JIUBJ

Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi, 22(3), Oktober 2022, 1918-1922
Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat universitas Batanghari Jambi
ISSN 1411-8939 (Online), ISSN 2549-4236 (Print)
DOI 10.33087/jiubj.v22i3.2333

The ICMI (Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals) and Its Political Tendency during the Indonesian New Order

Imron Rosidi
Universitas Isam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau
Correspondence email: imronrosidi@gmail.com

Abstrak. Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia (ICMI) yang didirikan pada 7 Desember 1990 adalah organisasi penting dan cukup populis pada masa akhir Orde Baru. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan tendensi politis dari ICMI dalam politik Islam di Indonsia. Artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan sejarah dari dokuen-dokumen yang tersedia seperti artikel, buku dan lain-lain. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa Pendirian ICMI dalam perkembangannya digunakan oleh anggotanya sebagai alat politik. Antara Negara (pemerintahan Orde Baru) dan ICMI memilki hubungan saling menguntungkan. Pada satu sisi dengan adanya ICMI, kelompok Muslim yang tergabung dalam ICMI lebih mudah mempromosikan nilai-nilai keislaman ke Negara sehingga Negara diharapkan lebih islami. Pada sisi yang lain, Negara Orde Baru memanfaatkan ICMI sebagai alat politik. Orde Baru merangkul kelompok Muslim ke dalam ICMI untuk menyokong keberlangsungan kekuasaan politik Orde Baru.

Kata kunci : ICMI; Tendensi Politik; Orde Baru.

Abstract. *The Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), which was founded on 7 December 1990, was an important and quite populist organization during the end of the New Order. This article aims to explain the political tendencies of ICMI in Islamic politics in Indonesia. This article uses a historical approach from available documents such as articles, books and others. This article finds that the establishment of ICMI in its development was used by its members as a political tool. Between the State (the New Order government) and ICMI have a mutually beneficial relationship. On the one hand, with the existence of ICMI, Muslim groups who are members of ICMI are easier to promote Islamic values to the State so that the State is expected to be more Islamic. On the other hand, the New Order State used ICMI as a political tool. The New Order embraced Muslim groups into ICMI to support the continuation of the New Order's political power.*

Keywords **:** *ICMI; Political Tendency; New Order.*

INTRODUCTION

Political developments during the New Order era were marked by restrictions and pressures. Political freedom is not allowed because the government has a stability agenda for economic growth. The Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), which was founded on December 7, 1990, was an important and quite populist organization during the end of the New Order. Hisanaro Kato mentioned two reasons why ICMI was considered an important organization at that time. First, ICMI has played an important role in social and cultural areas in Indonesia. This can be seen from ICMI's role in initiating the establishment of BMT (Baitul Mal wa Tamwil) and succeeded in building 651 BMTs in 24 provinces throughout Indonesia in 1996. ICMI also succeeded in establishing a national Islamic news newspaper, Republika (Kato, 2002). Second, at the political level, many ICMI members have been members of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) since 1992. In fact, some of the ICMI members were later elected by Suharto as ministers in his government (Kato, 2002). Some scholars view the birth of the ICMI as a corrective measure of the New Order government, which had a preference for the Muslim group. This opinion is represented by R. William Liddle (1999) explains: “
perhaps half a million members of the PKI or its affiliated labour, farmer, youth, student, women’s, and other organization were killed in the aftermath of the assassination of six senior army generals on 1 October 1965. Many of these killing were carried out spontaneously by civilians, particularly the religiously devout …but the armed forces, effectively headed after I October by Major General Soeharto, played a key role in stimulating and organizing the massacre.”

In this regard, the New Order's policy was in line with the concept of “Religious Functionalization Process” proposed by Gregory Starret. Starret (1998) stated that the process of functionalization of religion consists of three levels: “On an institutional level, independent local religious study circles are brought under the control of central or district government bureaucracies to act as tools of mass socialization. On a logistical level, formal religious studies curricula are fashioned by educators, and the formal testing patrols the borders of class mobility. On a philosophical level, ancient rituals and beliefs as well as the facts of history are reinterpreted to underscore political legitimacy, or are brought to bear on social concerns like public health, economic productivity, and crime.”

From Gregory Starret's explanation above, a common thread can be drawn that the dominance of the role of the State is believed to be seen in the establishment of ICMI. In this process, the establishment of ICMI can be categorized at the institutional level.

Thus, ICMI was established as a symbol for the homogenization of Muslim groups for the political interests of the New Order, which brought the issue of national development as a national discourse. Howard M. Frederspiel (1991) said that the New Order government demanded the loyalty of intellectual groups. In that context, Muslim intellectuals are expected to support the policies of the New Order government for the advancement of economic development. Thus every social organization in Indonesia at that time, according to Frederspiel (1991: 16) "[...] should seek to further national goals, not attempt to assert narrow religious values on the nation itself, for that would ruin development."

This paper attempts at studying the political tendency of the ICMI in Indonesian politics. This article argues that, by estabishing an Islamic organization called ICMI (Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals), its members used the ICMI as a political instrument to gain power. Because of the intensive interaction among members of the ICMI, their political agenda cannot be easily elucidated from their discussions and missions. Regarding the establishment of ICMI, this study believes that between the State (the New Order government) and ICMI there is a mutually beneficial relationship. On the one hand, with the existence of ICMI, Muslim groups who are members of ICMI are easier to promote Islamic values to the State so that the State is expected to be more Islamic. On the other hand, the New Order State used ICMI as a political tool. The New Order embraced Muslim groups into ICMI to support the continuation of the New Order's political power.

METHODS

This article uses a qualitative method with a historical approach. History as stated by E.H Carr is "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past". Every historical researcher holds the principle of the importance of historical facts. History researchers live in the present (present) while historical facts live in the past (past). A historical fact (past) will not be meaningful without an interpretation by historical researchers (present). Thus, history is the result of interpretation work carried out by historical researchers on historical facts. This is in line with the opinion of E.H Carr (1981: 30) as follows: The historians starts with a provisional selection of facts, and a provisional interpretation in the light of which that selection has been made- by others as well as by himself. As he works, both the interpretation and the selection and ordering of facts undergo subtle and perhaps partly unconscious changes, through the reciprocal action of one or the other. And this reciprocal action also involves reciprocity between present and past, since the historian is part of the present and facts belong to the past. The historian and the facts of history are necessary to one another. The historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless"

Thus historical research is a tug of war between data and interpretation. The first is related to the context of the past, while the second is related to the logic of the present. Connecting the past with the present in a logical manner requires a chronological frame of mind so that interpretations of historical facts can be easily accepted. Therefore, in this study, historical facts about ICMI will be analyzed or interpreted chronologically. This research is not based on location but based on historical sources in the form of text (books, journals, newspapers and magazines) and digital (electronic media and internet). Thus, the location of this research can be anywhere (anywhere). As a historical research, this research relies on historical sources in the form of articles from journals and books as the main data source. While the mass media (magazines or newspapers) both printed and electronic are used as secondary data sources. To collect data about ICMI, researchers will collect data with a digital base approach, namely using digital media (internet) to search for articles in journals (National and International) and collecting data manually by visiting a number of libraries in Riau. According to Usman Rianse and Abdi (2008), basically there are two data analysis techniques that are often used in research, namely qualitative analysis techniques: this technique is very appropriate to be used to analyze qualitative data. This analysis technique uses inductive logic, that is, conclusions are drawn after the facts and data are displayed. Second, quantitative analysis techniques: this technique is usually used to analyze data in the form of numbers. Based on the explanation above, this research uses qualitative analysis techniques, not quantitative ones.

THE ICMI'S POLITICAL TENDENCY

The hegemony of the state began when Soeharto coerced his enemies by using the armed forces as his main base of support. He continued to strengthen his political power by strictly regulating the Muslim activists in Indonesia. Liddle observed that this began in the late 1960s and continued until the mid-1980s. Liddle (1999 :48) writes: "Muslim daily newspaper were closed down or taken over." And even, preachers in Mosques were closely watched and subjected to interrogation. In its developmental stage the organization contributed significantly to Indonesian politics during the New Order period. The fact that many of the ICMI members got important positions during the New Order period proves this.Taufik Abdullah (1996) wrote:ts birth, nonetheless, reflects prevailing intellectuals and political spheres that have been emerging in Indonesia in two last decades. The latest political events-the general election, the re-election of President Soeharto, and the formation

of the new cabinet-have emphasized the political significance of the emergence of ICMI.

In Indonesian politics, this process was called as " *penghijauan*" (greening) (Hefner, 1997). It is a political term indicating that many Muslims were playing more prominent roles in Indonesian politics. It can be seen from the fact that there many Muslims were appointed as members of the Indonesian people's consultative assembly (DPR), reflecting the political clout of the ICMI. Therefore, it can be assumed that there was a political tendency in the ICMI. There were at least two factors. The first factor is that there was a the ICMI members felt a need to get support from the state in order to enhance Islamic values both in the state and in society . It is not surprising that some of the founders of this organization were ex-Masyumi members and "[...] many of them long-standing critics of the New Order's policies toward Islam and even of the regime itself" (Liddle, 1999).

The ICMI thus was a comfortable place for those who wanted to islamize the state. This is because by joining the power structure, they could implement their ambitions more easily than from outside the state structure. Therefore, most of Muslim intellectuals did not choose Nurcholis Madjid or another well-known Musim intellectual to be the General Chairman of the organization, but chose Habibie instead, who did not have a history of Islamic activism. Habibie had a close relationship with Soeharto while Nurcholish Madjid and other Muslim intellectuals did not have a close relationship with the government. With Habibie as the General Chairman of the ICMI, Muslim intellectuals believed that he could tame the New Order regime. As a result, the New Order administration was not suspicious towards the Muslim group. It is clear that the election of Habibie as the General Chairman of ICMI was based on political values, rather than other reasons.

Moreover, Soeharto allowed some Islamic programmes to be implemented together with other (national) programmes. This can be seen from the ICMI programme supported by Soeharto. The publication of the Islamic newspaper, *Republika,* is only one example of this programme. This Islamic newspaper is published in order to counter 'secular' newspapers such as *Kompas* and *Suara Pembaruan.* Therefore, many Islamic scholars viewed that the birth of the ICMI as symbolic of the islamization of bureaucracy. Dawam Rahardjo agreed that there was a process of islamization. He said that the evidence for this included the granting of increased facilities for religious activities, the absence of discrimination against pious civil servants, and the incorporation of religious values in the development process (Rahardjo, 1995).

If Maimuna Huq (1999) demonstrated that "[…] print in contemporary Bangladesh is Islamizing secular discourse", it can be connected with the motive of some members of the ICMI, which was to islamize the New Order government. Although the ICMI is not a political party, its role was as significant as that of Islamic parties. Its members greatly influenced the New Order government's policy towards Muslim society. Zaim Uchrowi and Usman Ks (2000) explained some successful examples of the ICMI programme. One of these examples was the establishment of the Indonesian *Sharia Bank* or *Bank Muamalat Indonesia* (BMI). Habibie, the General Chairman of the ICMI, promoted the idea of the establishment of *Bank Muamalat Indonesia* (BMI) to Soeharto. Although the economics cabinet was dominated by non-Muslim people, the Indonesian *Sharia Bank* or BMI was established successfully. Shortly after the establishment of the BMI, the New Order government established other *Sharia* banks. For example, *Bank Syariah Mandiri* (BSM) or *Mandiri Sharia Bank, BNI Syariah, BPR Syariah,* and so on.

Because the role of the ICMI in Indonesian politics was very significant, many people joined the ICMI in order to get political power. By joining the ICMI, people thought that they would be recruited and get a government position. Many civil servants joined the ICMI either in order to hold their position or to get promoted. The reason people joined the ICMI can be seen in the survey done by Yudi Latif. In his survey, twenty-nine percent of respondents admitted that by joining the ICMI they could further their careers. It meant that the ICMI was seen as an important vehicle for developing their career (Latf, 2004).

The second factor in the political tendency of the ICMI is that the New Order government needed political support from Muslims. In the Muslim societies, the government always tries to manipulate Islamic symbols in order to get political power. Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) writes that in Egypt, the government elite "[…] have depended on the the 'ulama for religious legitimacy. But, as elsewhere, they have often also made efforts to restrict the power of the 'ulama […]."Zaman's description has similar validity in Indonesian Islam, especially under the New Order government. One of the New Order government's efforts was permitting the establishment of the ICMI. It is true that this association was formed by Muslim intellectuals. However, if there was no support from the state, the ICMI would not survive.

In this case, Robert W. Hefner (1997) is accurate in saying that the involvement of Muslim intellectuals was the decisive factor rather than the initiative of the students from Brawijaya University. The role of Imaduddin Abdurrahim, for instance, was very important. He enjoined the students to be more active, in order to realize the idea as soon as possible. However, Soeharto's decision was the most important factor among the other factors. Because Soeharto also wanted support from the Indonesian military for his political step, he gave a number of military who had a close

relationship with the ICMI top positions within the armed forces. Lieutenant General Hartono, for instance, was installed as a replacement for Liutenant General Hariyoto, who was very critical of the ICMI. Lieutenant General Hartono said that the ICMI was important unifying the Muslim community. According to him, the ICMI was needed to support national development (Rasyid, 1995). Hartono's statement indicated his support of the ICMI, and it caused his career in the military to flourish. In this sense, Soeharto gave unprecedented political support to the ICMI.

Furthermore, Habibie as the General Chairman of the ICMI became a strong lobbyist representing the ICMI's interests. Some politicians who had a close relationship with the Muslim group were nominated by Habibie to be given strategic positions in the New Order regime. Soeharto gave more space to the ICMI's interests in the Golkar when there was a national congress in 1993. This government party's congress became an arena of rivalry between the military and the ICMI members. Since the rise of the New Order, the General Chairman of Golkar always came from the military wing. It is hardly remarkable that six months before this national congress was held, General Edi Sudrajad said that one of the military members should be nominated to be the General Chairman of Golkar in the upcoming congress. The military group prepared three candidates to be the General Chairman of Golkar. They were Lieutenant General Harsudiono Hartas (ABRI's former of Chief of Staff for Social and Political Affairs), General Soesilo Soedarman (the Coordinating Minister of Politics and Defence), and General Try Sutrisno (the Vice President and former Commander of Armed Forces). However, Habibie as the General Chairman of the ICMI, nominated Harmoko to be the candidate for General Chairman of Golkar. This nomination prevented the military's nominating a candidate. Harmoko thus became the only candidate for General Chairman of Golkar. Harmoko ultimately became the General Chairman of Golkar. For the first time the General Chairman of Golkar was not from the military.

This political victory was very crucial for the ICMI, in light of the presidential succession in 1998. This was because the General Chairman of Golkar would be responsible for the process of presidential succession. Because the General Chairman of Golkar came from the ICMI's group, it indicated that the political privilege in the Golkar had shifted from the military to the ICMI. Therefore, in the presidential succession in 1998, the ICMI managed its political role easily. It is not surprising that, in the presidential succession in 1998, Golkar nominated Habibie to be the Vice President. This nomination would be very crucial to the ICMI in its further struggle in Indonesian politics. Soeharto was too old to remain President. Therefore, in the presidential succession in 1998, the role of his Vice President would be significant. The impact of this nomination was that Habibie replaced Soeharto.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of ICMI at the end of the New Order era became an important marker for the efforts of the government and a group of political elites to use Islam as a political tool. The New Order government tried to embrace Muslims to perpetuate its power which was starting to fade at that time. Meanwhile a number of Muslim elites who claim to be Muslim intellectuals desire to occupy important positions in government through ICMI. This shows that in the old age of each regime, efforts continue to be made to extend its power. It is just that the tools and groups used by each regime are different.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, Taufik, 1996. The Formation of a New Paradigm? A Sketch on Contemporary Islamic Discourse, *Toward a New Paradigm:Recent Developments in Indonesian Islamic Thought*, Mark R. Woodward (ed), Arizona:Arizona State University.

Carr, E.H. 1981. *What Is History?* Newyork : Penguin Book.

Federspiel, Howard M., 1991. Muslim Intellectuals and Indonesia's National Development, *Asian Survey*, 31(3)

Federspiel, Howard M., 1998. *Indonesia in Transition : Muslim Intellectuals and National Development,* New York: Nova.

Hefner, Robert W. 1997. Islamization and Democratization in Indonesia, *Islam in an Era of Nation States,* Robert W. Hefner and Patricia Horvatich (ed) , Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press.

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

Huq, Maimuna. 1999. From Piety to Romance Islam, *New Media in the Muslim World : The Emerging of Public Sphere,* Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson(ed), Bloomington&Indianapolis:Indiana University Press.

Kato, Hisanori. 2000. *Agama dan Peradaban: Islam dan Terciptanya Masyarakat Demokratis yang Beradab di Indonesia,* Jakarta : Dian Rakyat.

Liddle, R. William. 1999. Regime:The New Order, *Indonesia Beyond Soeharto:Polity, Economy, Society Transition,*. Donald K. Emmerson(ed), Armonk etc:An East Gate Book.

Latif, Yudi. 2000. *Intelegensia Muslim dan Kuasa : Genealogi Intelegensia Muslim Indonesia Abad ke-20,* Bandung : Mizan, 2005.

Rahardjo, Dawam. 1995. *Visi dan Misi Kehadiran ICMI: Sebuah Pengantar* dalam ICMI antara Status Quo daan Demokratisasi, ed. Nasrullah Ali-Fauzi, Bandung : Mizan.

Rianse, Usman & Abdi. 2008. *Metodologi Penelitian Sosial dan Ekonomi : Teori dan Aplikasi*, Bandung : Alfabeta.

Starret, Gregory. 1998. *Putting Islam to Work; Education, Politics and Religious Transformation in Egypt*, London: University of California Press.

Uchrowi, Zaim and Usman Ks. 2000. *ICMI Bergerak : Lintasan 10 Tahun Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia* , Jakarta: Republika.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam:Custodians of Change*,. Princeton ,etc: Princeton University Press.