisted on the separation of Islam from the state (such as the rejection of making Islam as the state law) and Indonesian leaders thus refused the formalisation of *shariah* as state law. Soekarno (1901–1970) and Mohammad Hatta (1902–1980) were the most prominent secularist leaders of this time, the first President and Vice President of Indonesia respectively in 1945. They asserted that the nation–state should be based on a national identity that accommodates all ethnic and religious values. Soekarno and Hatta were the leaders of the nationalist–secular party called the Indonesian National Party (PNI) which was established in 1927.

⁹ Robert E Elson, "Islam, Islamism, the Nation, and the Early Indonesian Nationalist Movement," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Volume 1, Number 2 (2007), 231–266, <https://10.15642/JIIS.2007.1.2.231-266>

¹⁰ Greg Barton, "The Gülen Movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: Progressive Islamic Thought, Religious Philanthropy and Civil Society in Turkey and Indonesia," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, Volume 25, Number 3 (2014), 287–301, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2014.916124>; Muhammad Fuad, "Civil Society in Indonesia: The Potential and Limits of Muhammadiyah", *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Volume 17, Number 2 (2002), 133–63

The main visions of this party were the establishment of a nation-state and nationalism. Soekarno emphasised that his party's objective was to secure complete independence for Indonesian people, including for non-Muslims. Soekarno, with other Western-educated intellectuals such as Mohammad Hatta and Sjahrir (1909–1966) formed a circle of secularist-nationalist intellectuals. From the 1930s onwards, Soekarno, Hatta, and Sjahrir promoted nationalism as a key tool for establishing independence.

Ideological debates between nationalist and Islamic revivalist leaders were thus unavoidable. The debates initially focused on the nature of nationalism, with the Islamic revivalists believing that it should be based on Islamic teachings, while the nationalist group thought that the diversity and heterogeneity of national values should be accommodated. In the early 1940s, the debate between these two groups shifted to the nature of the relationship between Islam and the state. In an article published in 1940, Soekarno argued for the separation of Islam from the state (1964:369–500), on the basis that the formal-legal relationship between Islam and the state.¹¹ In contrast to Soekarno, Natsir (the Masyumi) promoted the idea of unity between religion and the state.¹² Since the beginning of the 1930s, Natsir had been very active in propagating the idea that the state and religion were indivisible.¹³ Natsir's idea is typical of the general ideology of Islamism.

¹¹ Ahmad Ali Nurdin, "Revisiting Discourse on Islam and State Relation in Indonesia: The View of Soekarno, Natsir and Nurcholish Madjid," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 6, Number 1 (2016), 63–92, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v6i1.63-92>.

¹² Audrey R. Kahin, *Islam, Nationalism and Democracy: A Political Biography of Mohammad Natsir*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2012.

¹³ Al Makin, "Not a Religious State' A Study of Three Indonesian Religious Leaders on the Relation of State and Religion," *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Volume 46, Number 135 (2018), 95–116, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2017.1380279>

The momentum in the debate between these two groups increased in the run-up to Indonesian independence in 1945, as well as in the post-colonial period during 1956–1959. The first gain in momentum came at a time when Indonesians were formulating the state constitution in preparation for independence in 1945, while the second came in the formative years of the Republic of Indonesia, when they were completing and revising the constitution after the first general election in 1955.

The first meeting of the Investigating Body for the Preparation for Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI) was held on 29 May 1945. During this meeting the Islamic and nationalist groups discussed the philosophical basis and ideology of the state.¹⁴ The Islamic faction argued for the importance of inserting the clause ‘with the obligation for the adherents of Islam to practice *shari’ah* (Islamic law)’ into the constitution, while the secularist group rejected this.¹⁵ This Islamic clause became referred to as ‘the seven words’ in the so called Piagam Jakarta or “Jakarta Charter”, referring to the original Indonesian translation: ‘*dengan kewajiban menjalankan Syari’at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*’.¹⁶

At this meeting, the Islamic representatives argued that Islam should be mentioned clearly in the constitution because Muslims contributed to the independence of Indonesia. Moreover, Natsir contended that the Muslim majority had taken the greatest role in the struggle for Indonesia’s

¹⁴ Faisal Ismail, *Islam, politics and ideology in Indonesia: a study of the process of muslim acceptance of the Pancasila*, Montreal: Mcgill University, 1995.

¹⁵ Robert E Elson, “Another Look at the Jakarta Charter Controversy of 1945,” *Indonesia*, Volume 88 (October 2009), 105–130.

¹⁶ Robert E Elson, “Two Failed Attempts to Islamize the Indonesian Constitution,” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Volume 28, Number 3 (2013), 379–437, <https://doi.org/10.1355/sj28-3a>.

independence, and that an integral part of this struggle involved the objective of implementing Islamic teachings and *shari'ah* in the country.¹⁷ Moreover, the Islamic groups appealed to the fact that Muslims made up the majority of the Indonesian population, constituting 90% of it in 1945.¹⁸ In this period, the spirit to strengthen Islamic identity among Muslims was very high, and the Islamic leaders insisted that the constitution of the state should clearly mention the application of *shariah* to Muslims. They believe that this would guarantee the state would formalise it as an official state law.

On the contrary, the nationalists proposed that Indonesia should be a modern nation-state, “neutral” with respect to religious identity, but accommodating various religions, ethnicities, and traditions. They argued that the constitution should not prioritise a particular religion, ethnicity or tradition and dropped the ‘seven words’ of the Islamic clause from the constitution’s preamble. Even though the Islamic faction was unable to achieve its goal of having the ‘*shari'ah* clause’ in the constitution, this polemic had strengthened the idea of ‘Islamism’ or the use of Islam as a political ideology to Islamise the state among Muslim leaders and the unity between Islam, politics, and law.¹⁹

The Islamic organisations such as the Muhammadiyah, *Persatuan Islam* or PERSIS and the NU, established an oppositional Islamic political party in 1945 named the *Majlis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia* (the ‘Consultative

¹⁷ Yusril Ihza Mahendra, “Combining Activism and Intellectualism: The Biography of Mohammad Natsir (1908–1993),” *Studia Islamika*, Volume 2, Number 1 (1995), 117–31, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v2i1.844>.

¹⁸ Faisal Ismail, *Islam, politics and ideology in Indonesia.....*

¹⁹ Noorhaidi Hasan, “The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere,” *Contemporary Islam*, Volume 3, Number 3 (2009), 229–50, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11562-009-0096-9>.

Council of Indonesian Muslims', called *Masyumi*), whose objective was to unite as many Islamic organisations as possible and to aid the mobilization of Muslims against Western allies.²⁰ These Islamic organisations joined the *Masyumi* to win the election from secular-nationalist parties in 1955 election.²¹

Their struggle in this period thus shifted its focus from a fight against colonialism and a struggle for independence to the fight to become the strongest Islamic political party. Despite the strong legitimacy of its initial emergence and becoming a crucial participant in Indonesian politics during 1940s–1950s, Masyumi only survived until 1960. For Islamic leaders, winning in a general election and dominating the parliament and government represented another way to pursue a *shariah*-based state.²² The Islamic leaders were united on a common issue that is to introduce *shariah* into the constitution.

The Islamists in the New Order period (1966–1997)

⁵ During the New Order period (1966–1997), the Indonesian government demonstrated two different approaches towards Islamic political parties and organisations. Based on these different attitudes towards Islam, the New

²⁰ Firman Noor, "Islamic Party and Pluralism: The View and Attitude of Masyumi towards Pluralism in Politics (1945–1960)," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 54, Number 2 (2016): 273–310, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2016.542.273-310>.

²¹ Sunny Tanuwidjaja, "Political Islam and Islamic Parties in Indonesia: Critically Assessing the Evidence of Islam's Political Decline," ⁴ *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, Volume 32, Number 1 (2010), 29–49.

²² François Burgat and Louis A Delvoie, "Face to Face with Political Islam," *International Journal* Volume 58, Number 3 (2003), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755612062>.

Order government under Soeharto was divided into two periods: the early and the late period. In this section I show that, in the earlier period, the New Order government sought to prevent the growth and spread of Islamist ideology among religious movements through various restrictions and regulations, while in the later period, the regime sought to domesticate Islamist groups to gain their support and sustain the New Order government.²³ These different political opportunity structures in the early and late periods of Soeharto's presidency impacted on the *da'wa* activities and strategies chosen by both Muslim leaders and Islamic organisations.

In the early period of the New Order (1966–1985), Islamic movements and political parties were considered to be a potential threat to national ideology, unity, and the survival of the New Order regime. In this period, the government ideology of Pancasila was reaffirmed.²⁴ During this period, Soeharto also 'refused to incorporate the Jakarta Charter'²⁵, which led to it being commonly referred to as the 'authoritarian period' of Soeharto's rule. The regime attempted to restrict Islamic groups from having political roles, with Soeharto creating limitations for and depoliticising the roles of Islamic movements and political parties. Moreover, Soeharto sustained the ban on *Masyumi*, considering it to be in the pursuit for formalising *shari'ah* that challenged the modern nation–state, and also considered what so-called later Islamism as a threat. As a result of such government policy, the *da'wa*

²³ Ai Fatimah Nur Fuad, "Modernity and The Islamists Notion of Active Da'wa," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 15, Number 2 (December 2019), 187–202, <https://doi.org/10.18196/aiijis.2019.0102.187-202>.

²⁴ Asep Saepudin Jahar, "The Clash of Muslims and the State: Waqf and Zakat in Post Independence Indonesia," *Studia Islamika*, Volume 13, Number 3 (2006), 353–96, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v13i3.556>.

²⁵ Carool Kersten, *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam*, London: Hurst, 2011, 53.

activities of both Islamic leaders and organisations went underground, ceasing to hold any overt political agendas.

The government tightly controlled Islamic political organisations and ideologies, repressing any signs of Islamism.²⁶ The involvement of Islamists in political arenas was strongly restricted by the President. The Soeharto regime removed Islamist figures from leadership positions in Islamic parties.²⁷ Through these authoritarian de-politicisation strategies, the government prevented the growth of Islamist ideology spread by either Islamic *da'wa* movements or Islamic political parties. The government believed that Islamism would lead to disharmony and instability in the secular nation-state.

Within such a climate, many Muslim activists withdrew from political parties entirely, choosing instead to disseminate their political views through educational, social, and religious activities.²⁸ For instance, Natsir shifted his political activities towards *da'wa* activities.²⁹ Islamist *da'wa* can be conducted either through cultural or political approaches, so the restrictions in the political domain led Islamist figures to transform their *da'wa* movement through cultural aspects such as education and training.

Several Islamist organisations also emerged within this political context, including the Indonesian Islamic *Da'wa* Assembly (DDII), the Institution of Islamic *Da'wa* of Indonesia (LDII), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI),

²⁶ Ai Fatimah Nur Fuad, "Da'wa and Politics; Lived Experiences of the Female Islamists in Indonesia", *Contemporary Islam*, Volume 14, Number 1 (December 2020), 19–47, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-019-00442-x>.

²⁷ Robert W Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, in New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.

²⁸ Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere." *Contemporary Islam*, Number 3 (2009), 229–250.

²⁹ Yusril Ihza Mahendra, "Combining Activism and Intellectualism".....

and the *Tarbiyah* movement.³⁰ They emerged during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s when there was no context for doing political activity. Their emergence marked the moment of new Islamist discourse of *da'wa*. The emergence of these Islamic social movements, however, cannot be separated from the development of *da'wa* in global Muslim society.³¹

Social and political stabilisation became the main concern of the government at this time and this resulted in the *da'wa* activities of Islamic organisations being excluded from the public sphere.³² *Da'wa* and other religious activities were held for limited audiences and in private places such as members' own houses (Interview, 1). According to the leaders of the HTI and the *Tarbiyah* movement, this underground phenomenon of *da'wa* was experienced by both these groups (Interview, 2).

The late period of the New-Order government (1986-1997) showed a more accommodating policy towards Islamic activists than the early period, not only towards the modernist and traditionalist groups, but also towards those who expressed an Islamist character. Islamic movements had, to some extent, found ways to integrate themselves into the New Order's policy.³³ The fact that the Muslim population comprised more than 85% of the overall

³⁰ Masdar Hilmy, *Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia: Piety and Pragmatism*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010.

³¹ Asef Bayat, "Islamism and Social Movement Theory," *Third World Quarterly*, Volume 26, Number 6 (2005), 891-908, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500089240>.

³² Noorhaidi Hasan, "Religious Diversity and Blasphemy Law: Understanding Growing Religious Conflict and Intolerance in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 55, Number 1 (2017), 105-126, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.551.105-126>.

³³ Bahtiar Effendy, *Islam and the State in Indonesia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003, 195.

population of Indonesia was seen as having a new significance for the state. In this phase, the government thus tried to accommodate Islamists. The policy was regarded as representing a 'turn to Islam', a process started by mobilising Islamists at the end of the 1980s.³⁴

The accommodative attitude toward Islamists was shown by the government's approval of the foundation of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) in December 1990 in Jakarta.³⁵ The establishment of the ICMI showed that the government had neutralised their previous attitudes towards Islamism. Another sign that the government was accommodating Islamists was the close relations that they built with conservative Islamist *da'wa* organisations such as the DDII and the Indonesian Committee for Islamic World Solidarity (KISDI) during 1995–1996.³⁶

This change in the political context and opportunities also led to the emergence of new Islamic social and *da'wa* movements and the diversification of *da'wa* approaches. Instead of focusing on formal political activities, many Muslim activists began to engage in socially and culturally-oriented Islam. Various discourses on the implementation of Islam in daily lives started to gain popularity in this period. Thus, *da'wa* at the individual level started to grow again and diversify in this period. These social and *da'wa* movements were primarily initiated by educated middle-class Muslims from secular universities (Interview 3). By the 1990s, they were actively

³⁴ Robert W Hefner, "Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia.", 167.

³⁵ Robert W Hefner, "Islam, State, and Civil Society: ICMI and the Struggle for the Indonesian Middle Class," *Indonesia*, Number 56 (1993), 1–35, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3351197>.

³⁶ Martin Van Bruinessen, "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Soeharto Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* Volume 10, Number 2 (2003), 117–154, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5367/000000002101297035>.

promoting the idea of Islamisation and calling for the return to pristine Islam. Their *da'wa* and religious activities could now be performed in this political context.

However, although Islamists had come to be viewed as a source of potential support for the Soeharto regime rather than as a threat during this later period, the policies that Soeharto's regime created to accommodate them were based in his belief that they would support him in the 1997 election. This policy is a partial effort to accommodate Islam, in which Islamic legitimacy was being experimented by the regime in order to retain control.³⁷ The Soeharto regime used more Islamic symbols itself and issued more Islamic policies.

In this second period of its rule, the Soeharto government strategy was thus to domesticate Islamists rather than to restrict their practices. The 1990s were considered as a crucial phase for Soeharto's regime to secure its political power. Islamic organisations, including Islamists, were expected to be new allies to support and sustain the government. The government's decision to behave more accommodatingly towards the Islamists was thus driven by the weakness of Soeharto's regime. The regime's need to curtail the growing criticism of its corrupt, collusive, and nepotistic practices.³⁸

The Prospects for Islamist movements

President Habibie, who was appointed after Soeharto's fall in 1998, announced the liberalisation of Indonesia's political system. This new political liberalisation partially resulted from the fact that Habibie was a civilian president who lacked strong support from the military, and thus

³⁷ Bachtiar Effendy, *Islam and the State in Indonesia.....*

³⁸ Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam:".....

needed support from the Muslim population and its various interest groups to retain his power.³⁹ His policy created a political atmosphere conducive towards a free and democratic political system. The Habibie regime allowed all political and ideological groups to participate and compete in open political processes. As a result, numerous political parties with varying ideologies and objectives sprang up between June and August in 1998, only a month after the fall of the Soeharto regime in May.⁴⁰

Islamist groups saw this new political system as a great opportunity to establish a variety of *da'wa* organisations and political parties with Islamism as their main ideology. These social organisations and political parties played a role in implementing their religious and political programmes. Thus, in this era, the Islamist presence within the public sphere was much more obvious than it had been in the final period of the New Order. Their emergence indicated that they already had the agenda to be involved in public affairs and politics in either direct or indirect ways.⁴¹ Some of these Islamists engaged in political struggles through Islamic political parties such as the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). While others did so through Islamic organisations such as FPI, HTI, MMI, the Communication Forum of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* (FKAWJ), and the Indonesian Committee for Solidarity

³⁹ ² Marcus Mietzner, *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia: From Turbulent Transition to Democratic Consolidation*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009.

⁴⁰ ² Masdar Hilmy, *Islamism and democracy in Indonesia.....*

⁴¹ Sunny Tanuwidjaja, "Political Islam and Islamic Parties in Indonesia: Critically Assessing the Evidence of Islam's Political Decline." ⁴ *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, Volume 32, Number 1 (2010), 29–49.

of the Islamic World (KISDI).⁴²

The afore-mentioned Islamic non-government organisations were very active in developing their *da'wa* programmes, primarily in campaigning for the formalisation of *shari'ah* in the state. The main aim of the establishment of the FPI soon after the collapse of the regime in 1998 was to conduct *da'wa*. They claim to seek 'to command the truth and prevent sin (*al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa an-nahy 'an al-munkar*)'.⁴³ The founder of the FPI—Habib Rizieq Syihab — stated that 'it was primarily founded for the purpose of supporting the implementation of *shari'ah*'.⁴⁴

The FPI approached members of parliament and Islamic political parties to implement *shari'ah* and other Islamic teachings in public life, and their *da'wa* movements within Indonesia's public sphere became highly visible, being frequently covered by the national media. They attracted the media and people's attention because public places that were considered as being against *shari'ah*, such as cafes and night clubs were attacked and destroyed by the FPI. In addition, other Islamic groups such as the *Ahmadiyah*, *Syi'ah*, and the Islam Liberal Network also became the targets of their public disciplinary form of *da'wa*, as these groups were regarded as

⁴² Noorhaidi Hasan, "Islamist Party, Electoral Politics and Da'wah Mobilization among Youth: The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Volume 6, Number 1 (2012), 17–47.

⁴³ Chaider S Bamualim, "Islamic Militancy and Resentment against Hadhramis in Post-Suharto Indonesia: A Case Study of Habib Rizieq Syihab and His Islamic Defenders Front," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Volume 31, Number 2 (2011), 267–81, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x-1264226>.

⁴⁴ Chaider S Bamualim, "Islamic Militancy and Resentment against Hadhramis in Post-Suharto Indonesia:"....., 273.

being 'deviants' and 'non-Islamic'.⁴⁵

Like the FPI, the HTI was re-launched publicly in this transitional era. The spokesperson of HTI (Ismail Yusanto) explained that the HTI has conducted *da'wa* activities and programmes since the 1980s, but because of the limitations and regulations of the New Order regime during the 1980s, this revolutionary but non-violent organisation arranged their programmes secretly for their loyal members, only beginning public activities after the fall of the authoritarian regime.⁴⁶ The core idea behind the establishment of the HTI was to re-build the Islamic caliphate (*khilafah Islamiyah*).⁴⁷ HTI is categorized as an utopian Islamism because "they are obsessed with establishing an ideal state of being and an ideal community based on religion."⁴⁸ The HTI believes that Islam, as practiced by the Prophet and his companions (*sahabat*), is the system that should be implemented by all Muslims in the world, including in Indonesia.

Another Islamic organisation that was founded after Soeharto's fall was the Communication Forum of *Ahl Sunnah wa Al Jama'ah* (FKAWJ). It was founded by Ja'far Umar Talib in February 1999. Its establishment was motivated by the political and economic crisis in 1998. This forum promoted *shari'ah* as the solution for multi-layered crisis. FKAWJ was also concerned with supporting Muslims who were engaged in conflict with Christians in

⁴⁵ Ahmad Ali Nurdin, "Islam and State: A Study of the Liberal Islamic Network in Indonesia, 1999-2004," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume 7, Number 2 (2005), 20.

⁴⁶ Jamhari dan Jahroni, *Gerakan salafi radikal di Indonesia*, Rajawali Press, Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2004.

⁴⁷ Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb Al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate*, London: Grey Seal, 1996.

⁴⁸ Masdar Hilmy, *Islamism and democracy in Indonesia*.....,8.

areas like Ambon.⁴⁹

In August 1999 Abu Bakar Ba'asyir launched MMI, who actively opposing the government for being secular and anti-Islam. Ba'asyir was banned from forming any political organisations by the Soeharto government because of his criticisms.⁵⁰ He left for Malaysia claiming that Indonesia was no longer conducive to his *da'wa* movement. After the fall of the regime, Ba'asyir returned to Indonesia and established a new organisation for continuing his *da'wa* movement.⁵¹ The previous government, led by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014), considered Ba'asyir to be involved in many radical Islam movements.

Although these organisations have different characters, they share the *da'wa* tendency to Islamise the state, from promoting the formalisation of *shari'ah* to adopting a literal understanding of Islam. They believe that Muslims should practise only the pure and pristine Islam implemented by the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions (*Salaḥ*). Variety of *da'wa* movements and activities performed by Islamic organisations address different groups of Muslims.⁵² Nevertheless, these organisations exert only a

⁴⁹ Birgit Bräuchler, "Islamic Radicalism Online: The Moluccan Mission of the Laskar Jihad in Cyberspace," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, Volume 15, Number 3 (2004), 267–285, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1835-9310.2004.tb00098.x>.

⁵⁰ Akh Muzakki, "The Roots, Strategies, and Popular Perception of Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Volume 8, Number 1 (2014), 1–22, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2014.8.1.1-22>.

⁵¹ Martin Van Bruinessen, "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism".....

⁵² Johan Meuleman, "Dakwah, Competition for Authority, and Development," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-En Volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, Volume 167, Number 2–3 (2011), 236–69, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003591>.

limited influence among Indonesian Muslims.⁵³ The new type of *da'wa* movement which is more active and aggressive has attracted only small numbers of Muslims, who are generally young and from urban and secular educational backgrounds.

The new Islamic organisations above are only some examples of organisations that were established in Indonesia after the fall of the Soeharto regime. These groups have sought to create a better climate for their political, social and religious expressions. They regard the Habibie period as the time to speak up for their rights and freedoms. The *Tarbiyah* movement was one of the organisations that took advantage of the 1998 to build an Islamist party, named the Prosperous Party (PK).⁵⁴ It then changed its name to the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in 2004. This more democratic political setting provided the movements with an enlarged public space to advance its religious and political views and communicate its *da'wa* messages to Indonesian audiences.

Conclusion

The idea of Islamism arose among revivalist Muslims in a period in which Indonesian leaders were competing to establish a nation–state. The rising voices of those campaigning for ‘secular’ nation–states in the pre–independence period caused the crystallisation of Islamist ideas. Islamic leaders were concerned with the place of *shari'ah* and Islamic identity in the state, and inevitably there were contests between secularist and Islamic groups over the appropriate form that the state should take. The emergence

⁵³ Azyumardi Azra, “Indonesian Islam; Lessons to Learn: some Impacts on Indonesia Social Political Life”, *Conference paper for the EU–Indonesia Conference on Islam in a Globalizing World*, 2010.

⁵⁴ Ai Fatimah Nur Fuad, “*Da'wa* and Politics”

⁶
Title: ... (full names of author)

of Islamism in Indonesia appeared as a response of the revivalists to the modernisation programmes of the government. They perceived it as replacing *shari'ah* with Western political, legal and economic systems.

The relationship between Islam and the state has continued to be the most important issue contested by Islamists, ⁵ from the Old Order to the New Order government. The Islamists remain committed to the necessity of applying *shari'ah* as state law and has become their main *da'wa* message.

Islamists believe that in the colonial period, Islam became the main symbol of resistance to the oppressors. Islamist figures preferred to use a cultural approach to deliver their *da'wa* messages under the repressive New Order government as they were forbidden to conduct their *da'wa* in the political domain. The government was suspicious of them, regarding Islamism as a threat to the Indonesian modern nation-state. For this reason, many Islamist figures not only changed their political approaches, but also transformed the *da'wa* messages to individual piety. However, the Islamic social organisations established by these Islamic figures received more space within the public sphere when the New Order government needed their political support to counter the threats from military figures that they faced at the end of the 1980s.

Islamist ideologies were developed and implemented more thoroughly within the more democratic political system that emerged after the downfall of the New Order in Indonesia in 1998, marking the beginning of the democratisation process in Indonesia. In this period, many significant changes in Indonesia's social and political systems including the emergence of new organisations and political parties. Thus, the Islamists saw it as an opportunity to play a more significant role in public life.

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