



## KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's Da'wah in the Field of Islamic Politics in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the political da'wah activities of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri in Indonesia and its impact on the development of Islamic politics. Using descriptive qualitative methods and political approaches. Data collection techniques through interviews and documentation. The study results indicate that KH Cholil Bisri plays an important role in Islamic politics in Indonesia, especially through preaching that integrates Islamic values with national life. Since the 1971 to 1992 elections, he has been active in voicing the importance of Islamic morality in politics while overseeing the birth of the National Awakening Party (PKB). His political da'wah paved the way for inclusive and moderate Islam in national politics. The impact of KH Cholil Bisri's political da'wah is the creation of a strengthening of moderate Islamic politics by Indonesian national values, making him an important figure in formulating fair and just state policies. The implications of this study suggest that KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's political da'wah significantly contributed to the shaping of inclusive and moderate Islamic politics in Indonesia, offering valuable insights for future political leaders in integrating Islamic values with national governance to promote justice, unity, and social harmony.*

**Keywords:** Indonesia; Islamic politic; KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri; political da'wah.

### INTRODUCTION

Da'wah is the actualization of theological faith and is manifested through a series of social-community activities covering various fields, including politics (Rosidi, 2021). This is implemented systematically and orderly to influence humans' feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and actions to align with Islamic values (Mat Akhir & Sabjan, 2015). In this context, preaching is not only limited to tabligh or delivery of religious teachings verbally but also includes political propaganda, political jihad, and various dimensions of life (Hidayat et al., 2024). The main purpose of Islamic da'wah is to realize

Islamic teachings in every aspect life of man (Purnomo & Kurniawan, 2024). Da'wah aims To integrate Islamic values in various layers of society so that all over the order of life, man can be based on the principles of Islam (Akca et al., 2024; Wright, 2018b). Thus, the space scope of preaching is very broad, covering spiritual, social, economic, political, and cultural aspects.

Da'wah becomes an important instrument in social transformation, inviting people to virtue and abstaining from evil (Olatubosun & Ajani, 2020). Therefore, more than preaching is needed to form behavior and order the public according to Islamic teachings (Riyadi & Karim, n.d.). Every action da'wah must directed To create a just, prosperous, and moral society (Riyadi & Karim, 2023). Here, da'wah touches the individual and comprehensively embraces all life aspects.

Hamzah Ya'qub said three main methods in conveying da'wah: verbal, written, and deed real or da'wah bill thing (Noor et al., 2023). Da'wah bills is considered most effective Because involving action real that can emulated by society, showing How Islamic values are applied in life daily (Salam, 2016).

One manifestation of da'wah that is more broad and structured is da'wah structure, which uses structure power To spread Islamic teachings (Affandi et al., 2022). Da'wah structural focuses on the existing social, political, and economic usage system to influence public policy and structure government (Riyadi et al., 2021). With this method, activist da'wah makes an effort to make Islam an integral part of state ideology, viewing the state as a means For applying Islamic values in life nation and state in a comprehensive way (Kenney, 2020).

KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri is one of the clerics with a significant role in developing Islamic politics in Indonesia. As one of the founders of the National Awakening Party (PKB), KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri shows that Islamic da'wah is not only limited to the spiritual realm but also includes political aspects that aim to fight for the people's interests (Zaman, 2010). Born in an Islamic boarding school environment, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri grew up in a strong tradition of clerics, especially in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) environment (Arifianto, 2021). His affiliation with NU directed his political views towards moderate Islam, emphasizing inclusivity, nationality, and social welfare (Bush, 2009).

KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's da'wah in the political field in Indonesia began in the reform era, where new freedoms emerged in

political life after the fall of the New Order (Irfan & Sarjuni, 2020). KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri took advantage of this momentum by strengthening the position of Islam as a political force through the formation of PKB in 1998 with Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur). KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri actively advocated Islamic values aligned with democracy, pluralism, and human rights. This was an important contribution to changing the perception that political Islam did not have to be radical but could be a force that supported democracy and national stability (Insani, 2019).

In addition to his political role at the national level, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri is also known for his da'wah approach that prioritizes dialogue. He invites various political groups to deliberate and build consensus for the common good (Abdullah, 2017). His political da'wah includes ideological discourse and practical strategies for building an inclusive political coalition involving various elements of society, both Muslims and non-Muslims (El Ishaq, 2022).

In politics, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri focuses on the Muslim community's agenda and the nation's overall development (Zana & Hidayat, 2023). His political da'wah focuses on empowering society through good political education, aiming that Muslims become an active part of national development (Irfan & Sarjuni, 2020). KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri sees that political involvement is one way to apply Islamic values in broader social life and ensure that the interests of Muslims are accommodated in public policy (Ridho et al., 2023).

KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's political da'wah is also reflected in his views on the importance of political ethics (Coady, 2023). He emphasized that politics must be based on good morals and uphold the values of honesty, justice, and simplicity (Karlić & Smiljanić, 2014). KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri criticized corrupt and immoral political practices on various occasions. According to him, politics is part of da'wah that must be carried out ethically and by Islamic teachings.

KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri has inherited an inclusive and moderate model of political da'wah, which is still relevant in Indonesian politics. His political da'wah can be felt in the development of Islamic parties, which are increasingly aware of the importance of prioritizing dialogue and cooperation between groups (Mustofa, 2020). With a balanced political approach, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri succeeded in instilling the idea that Islam and politics do not have to be opposites but can support each other

to create a just and prosperous society (Riauuan et al., 2022).

Focusing on ethical politics, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri emphasizes honesty, fairness, and simplicity in every action of politics. According to him, politics is part of da'wah that must be run ethically following Islamic teachings. KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri inherits the model of da'wah political inclusive and moderate, which is still relevant in the context of Indonesian politics today. This is. His figure as a Kiai, politician, and writer inspired a generation of Islamic boarding schools, showing that fusion between da'wah and politics can positively impact people and the nation.

The novelty of this study lies in its exploration of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's distinctive approach to political da'wah, which seamlessly integrates Islamic values with the principles of Indonesian nationalism. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on the general dynamics of Islamic politics, this research highlights KH Cholil Bisri's pivotal role in shaping inclusive and moderate Islamic political discourse. His contributions, particularly through the establishment of the National Awakening Party (PKB) and his active engagement in promoting Islamic morality in politics during critical electoral periods (1971–1992), underscore a transformative impact on the development of fair and just state policies. This study offers a unique perspective by connecting his political da'wah efforts with the broader context of strengthening moderate Islam in Indonesia, providing a valuable framework for understanding the interplay between religion and politics in a pluralistic society.

This type of research is qualitative descriptive research, namely writing that aims to describe the state of the status of the phenomenon systematically and rationally (logic) found in the Da'wah of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri in the field of politics in Indonesia. The approach used is a political approach, namely to provide a study of the Da'wah of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri in Indonesia's politics field.

To obtain the data needed in this study, the researcher used the following methods: 1) Interview is a question-and-answer process in which two or more people face each other physically; one can see the other's face and hear his voice with his ears. Through the open interview method, the author can obtain information about the life journey of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri from KH. A. Mustofa Bisri, KH. Khazim Maburr, KH. Makin Shoimuri, KH. Yahya Cholil Tsaquf, Gus Tutut, KH. Syarofuddin Ismail Al-Qoyyimas and Masruhan Samsuri (PPP figures), 2) Documentation is the collection of secondary data or data collected by others as records of

past events. The documents are notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, inscriptions, meeting minutes, agendas, etc. This documentation data is used to complement the data obtained by interviews. The author uses this documentation method to obtain data on the life journey of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri. The researcher collects data systematically and then analyzes it to support previous data.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's Da'wah Activities in the Field of Islamic Politics in Indonesia**

Career positions he has held: Chairman of PPP Rembang (1973-1995), Chairman of MPW PPP Rembang (1995-1998), member of FPP DPRD II Rembang (1970-1982), Leader of the FPP Council DPRD II Rembang (1982-1992), member of FPP DPR/MPR RI (1992-1997), member of the Regional Representatives Faction of the Central MPR RI (1997-1999), member of FKB DPR/MPR RI (1999-2004), Deputy Chairman of the MPR RI (2002-2004), replacing Matori Abdul Jalil until the end of his life.

#### **1971 Election Period**

At the end of 1969, the government took two important decisions, namely: first, to schedule the General Election in 1971 followed by the MPR General Session, and second, to coordinate and implement the election in such a way as to guarantee the existence of a majority of the DPR/MPR formation that the government could directly control.

Next, the government created its election organization that relied on something other than one of the existing political parties to gain mass support in society and the majority of the DPR. Finally, in 1971, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri began to enter the party. Because of his ties with Kyai Bisri, he was appointed Deputy Chairman of the NU Party, Rembang Branch.

KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's task at that time was to deal with Kodim to free his friends who were arrested without a clear legal process. Several police officers also assisted him. Because many of the police officers in the area were his school friends. There was even a police officer who was demoted because he was caught guarding him.

The results of the 1971 election at the national level were that Golkar obtained 34,348,673 votes (62.80%), NU 10,213,650 votes (18.67%), PNI 3,793,266 votes (6.94%), Parmusi 10,213,650 votes (5.36%), PSII 1,308,237

votes (2.36%), Parkindo 733,359 votes (1.34%), Catholic Party 603,740 votes (1.10%), Perti 381,309 votes (0.70%), IPKI 388,403 votes (0.62%), Murba Party 48,126 votes (0.09%) (Eklöf, 1997).

In the 1971 election, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was a candidate for DPRD level II from the NU Party. So, from the results of the 1971 election, he passed to become a member of DPRD level II representing the NU Party. His father, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri, was also a candidate for MPR member from the NU Party, and he also passed to become a member of the MPR representing the NU Party from the Central Java electoral district (Ghofur & Badrun, 2022).

### **1977 Election Period**

In the 1977 election, President Soeharto only allowed three parties to participate: PPP, PDI, and Golkar. So, NU had to join the PPP. Finally, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri helped to mobilize the emergence of the PPP. He became the first PPP Chairman in Rembang. Approaching the 1977 election, a week before the campaign period, his father passed away precisely on February 27, 1977 (Liddle, 1985).

After his father passed away, the pulse of the party's life, especially in Central Java, was felt to have stopped. Because KH Bisri Mustofa was a great campaigner and one of the mainstays of the PPP, he was a charismatic figure and had a very broad and fanatical mass of supporters (Rasyid, 1995).

During the campaign, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was still in mourning. Not only that, he was also given a legacy of a pesantren from his father. Meanwhile, at that time, his business began to grow. One of his efforts at that time was to develop goat farming and supply to markets (Cobong Gamping). At that time, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's position in business and politics improved. In politics, he became deputy chairman of the DPRD Level II. However, because KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was the eldest son, he was obliged to take on the mandate to become the kyai of the pesantren. Finally, he became a kyai, taking care of the students. His business was abandoned and closed (Franklin, 2014). However, the position of deputy chairman of DPRD II was maintained.

Furthermore, according to Gus Mus' story, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was the same caliber as his father, KH. Bisri Mustofa was proficient in the science of mantiq (logic). At that time, Kiai Bisri Mustofa told KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri: "You already know that you have not contributed anything; why don't you want to be nominated?" For Kiai Bisri, nomination

is different from the certainty of passing.

Finally, the 1977 election was passed by KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri without the presence of KH. Bisri Mustofa. Golkar still won the majority of votes in the vote count, with 39,750,096 votes (62.11%), followed by PPP in second place and PDI in third place. PPP won 18,743,491 votes (29.29%), and PDI won 5,504,751 (8.60%).

### **1982 Election Period**

In the 1982 election, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was asked to join the Level I DPRD. But he refused. Because he had a pesantren that had to be taken care of, at that time, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri only wanted to be in the Level II DPRD for life. The offer to become a member of the Level I DPRD was handed over to his younger brother, KH A Mustofa Bisri.

Meanwhile, his other brother, M., Adib Bisri, was a civil servant, teaching at PGA, then transferred to a high school in Rembang. He was forced to join Golkar by the school principal. On the advice of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri, his younger brother finally went to their father's grave. After that, his younger brother told him that he met his father and gave him a will not to join Golkar (Roth et al., 2020). The next morning, his younger brother submitted the form letters and others to the school principal and left. His younger brother quit being a civil servant rather than join Golkar (Irawan et al., n.d.). However, his students wanted to be included because he was an exemplary teacher with a pleasant demeanor and handsome attitude.

In 1984, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was already in the circle of NU figures at the National level. He was also involved in drafting the NU Khitoh concept at his house on Jl. Mulyo no. 1-3 Leteh Rembang. Then, in 1987, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was appointed as the Chairman of the MPW (Regional et al.) of Central Java Province.

Meanwhile, KH A Mustofa Bisri said that at that time, he no longer wanted to be a member of the Level I DPRD. KH A Mustofa Bisri wanted to focus on the cultural field. Meanwhile, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri wanted to stay within the Level I DPRD. His position in Rembang was still Deputy Chairman of the Level II DPRD.

### **1992 Election Period**

In the 1992 Election, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri began to feel bored being in the DPRD level II. Meanwhile, he was offered by the regional head to enter level I. However, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri instead

thought about entering the DPR RI. So, that year, he succeeded in becoming a member of the DPR RI from the PPP.

At the 1992 PPP Congress, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri began to think that the PPP was big because of the support of NU members. However, why wasn't the Chairman an NU member? So, in 1994, he began to hold a movement in the PPP, which was eventually known as the 'Rembang Group Movement.' KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri and his friends tried hard to get an NU member to become the General Chairman of the PPP (Alfirdaus & Azahra, 2019). However, at that time, a journalist asked him if it would be better to ask for Suharto's blessing, but instead, he answered: I do not need Pak Harto, but I only need God.

Then, approaching the 1997 Election, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was nominated from Central Java, which was in the top 10. However, upon his arrival in Jakarta, because of Suharto's influence, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was instead placed at number 53. So, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri did not become a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives at that time (Taufik et al., 2024).

Gus Yahya explained that after the incident, although disappointed, KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri returned to persevere at the Islamic boarding school. He also wrote a lot. He is a villager but still active in the party as MPW. At that time, he was proposed by the party to become MPP. However, Mr. Ismael Hasan refused. Despite this, he was still appointed as a member of the MPR RI in the Working Body as a regional representative, not from the party.

### **Become Deputy of the MPR RI**

Regarding the position of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri as Deputy Chairman of the MPR from the PKB, replacing Matori Abdul Djilil, Gus Yahya said that from the beginning, his friends had asked KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri to be in the leadership of the MPR or DPR. However, he did not want to (Munhanif & Ihsan, 2023). Because KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was still thinking about the Islamic boarding schools that were starting to develop, he was also the first to propose to advance Matori as a candidate for MPR chairman, who eventually became deputy chairman.

Gus Yahya explained that Mr. Matori wanted his party to fill the MPR leadership. On the other hand, PKB Alwi-Gus Dur wanted something else. In a dispute like that, Cholil pushed For willingness to fill in the emptiness in PKB Alwi Sihab's camp. At that time, Matori still refused. However,



when he found out that KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was nominated, he did not dare because KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri was the one who had led Matori all this time from Central Java (Ridwan, 2024).

At that time, the MPR leadership had headed towards nominating KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri to replace Matori's position. It would inaugurate KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri as deputy chairman of the MPR from the F-KB on June 5. The reason for appointing KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri as deputy chairman of the MPR from the F-KB was that de facto, the F-KB in the MPR wanted KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri to be inaugurated to replace Matori (Maruapey & Akadira, 2022).

### **The Impact of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's Political Da'wah on the Development of Islamic Politics in Indonesia**

The political da'wah of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri has significantly impacted the development of Islamic politics in Indonesia. As one of the charismatic clerics and an important figure in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization, he has succeeded in bringing a strong influence to the Islamic political movement, especially through his involvement in the establishment of the National Awakening Party (PKB). PKB, which was founded in 1998, is a political party based on moderate Islamic values. In this context, the political da'wah of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri is not only limited to spreading religious teachings but also involves active efforts in forming a representative political forum for traditionalist Muslims (Saenong, 2021).

One of the main impacts of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's political da'wah was to encourage the participation of Muslims in the national political process. As a highly respected cleric among NU, he was able to convince Muslims to be more actively involved in politics, changing the paradigm of apoliticism previously held by most traditional Muslims (Fuad, 2020). This can be seen from the increasing political representation of NU in parliament after the reformation, where PKB became one of the parties that succeeded in gaining significant support from the community.

KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri played an important role in bridging the political interests of Muslims with national interests. Through his political da'wah, he introduced an inclusive approach that prioritizes harmony between Islam and nationality (Rahmah & Aslamiah, 2023). This approach is seen in the PKB platform, which emphasizes the importance of national unity, social justice, and respect for pluralism. In this case, KH Mohammad

Cholil Bisri's political da'wah reduced radicalism and strengthened moderate Islam's position in the Indonesian political arena.

KH Cholil Bisri's political da'wah also changed the dynamics of the relationship between Islam and the state. By being actively involved in politics, he helped strengthen the political legitimacy of Muslims in Indonesia. Previously, Muslims were often marginalized in the national political structure (Ibrahim & Riyadi, 2023). However, through involvement in the PKB, they gained a stronger voice in political decision-making, especially regarding policies that concern the lives of Muslims.

The role of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri in politics is also inseparable from his da'wah strategy, which uses a persuasive and dialogical approach. On various occasions, he emphasized the importance of dialogue between various political and religious groups in Indonesia (Rosidi, 2021b). This reflects his vision of inclusive Islamic politics oriented towards the welfare of the people (Kholili, 2023). This dialogical approach helps prevent religious-based political polarization and strengthens political stability in post-reform Indonesia (Arifuddin & Faridah, 2021).

From a historical perspective, KH Cholil Bisri's political da'wah also played a role in strengthening the principles of democracy in Indonesia. As one of the founders of PKB, he emphasized the importance of democratic and accountable political participation (Muchtar & Alam, 2019). These values are reflected in the party structure that prioritizes deliberation and balanced representation between religious and state interests (Lessy, 2022). Thus, his political da'wah contributed to strengthening the foundations of democracy in pluralistic Indonesia.

In addition to its impact on national politics, the influence of KH Cholil Bisri's political da'wah also extends to the local level. In various regions, especially in traditional NU bases, his political teachings were adopted by religious scholars and community leaders (Knott, 2017). They used the principles taught by Cholil Bisri to manage local political conflicts and build cooperation between different groups (Zaman, 2009). This shows that his political da'wah not only had an impact at the national level but also succeeded in creating stability at the grassroots level (Liow, 2022).

## **CONCLUSION**

KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri played an important role in the Indonesian political arena through his da'wah activities that synergized with the struggle for Islamic politics. From the 1971 to the 1992 Election, KH

Mohammad Cholil Bisri consistently voiced the importance of Islamic values in state governance. During those times, he was actively involved in practical politics and conveyed Islamic ideas as a moral and ethical foundation in national life. In addition, KH Cholil Bisri also helped shape the birth of the National Awakening Party (PKB), a political party that fights for the interests of Muslims, especially members of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Through PKB, KH Cholil Bisri's political da'wah created space for the realization of a more inclusive and moderate Islamic political voice in Indonesia. His role as Deputy Chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) also showed his significant influence in formulating the direction of state policy while still emphasizing the principles of moderate and just Islam.

The impact of KH Mohammad Cholil Bisri's political da'wah on the development of Islamic politics in Indonesia is quite large. He provided a new direction for the Islamic political movement and succeeded in bringing Islamic discourse into the mainstream of national politics. The political da'wah carried out by KH Cholil also encouraged strengthening Islamic politics that are more inclusive, moderate, and in accordance with Indonesian national values.

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