

Ulema and Politics in Indonesia in the Perspective of Hamka

Heri Herdiawanto¹, Valina Singka Subekti², Yasmi Adriansyah³
{heriherdiawanto@yahoo.co.id¹}

Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia^{1,2}
Universitas Al Azhar, Indonesia³

Abstract. The phenomenon of election of the President of Indonesia in 2019 has brought the chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Ma'ruf Amin stepped forward as vice president in pairs with Joko Widodo (Jokowi). With the pros and cons during his nomination process up to the stage of presidential election results for the 2019-2024 period, it is interesting to study in the context of the role of ulema in political arena. Amin has the background of Nahdatul Ulama which is accommodating with practical political power and even willing to participate in the election as vice president who was carried out by a coalition of Islamic nationalist and secular parties. On the contrary, Hamka as the first chairman of MUI from 1975-1981 had a Muhammadiyah background and was not even reluctant to go against when democratic principles and religious values were ignored by political power regimes. Hamka experienced a number of political incidents, including accusations of treason, which led to imprisonment without trial in the Old Order, and resigned from the position of MUI chairman due to the case of Christmas joint-celebration in the New Order period. Hamka as a cleric held the view that politics is part of worship when it is intended to benefit the people and seek the pleasure of Allah SWT. Based on this phenomenon, this study proposes the research question, "What is the view of Hamka about the relationship between Ulema and Politics in Indonesia?".

Keywords: Islam, Hamka, Ulema, Politics, Democracy, Indonesia.

1 Introduction

Indonesia has recently completed the direct presidential election in 2019 and the winner pair –Joko Widodo (Jokowi) as president and Ma'ruf Amin as vice president– was inaugurated in October for the 2019-2024 service period. There is an interesting phenomenon in the election, which was in the form of the political role of the *ulema* (Muslim cleric) who had a strategic place and even was almost dominant in the national political discourse from the nomination until his election. Such conditions make the discourse of religious and state relations or religious and political relations, especially Islamic and Political debates are relevant again [1].

There were pros and cons during the nomination process up to the stage of the election results for the 2019-2024 period. Amin, who has been serving as the chairman of MUI prior to his election until 2020, has been accommodating with practical political power and therefore was willing to contest in the election through the nomination by a coalition of Islamic nationalist and secular parties.

On the other hand, another figure named Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah), who was the first chairman of the MUI (1975-1981) and had a Muhammadiyah background, was not

even reluctant to go against the political power regimes when democratic principles and religious values were ignored.

Hamka was a modernist and activist figure of Muhammadiyah. He was a self-taught figure and had a variety of expertise, namely a poet, journalist, scholar and writer and Masyumi politician. Hamka carried out investigations covering various fields of science such as philosophy, literature, history, sociology, politics of Islam or the Western version. With his high Arabic language proficiency, he was able to investigate the work of scholars and great poets in the Middle East such as Zaki Mubarak, Jurji Zaidan, Abbas al-Aqqad, Mustafa al-Manfaluti, Jamaluddin al Afghani, Abduh, Rashid Ridha and Husein Haikal. Through Arabic as well, he researched the work of French, English and German scholars such as Albert Camus, William James, Sigmund Freud, Arnold Toynbee, Jean Sartre, Karl Marx and Pierre Loti.

In 1946 Hamka was elected as Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Leadership Council in West Sumatra by the Muhammadiyah Conference replacing S. Y. Sutan Mangkuto. Hamka played a role in rearranging development in the 31st Muhammadiyah Congress in Jogjakarta in 1950. In 1953, Hamka was chosen as an Advisor to the Muhammadiyah Central Executive. Hamka's work began as a religious teacher in 1927 at Tebing Tinggi Plantation, Medan and a religious teacher in Padang Panjang in 1929. Hamka was later appointed as a lecturer at the Islamic University, Jakarta and Muhammadiyah University, Padang Panjang from 1957 to 1958. After that, he was appointed Chancellor of Islamic Higher Education, Jakarta and Professor of Mustopo University, Jakarta. From 1951 to 1960, he was appointed as a High Religion Officer by the Indonesian Minister of Religion, but placed a position when Sukarno gave him two choices of equal importance, being a civil servant or active in politics at the Indonesian Muslim Shura Council (Masyumi) [2].

Besides being active in Indonesia, Hamka was also active at the level of international relations / International Forum. In 1950, he visited Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon to discuss matters relating to Islam. In 1952, he traveled to the United States for four months at the invitation of the American government. In 1954, Hamka visited Burma as a representative of the Indonesian government in the context of the 2000 year celebration of the Buddha. Then, in 1958, he accompanied the Islamic seminar in Lahore Pakistan and in 1967 Hamka was a guest of the Malaysian kingdom. On July 26, 1975, the Indonesian Minister of Religion, Mukti Ali, installed Hamka as the first General Chair of the Indonesian Ulema Council but later he resigned in 1981 due to his advice on "Joint Christmas" was ignored by the Indonesian government. HAMKA passed away on July 24, 1981 and was buried in Jakarta's Tanah Kusir [3].

Hamka as a Muhammadiyah scholar and activist was critical of the political leadership of Sukarno and Suharto or the two governmental regimes namely the Old Order and the New Order. HAMKA experienced a number of political events, including accusations of treason slander that resulted in imprisonment without trial in the Old Order, and resigned from the position of MUI chairman due to the case of the Christmas joint-celebration with the March 7, 1981 *fatwa* (ruling) in the New Order period [3].

The political case in the form of allegations of treason was addressed to Hamka and friends namely Kasman Singodimejo, Yusuf Wibisono, Col. Nasuhi, who were accused of forming a subversive movement called the Islamic Youth Force Movement (GAPI), with the aim of: 1. Murdering President Soekarno and Ministers opposing GAPI, 2. Blasting GANEFO, Blasting palaces and several Departments, including the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, 3. Forming an Islamic cabinet consisting of former Masyumi leaders, 4. Assisting Malaysia in confrontation with RI, and 5. Disrupting the commemoration of the ABRI Anniversary on October 5, 1963 [4].

Hamka as a cleric held the view that politics is part of worship when it is intended to benefit the people and seek the pleasure of Allah SWT [5]. The reason why we compare Hamka and Ma'ruf Amin is because in the same position at MUI both of them responded to the offers of power differently. We argue that this phenomenon is interesting to be examined closely with a more in-depth investigation.

2 Research Method

This study applies qualitative approach. The research uses the method of literature study and document search in order to get a complete picture of the role of ulema in Indonesian politics, including in the context of the presidential election. The data analysis stage was carried out as an ongoing, repetitive and continuous activity. Stages of data analysis were done by reducing data, presenting data and drawing conclusions [6].

3 Discussions and Results

3.1 Hamka as a Modernist Islamic Thinker

We argue that the thoughts of Hamka that are closely related to politics were motivated by the active life of organizing and politicizing Hamka in Muhammadiyah. The impetus for these are the problems of leaders and leadership, which was a reflection of his closeness to organizing activities in Muhammadiyah and, to some extent, the politics in Masyumi. Borrowing from Hamka himself, history is formed by leaders who have leadership with classification based on descent, strength, intelligence and other leaders recognize it as a leader [7].

3.2 Basic Principles of Hamka's Political Thoughts

3.2.1 Monotheism (*Tawheed*)

Fuad Mochammad Fachruddin interprets monotheism as a belief in Islam based on the necessity of believing in the truth of what is believed and the true and natural place of trust according to a sane mind. Trust that is based on that belief, resides in a person's heart. Such trust is not achieved with perfect and complete requirements, if not based on a healthy mind, there is no known belief if not based on reason, as an organ of knowledge [8].

Monotheism for Hamka is not only as a guide in interpreting life in the scope of *ḥabl min Allāh*, which is oriented to the awareness of the power of God, the representation of the meaning of *lā ilāha illa Allāh*, but also the meaning of *ḥabl min an-nās* which emphasizes social piety in carrying out what is meant by *khalīfah fil arḍ*. Both of these relationships lead humans to achieve the perfection of faith. Faith is not perfect if it is built only to elevate God without being accompanied by efforts to provide happiness, prosperity, prosperity and justice for humans, and the inhabitants of the earth as a place for humans to act to fulfill their duties.

3.2.2 Characters (*Akhlak*)

Moral becomes an important point for Hamka to put forward the figures of Islamic leaders whether they have the title of caliph, sultan amir/emir. Hamka's view of morality combines individual piety and social piety closely with the concept of al-Ghazali as expressed in the book of *Ihyā 'al-'Ulūm al-Din*, with the best manifestation of morals [9][10].

3.3 Theories and Literature Review

The relevant theory to explain the above phenomenon is the theory of Islamic and political relations. The first argument of the theory holds that Islam is *sumuliah* or comprehensive so that in the concept of Islam there is no separation of world and hereafter affairs but both become unified or integrative. The second argument of the theory holds that Islam is like the Western view that separates religious and political or secular affairs. The third argument of the theory holds that disagreeing with secularism but Islam provides a set of values as a moral guide in politics and governance, or mutualism symbiosis in the view of Hamka is like an element of spirit and material which can both strengthen and symbiosis positively. The third argument is relevant and can be used to explain the phenomenon of religious and state relations or ulema in the political arena in Indonesia. The fact is that political affairs cannot be completely ignored by Muslims or religious groups, even in some cases the issue of religion becomes a political commodity in the country's political momentum [11].

In this paper the definition of ulema refers to religious scholar. Religious scholar consists of people who have formal religious education background in the sense of studying and deepening Islamic texts specifically, both through educational institutions such as pesantren, the world's leading Islamic universities, such as Al-Azhar, Ibn Saud, Tarim Hadramaut and UIN/IAIN as well as those who study specifically through the strict tradition of majelis taklim.

3.4 Political Concepts of Hamka

For Hamka, political education needs to be given through faith. That faith itself also provides political education. If people have been trained to form a small community around the mosque, surely at a later stage they would have an ability to regulate the wider community. His faith is fear. Not afraid of God, but afraid of humans. The first creates love, the second awakens revenge [5].

Hamka believes that the influence of monotheism on state politics is huge. When one sees that there is a part of the world that is colonized by another and one nation colonizes another nation, it is blamed that it is unjust and untrue. He will fight to release the shackles of colonialism. Colonialism crushed the influence of that teaching. A group of people becomes a place of fear, some protect it other than God.

Hamka is then of the view that the similar situation goes to Islam as a religion. According to him, it has a discipline that must be obeyed by adherents. If the adherent has been looking for verses that can be twisted and divided, he cannot be punished for violating discipline. That is a sign that his inner relationship with his religion has been damaged, like the damage to his inner relationship between members of a party and the ideals of his party. If within a party it is considered dangerous if there are members who carry other ideologies into their party, it is seen that it has harmed the party, and has the right to administer meroyeer from the party, so too is becoming a Muslim. Many times, al-Qur'an states that the empty address of the soul of belief, and the destruction of the heart even though it accuses oneself of faith is due to reluctance or disorder to do faith-based work (*amal*).

3.5 Hamka's Democracy Concept

Democracy, according to Hamka, is the seed of a government based on *shura*. Democracy is a form of state aspired to by people today. What is called democracy in modern times is actually the seeds of government based on "*shura*". The word democracy is very beautiful. However, if it is not accompanied by monotheism, democracy will only exchange with "he wants a chair". Monotheism naturally avoids dishonest struggles among leaders. The emergence of the struggle for rank, is because people have been mistaken for the meaning of glory and grandeur. Half thought that the glory and splendor was in chairs and ranks, treasures and beautiful houses, stars embedded in the chest, worshiped in the laurels where they went.

Hamka believes that democracy is a matter of ideology to establish a just and prosperous government. Various ideologies have been compiled by people in this world, such as democratic ideology, communism, socialism and so on. It is evident that humanity is in fact always looking for a more perfect arrangement of life. Looking for more perfect is the characters (*tabi'at*) of human life. Every time there are such thoughts, Muslims who adhere to religion always say that 1000 years before a philosopher states a theory, the Qur'an has stated clearly and without doubt. People look for the basis of democracy by brainstorming, but the Qur'an provides the basis for a deeper and safer democracy, that is taqwa democracy. The Word of God in al-Hujurat verse 13: "Verily, the noble of you in the sight of Allah are those who are loyal to you".

Hamka argues that 1000 years before Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote about state philosophy and social contracts, Islam had already practiced it. After the Prophet Muhammad moved to Medina, the Ansar and the Muhajirin agreed that Muhammad was not only a Prophet but also a community leader. On that day what has been called Rousseau as the social contract. De facto and de jure he became a head of state. Then when he died, Abu Bakr was appointed as caliph. That means the social contract has emerged and was practiced at that time. That is the basis of democracy in Islam.

Hamka believes that freedom and religious freedom are important pillars of democracy. This religion is very important because it is a human right. The progress of human thought in forming a just state has come to the conclusion that the people in a country must be left free to embrace a religion and practice the religion they choose and believe.

Hamka holds the view that democracy is fast entering our minds today. Yet in the Islamic faith, according to him, we govern the country together is by the will of God. We appoint governments, heads of state under the names of kings, caliphs, sultans, malik and others. It is of our own free will and the good fortune is ours. He was recognized by God as holding the country and given certain conditions in religious law. Hamka therefore gave the name "Democracy of Taqwa" [12].

3.6 Discussions

Our analysis in understanding the above problem refers to the work of Asef Bayat (2007) who argues that it is incorrect to confront Islam to democracy or politics. For him, the more appropriate question is, under what conditions can Muslims make themselves adapt to the main principles inherent in democracy: power-sharing, participation in decision-making, egalitarianism and liberation. Fifty years ago, social scientists believed that Christianity and democracy were incompatible. But today, democracy blooms in Christian areas, even in areas where fascism arises and is linked to the church. Indeed, previous authoritarian and exclusive ideologies were always juxtaposed with Christianity. Early Christian sects promoted loyalty to authoritarian rulers, provided they were not atheist and did not endanger their adherents.

Obedience is the subject of Christian political thought based on the belief that higher power is given by God.

Bayat further suggests that it is better for us to examine the conditions which enable social forces to change the texts of the scriptures into hegemonic forces. This is closely related to the group's capacity to mobilize consensus around the "truth" they build. Therefore, referring solely to the scriptures may not act as an effective analytical tool, but must be directed at the core of the political struggle in building hegemonic discourse. The statement that "Islamic government has a democratic character" may be analytically naive.

In the context of strengthening the challenges of political Islam in Indonesia, this paper attempts to read the direction of the relationship between Islam and politics; the extent to which political Islam can expand its influence and present a real challenge for the survival of the nation-state called Indonesia. This effort is based on a theoretical belief that there is a significant relationship between the perceptions and attitudes of the ulema regarding the nation-state and the future of political Islam. Recognizing the complex situation faced by the clerics as religious authorities, squeezed between state institutions which continually undermine their legitimacy and Islamist ideologues who never tire of offering a very populist political Islam discourse, this section wants to put the views and attitudes towards the nation-state as an effort to negotiate with the situation, and as such, maintain their relevance in public life and society [13].

We therefore argue that the political Islam offers an alternative. With the core support of the poor middle class, political Islam has succeeded for three decades in mobilizing large numbers of disappointed people through 'low-cost Islamization': with the slogan of language purity of morals and culture, demanding identity politics, and doing productive charity work. However, towards the mid-1990s political Islam could not move far when it came to the more challenging Islamization: establishing an Islamic government. As a result, political Islamic power faces a major crisis wherever it is practiced (as in Iran, Sudan and Pakistan, for example). At the same time, the strategy of violence and armed struggle adopted by political Islam that took a radical line (in Egypt and Algeria, for example) failed to reach its target. Faced with the authoritarian regime, many actors are forced to abandon destructive discourses or methods of violence. They began to build a more democratic vision for more compromising political Islam projects.

Political Islam often emerges as a language of self-affirmation to mobilize people (mostly middle class) who feel marginalized by the dominant economic, political, or cultural processes in their society; a society that feels the failure of capitalistic and utopian-socialist modernity which then makes the language of morality through religion while wanting to change the political system. In fact, he argues, political Islam can sometimes be read as a way for the growing middle class of Muslims to say no to what they perceive to be foreign influence, national elites, secular governments, and Western allies of government. They strongly reject the "domination of Western culture", political rationality, moral sensibility, and normative symbols, even though they themselves share many features with the alien, for example; ties, food, education and technology.

Indonesia as a pluralistic nation with diverse tribes, religions, races and intergroups (SARA), demands a conducive atmosphere in every party of democracy. The contribution of religious communities in Indonesia is very large in helping to maintain a conducive democratic climate. The government has an interest in the role of religious leaders, thus during the New Order era was encouraged to establish the FKUB or the Indonesian Religious Communication Forum. The FKUB consists of several religious organizations, namely: MUI for Muslims, PGI or Indonesian Church Communities for Protestants, KWI or Indonesian Church Guardian Conferences for Protestants, MATAKIN or the Indonesian Confucius Council, WALUBI or

Representatives of Indonesian Buddhists for Protestants Buddha and PHDI or Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia for Hindus in Indonesia. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) is a religious institution formed in order to bridge the interests of the government with Muslims. According to national figure Jimly Assidiqueu, MUI is the home address of Indonesian Muslims, the intention is that when there is a NU that represents traditional Islam and Muhammadiyah as a modernist Islamic group, the MUI unites it. In the MUI various Muslim groups in Indonesia are incorporated.

Election as a standard mechanism in political contestation in a democratic country requires a party system. Indonesia as a democracy has adopted a multi-party system since the 1955 elections, until the elections in the reform era, the number of election contestants numbered more than two parties. In general, the party qualifications in Indonesia are polarized in a variety of political ideological identities, but in broad outline it still repeats the previous period between two major powers, the Islamic nationalist wagon and the secular nationalist. Ulema in Indonesia are usually included in the carriages of religious nationalist groups and fight for the interests of the Ummah through political channels [14].

4 Conclusion

Hamka as an ulema is of the view that in Islam there is no secularism. Islam and the State or Islam and politics are like two elements namely the elements of spirit and material. Both are closely related and mutually reinforcing (symbiotic mutualism). Related to this, ulema as religious leaders are not prohibited from entering the political arena as a choice of struggle, as long as it is intended as worship, in the context of upholding *the amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*.

Ulema in Indonesian society has an honorable position in the community. Ulema as a symbol that has the knowledge and representation of religious leaders in matters of religious knowledge. Such a strategic position is in the spotlight and even targets for politicians in the five-year agenda in the form of elections. Election as a venue for political contestation as well as a manifestation of democracy in the sense of popular sovereignty requires the support of the majority in quantity if one wants to win the contestation. Thus there are some scholars who are tempted even drifted in the political field so that reducing the role of religious leaders in the midst of a religious society. Ideally, scholars are able to maintain dignity (*marwah*) as guardians of moral fortifications in the midst of society, neutral and impartial. Ulema should be a moral force for the implementation of climate, a healthy and polite democracy.

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