

Reconfiguring Muhammadiyah's Intellectual-Political Thought in Strengthening Civil Society from the Jokowi Era to the Prabowo–Gibran Era

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Abstract:

The relationship between religion and state in Indonesia since the Reformation era has been characterized by complex dynamics, with religious organizations playing a crucial role in balancing state power and civil society interests. In this context, Muhammadiyah has long served as a key actor in Islamic civil society, serving both as a counterbalancing force to the state and as a driver of social transformation. This study examines the transformation of Muhammadiyah's intellectual-political thinking in response to shifting power configurations and democratic dynamics during the Joko Widodo administration and the transition to the Prabowo Subianto–Gibran Rakabuming Raka administration. Using a qualitative approach based on desk research and limited interviews, the study finds that Muhammadiyah's political thinking has evolved into a more strategic and adaptive orientation. This transformation reflects Muhammadiyah's efforts to reinterpret its political role through social da'wah (Islamic outreach) and national responsibility while maintaining its identity as a progressive Islamic movement. It also strengthens civil society through critical, participatory, and collaborative engagement in public policy, social services, and humanitarian diplomacy. Overall, Muhammadiyah offers a constructive model of religion-state relations that combines organizational independence, public participation, and a commitment to democratic values and social justice.

Keywords: civil society; Darul Ahdi wa Syahadah; Indonesian democracy; Islamic politics; Muhammadiyah.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religion and state is a crucial dimension in understanding the dynamics of democracy in Indonesia. Since the nation's inception, this relationship has never been entirely secular or theocratic, but has instead evolved into a dialogical and compromising relationship between state institutions and socio-religious forces. This relationship is reflected in the construction of the Indonesian nation-state, which positions religion as a crucial element in public life while remaining within the framework of the pluralistic Pancasila state. In this context, religious organizations play a strategic role as mediators between the state and society, as well as acting as moral forces that maintain a balance between political power and social aspirations. In the literature on Islam and democracy in Indonesia, this relationship is often understood as a form of interaction between the state and civil society, enabling Islamic organizations to play a crucial role in maintaining democratic stability while articulating the aspirations of the Muslim community in the public sphere (Hefner, 2011).

Within this framework, Islamic organizations in Indonesia function not only as religious missionary institutions but also as part of a civil society force that contributes to the development of democracy. The existence of Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama demonstrates that civil society in Indonesia has a strong socio-religious base. These organizations play a role in education, health, social advocacy, and strengthening democratic values within society. Studies of civil society in Indonesia indicate that the existence of moderate Islamic organizations has been a crucial factor supporting the consolidation of democracy post-Reformasi, as they are able to integrate religious values with the principles of pluralism, tolerance, and public participation (Hefner, 2011).

Muhammadiyah, as one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, holds a crucial position in this dynamic. Since its founding by Ahmad Dahlan in 1912, Muhammadiyah has been known as a modernist Islamic movement emphasizing the renewal of religious thought, education, and social services. Throughout its history, Muhammadiyah has served not only as a missionary and educational movement, but also as a socio-political actor contributing to the formation of a strong civil society. From a civil society perspective, Muhammadiyah can be understood as a social institution that serves as a counterweight to state power through moral criticism, policy advocacy, and the strengthening of community capacity. This aligns with the view that religious organizations in a democratic society can function as a countervailing force against the state and as a source of moral legitimacy in public life.

However, the dynamics of the relationship between Islamic organizations and the state have undergone significant changes in the contemporary political context of Indonesia. During the Joko Widodo administration, national politics has shown a tendency towards an increasing role for the state in various development sectors through a technocratic approach and strong economic development. In this situation, civil society organizations, including religious organizations, face new challenges in maintaining their independence and role as checks on power. Several studies on Indonesian democracy indicate that over the past decade, a phenomenon often referred to as democratic regression has emerged, namely the weakening of democratic institutions, the strengthening of political oligarchies, and increasing pragmatism in the practice of power (Hadiz, 2016).

This democratic regression phenomenon then continued in the dynamics of the transition of power to the Prabowo Subianto administration with Gibran Rakabuming Raka as vice president. This new political configuration demonstrates the increasingly complex relationship between the state, political elites, and civil society. In this situation, Islamic organizations face a strategic dilemma: on the one hand, they must maintain moral independence as part of civil society, but on the other, they also need to build constructive relations with the state to ensure that public aspirations remain accommodated in public policy. Therefore, the strategies of Islamic organizations in responding to political change have become a crucial issue in the study of religion and politics in Indonesia.

It is in this context that Muhammadiyah demonstrates an interesting dynamic of transformation. While previously known for its moral critique and distance from political power, in recent developments, the organization has begun to develop a more dialogical and constructive pattern of interaction with the state. This transformation does not mean that Muhammadiyah has abandoned its role as a moral force in civil society, but rather demonstrates a strategic adaptation to changing political and social contexts. From the perspective of civil society theory, this strategic shift can be understood as a form of strategic engagement, namely the efforts of civil society organizations to maintain autonomy while participating in the public policy process to influence the direction of national development (Habermas, 2015).

Thus, Muhammadiyah no longer merely plays the role of a morally critical force from outside the power structure (moral distance), but has begun to develop a more active engagement strategy across public policy, social services, and advocacy for community interests. This strategy demonstrates Muhammadiyah's efforts to position itself as an adaptive civil society actor amid national political change. Through this approach, Muhammadiyah strives to maintain a balance between its critical function of the state and its constructive role in social development. This transformation serves as an important background for this research, which aims to understand how Muhammadiyah intellectual political thought has evolved in response to the dynamics of the relationship between religion, state, and civil society in contemporary Indonesian democracy.

Academic studies on Muhammadiyah have expanded considerably in recent decades, particularly in understanding the organization as a modernist Islamic movement that has made significant contributions to social, religious, and political development in Indonesia. Several classical studies position Muhammadiyah as a reformist movement emphasizing religious rationality, modern education, and the social transformation of

Muslim society. From this perspective, Muhammadiyah is understood as part of an Islamic modernization project that seeks to integrate religious values with the development of modern society. Important early studies in this area emphasized how Muhammadiyah built a social base through educational institutions, health services, and extensive social activities, thus establishing a modern Islamic identity that is adaptive to social change (Nakamura, 2012).

Besides being a modernist movement, several studies have also highlighted Muhammadiyah's role in Indonesia's democratization process, particularly in the post-Reformasi era. In the literature on Islam and democracy in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah is often viewed as a key pillar of civil society contributing to the consolidation of democracy. This organization not only plays a role in building strong social institutions but also functions as a moral force that encourages the strengthening of values of pluralism, tolerance, and public participation. In this context, Muhammadiyah is understood as a representation of what is known as civil Islam, namely the Islamic tradition that supports democracy by strengthening civil society and social institutions autonomous from the state (Hefner, 2011).

Furthermore, other research also emphasizes the social activism dimension of Muhammadiyah in responding to various contemporary societal issues. Muhammadiyah is known as an organization with a very extensive social service network, encompassing thousands of schools, universities, hospitals, and various community empowerment institutions. This social activism not only demonstrates Muhammadiyah's commitment to social *da'wah* (Islamic outreach) but also demonstrates the organization's capacity to build a strong civil society infrastructure at the local and national levels. Through these various social institutions, Muhammadiyah plays a crucial role in strengthening the foundation of civil society and making a tangible contribution to social development in Indonesia.

However, most existing literature still emphasizes the historical, ideological, and social aspects of the Muhammadiyah movement, while studies specifically addressing the transformation of Muhammadiyah's political strategy within the context of changing state power configurations are still relatively limited. Changes in Indonesian political dynamics over the past decade have demonstrated the emergence of an increasingly technocratic and pragmatic model of state leadership, where development orientation is increasingly determined by managerial approaches and complex political-economic interests. In this situation, civil society organizations face new challenges in maintaining their role as a balancing force and critical partner for the state. Several studies on Indonesian politics even point to a growing tendency toward political oligarchy and power pragmatism, which can impact the quality of democracy (Hadiz, 2016).

In this context, Muhammadiyah's position as a key actor in Islamic civil society has become increasingly interesting to study, particularly in examining how the organization adapts its political strategy to address the changing nature of state leadership. To date, studies specifically exploring how the political thinking of Muhammadiyah intellectuals has transformed in response to an increasingly technocratic model of state leadership remain very limited. Yet, changes in organizational strategy are often rooted in the dynamics of intellectual thought developing within it. Therefore, understanding the transformation of Muhammadiyah intellectuals' political thinking is crucial to explaining how the organization formulates new strategies in its relations with the state.

Furthermore, there remains a gap in research linking the development of Muhammadiyah intellectual thought with contemporary civil society strategies. While some studies have discussed Muhammadiyah's contribution to strengthening civil society, few have examined how intellectual ideas developed among Muhammadiyah elites are translated into political and social strategies within the organization. From a civil society theory perspective, the relationship between intellectual thought and organizational strategy is a crucial aspect determining how an organization can adapt to changing power structures and evolving political dynamics. Intellectual thought serves not only as an ideological framework but also as a source of normative legitimacy that guides the direction of an organization's social and political movements (Gramsci, 2020).

Based on this description, this study attempts to fill the gap in the literature by analyzing the transformation of Muhammadiyah intellectual political thought in the context of the organization's changing strategies in facing contemporary Indonesian political dynamics. By positioning Muhammadiyah as an Islamic civil society actor, this study seeks to explain how this organization navigates its relationship with the state through a combination of moral criticism, policy advocacy, and strategic engagement in various social fields. Thus, this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to understanding the transformation of Islamic organizations in modern democracy while enriching the literature on the relationship between religion, state, and civil society in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative, interpretive approach to understand the dynamics of Muhammadiyah intellectual political thought in responding to changes in the configuration of power and the development of democracy in Indonesia. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study does not aim to measure phenomena quantitatively, but rather to interpret the meanings, ideas, and discourse constructions that develop in the thoughts of Muhammadiyah intellectuals and in relevant organizational documents. Within the tradition of social science research, an interpretive approach allows researchers to understand social reality as a construction of meaning formed through social interaction, intellectual discourse, and institutional practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

This approach is also relevant for analyzing the relationship between religious ideas, organizational strategies, and the broader political context. Within an interpretive framework, political thought is not understood as a static doctrine, but as the result of a discursive process influenced by specific historical, institutional, and social contexts. Therefore, this study seeks to interpret how concepts such as Darul Ahdi wa Syahadah, Progressive Islam, and Muhammadiyah's role in civil society are constructed and used in the intellectual discourse of organizations. This interpretive approach is widely used in the study of religion and politics to understand how religious values are translated into the social practices and political strategies of civil society organizations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Muhammadiyah as a Pillar of Indonesian Civil Society

Muhammadiyah's presence in Indonesian social and political life is inseparable from its long history as a key pillar of civil society. Since its founding in 1912 by Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta, Muhammadiyah has developed as an Islamic reform movement emphasizing the importance of education, social services, and societal transformation. Unlike religious organizations that focus on formal political mobilization, Muhammadiyah has built its movement's foundation from the outset by strengthening social institutions such as schools, hospitals, orphanages, and various community empowerment institutions. This strategy makes Muhammadiyah not only a religious missionary movement but also a social institution playing a vital role in the formation of civil society in Indonesia (Nakamura, 2012).

From a civil society perspective, civil society organizations function as social spaces between the state and society, where citizens can organize themselves, express collective interests, and participate autonomously in public life. In the Indonesian context, Muhammadiyah is often seen as one of the most prominent examples of a faith-based civil society organization that has successfully developed a broad social network while maintaining its independence from state power. According to Robert W. Hefner, the development of Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama demonstrates that Islam in Indonesia has the capacity to contribute positively to democracy by strengthening civil society and the values of pluralism (Hefner, 2011).

Muhammadiyah's history of public involvement also demonstrates that the organization has never been entirely separate from national political dynamics. During the colonial period, Muhammadiyah played a role in promoting social awareness and education among indigenous communities as part of the process of Islamic modernization. In the early years of independence, several Muhammadiyah figures were actively involved in shaping the state's foundations and in various government institutions. However, institutionally, Muhammadiyah maintained its position as a civil society organization, not directly affiliated with any particular political party. This stance enabled Muhammadiyah to maintain its organizational independence while retaining influence in the process of public policy formation.

In the Reformation era after 1998, Muhammadiyah's role as a civil society actor became increasingly visible in efforts to promote democratic consolidation in Indonesia. The reforms opened up broader participation for civil society organizations in the political process and oversight of state power. In this context, Muhammadiyah played an active role in various public issues such as eradicating corruption, strengthening democracy, protecting community rights, and social development. Through its various autonomous institutions and charitable enterprises, Muhammadiyah not only provides social services to the community but also acts as an advocate, voicing public interests in various policy forums (Burhani, 2018).

Muhammadiyah's position in Indonesian democracy can also be understood through the concept of civil Islam developed by Robert W. Hefner. Within this framework, Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah are viewed as a social force capable of bridging religious values with the principles of modern democracy. Islam is not understood as a force opposed to democracy, but rather as a source of moral values that can strengthen democratic practices by fostering public ethics, social solidarity, and community participation in political life. In this regard, Muhammadiyah plays a crucial role in building a more inclusive and civilized political culture in Indonesian society (Hefner, 2011).

One of Muhammadiyah's important functions in a democratic system is as a countervailing power or balancing force against the state. In democratic political theory, the existence of a balancing force is crucial to prevent excessive concentration of power in the state and to ensure that public policies continue to consider the interests of the wider community. Civil society organizations such as Muhammadiyah can fulfill this function through various means, such as policy advocacy, criticism of government policies, and mobilization of public opinion on strategic issues related to social justice and democracy (Diamond, 1999).

In practice, Muhammadiyah exercises this countervailing power through various forms of public engagement. The organization consistently expresses critical views on various government policies deemed inconsistent with the principles of social justice or the interests of the wider community. At the same time, Muhammadiyah frequently provides constructive policy recommendations to the government as part of its moral responsibility to maintain the quality of state governance. This stance demonstrates that Muhammadiyah acts not only as a critic of the state but also as a dialogue partner seeking to contribute to the public policy formulation process.

Furthermore, Muhammadiyah's strength as a pillar of civil society lies in its extensive institutional network. Muhammadiyah has thousands of educational institutions, hospitals, universities, and various social institutions spread throughout Indonesia. This network not only provides social services to the community but also serves as a social space where Islamic, national, and democratic values are transmitted to the younger generation. Thus, Muhammadiyah plays a role not only directly in the political arena but also in shaping the social and political culture of society through education and social activities (Nakamura et al., 2001).

In the context of contemporary Indonesian political developments, Muhammadiyah's role as a pillar of civil society faces increasingly complex challenges. Political dynamics marked by increasing political pragmatism, the consolidation of executive power, and the emergence of various forms of political populism demand that civil society organizations continue to strengthen their advocacy capacity and independence. In such a situation, Muhammadiyah strives to adapt its movement strategy while maintaining the organization's moral and ideological principles. This effort reflects Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain a balance between constructive engagement with the state and its critical role as a balancing force in democracy.

Thus, it can be concluded that Muhammadiyah holds a crucial position within the structure of Indonesian civil society. The organization's long history in education, social services, and policy advocacy demonstrates that Muhammadiyah functions not only as a religious organization but also as a social institution that contributes to strengthening democracy. Through its role as a countervailing power, Muhammadiyah helps maintain the balance between state power and the interests of the people, while strengthening the foundation of public ethics in Indonesian democracy.

Transformation of Muhammadiyah Intellectual Political Thought

The development of Muhammadiyah's intellectual political thought over the past few decades has demonstrated a significant transformation in the organization's positioning of itself within the relationship between religion, state, and civil society. While in the previous period Muhammadiyah tended to maintain a moral distance from the state—that is, a critical distance from political power—contemporary developments have seen a trend toward a more active and constructive engagement with the state. This transformation does not mean that Muhammadiyah has abandoned its critical function as a countervailing power, but rather demonstrates the organization's efforts to adapt its movement's strategy to increasingly complex political dynamics and societal needs.

Historically, the moral distance approach has long been a key characteristic of Muhammadiyah's political orientation. This approach stems from the organization's commitment to maintaining the independence of its da'wah and social movements from practical political interests. Within this paradigm, Muhammadiyah does not engage directly in electoral politics but instead maintains moral criticism of state policies deemed inconsistent with the principles of social justice and the interests of the community. This approach allows Muhammadiyah to

maintain its moral legitimacy in the public eye as a religious organization oriented toward the welfare of the people and the nation (Hefner, 2009).

However, changes in the national political configuration in the contemporary democratic era have pushed Muhammadiyah to develop a more adaptive approach. The complexity of public policy, the increasing interdependence between the state and civil society, and the need for more concrete social solutions have made it impossible for the organization to remain merely critical of norms. In this context, Muhammadiyah intellectuals have begun to develop the concept of strategic civic engagement, namely the strategic involvement of civil society in the public policy process without losing its moral independence as a social force (Burhani, 2018).

This transformation is also related to the development of Muhammadiyah's ideological thinking, which emphasizes the concept of Progressive Islam. This concept, largely developed by Haedar Nashir, emphasizes that Islam must be present as a moral force that not only critiques social realities but also actively contributes to building a more advanced and civilized civilization. In a political context, this idea encourages Muhammadiyah to take a more proactive role in various public policy issues related to education, health, social development, and state governance.

One concrete manifestation of Muhammadiyah's transformation in political strategy is its increased involvement in public policy advocacy. Muhammadiyah not only criticizes government policies but also actively provides recommendations and input into the policy formulation process. This advocacy is conducted through various internal organizational institutions, policy dialogue forums, and the publication of policy documents such as policy briefs. Through these mechanisms, Muhammadiyah seeks to influence public policy to better align with the interests of the wider community, particularly in education, health, and social welfare. From a civil society perspective, this type of advocacy practice is a crucial form of public participation in maintaining government accountability and transparency (Diamond, 1999).

In addition to policy advocacy, the transformation of Muhammadiyah's political thinking is also evident in the development of socio-religious diplomacy practices carried out by the organization's leaders and institutions. In the context of globalization and increasing interaction between nations, Muhammadiyah has begun to play a more active role in international dialogue forums related to issues of peace, interfaith dialogue, and humanitarian solidarity. One prominent figure in this effort is Din Syamsuddin, who actively promotes intercivilizational dialogue and peace diplomacy through various international organizations. This approach demonstrates that Muhammadiyah views politics not only in a national context but also as part of Muslims' global responsibility to build world peace and justice.

This socio-religious diplomacy also reflects how faith-based civil society organizations can contribute to strengthening Indonesia's soft power at the international level. Through its network of organizations, educational institutions, and global dialogue forums, Muhammadiyah serves as a non-state actor bringing Islamic values of moderation and pluralism into international discussions. From an international relations perspective, the role of non-state actors such as religious organizations is increasingly important in shaping global norms and practices related to peace, human rights, and sustainable development (Hefner, 2011).

Another form of transformation is seen in Muhammadiyah's increasing collaboration with various state institutions to implement social programs. This collaboration covers areas such as healthcare, education, community economic empowerment, and social welfare programs. Through its extensive network of charitable organizations, Muhammadiyah often serves as a strategic partner with the government in implementing various social development programs. This collaboration demonstrates that the relationship between civil society organizations and the state is not always antagonistic, but can develop into a complementary partnership in efforts to improve community welfare.

However, Muhammadiyah's involvement in various forms of collaboration with the state remains accompanied by efforts to maintain the organization's independence. Muhammadiyah intellectuals consistently emphasize that cooperation with the state must not diminish the organization's critical function as a moral force in society. In other words, the engagement strategy developed by Muhammadiyah is selective and grounded in ethical principles and public interest. This approach allows Muhammadiyah to maintain its moral legitimacy as a civil society organization while contributing constructively to the national development process.

Overall, the transformation of Muhammadiyah's intellectual-political thought demonstrates a shift from a distant moral critique to a more proactive engagement with the state and other social actors. This shift does not mean that Muhammadiyah has abandoned its identity as a civil society movement, but rather reflects the organization's adaptation to increasingly complex political and social contexts. Through public policy advocacy,

socio-religious diplomacy, and collaborative social programs, Muhammadiyah seeks to strengthen its role as a civil society actor that not only critiques the state but also contributes to building a more just, democratic, and civilized social and political system in Indonesia.

Muhammadiyah's Strategy in Strengthening Civil Society

In contemporary Indonesian politics, Muhammadiyah has demonstrated an increasingly complex strategic transformation as it strengthens its role as a civil society actor. While in the previous period, Muhammadiyah emphasized its moral function as a countervailing power to the state, in recent political dynamics, the organization has begun to develop a more adaptive approach through a strategy of engagement with various state institutions. This strategy is not intended to eliminate the organization's independence, but rather to expand Muhammadiyah's contribution to social development and public policy. From a civil society perspective, this type of engagement can be understood as a form of constructive participation by social organizations in the democratic governance process (Diamond, 1999).

This strategic transformation is also related to the development of Muhammadiyah's ideological thinking, which emphasizes the concept of Progressive Islam. This concept, popularized by Haedar Nashir, emphasizes that Islam must be present as a moral force that actively contributes to the development of modern civilization. In this context, religious organizations not only carry out spiritual proselytizing but also play a role in public policy development, social services, and humanitarian diplomacy. Thus, Muhammadiyah's involvement in various national forums and programs can be understood as part of the organization's strategy to strengthen the position of civil society in the national development process.

One prominent form of Muhammadiyah involvement is the participation of its cadres and organizational figures in the government structure known as the Red and White Cabinet during Prabowo Subianto's leadership. The presence of figures with Muhammadiyah backgrounds in the cabinet demonstrates a more open space for interaction between the state and civil society organizations. From an institutional political perspective, the involvement of individuals with civil society backgrounds in government structures can strengthen communication between the state and society. This allows moral values and social aspirations developing within civil society to influence the direction of public policy taken by the government (North, 1990).

In addition to its participation in the cabinet, Muhammadiyah has also demonstrated its involvement in various strategic economic development sectors, including policies related to mining business permits (IUP). In this context, Muhammadiyah's involvement is not only about participation in the economic sector but also about efforts to ensure that natural resource management is carried out in a more equitable and sustainable manner. As a civil society organization with an extensive social network, Muhammadiyah has the potential to play a role as a moral watchdog against economic practices that have the potential to harm the community or the environment. Thus, participation in this sector can be seen as an effort to strengthen the principle of social justice in natural resource governance (Hefner, 2011).

Muhammadiyah's involvement is also evident in various government social programs aimed at improving community welfare, including the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program, which is part of the government's social policy agenda. Muhammadiyah's participation in such programs reflects how civil society organizations can collaborate with the state in efforts to improve the quality of life of the community, particularly in the areas of health and nutrition. Through its extensive network of charitable enterprises, Muhammadiyah has considerable institutional capacity to support the implementation of various government social programs at the community level. This type of collaboration demonstrates that the relationship between the state and civil society is not always antagonistic, but can develop into a complementary partnership in social development efforts (Burhani, 2018).

In addition to its involvement in domestic programs, Muhammadiyah has increasingly played an active role in humanitarian diplomacy and global peace through various international forums. One initiative reflecting this role is its involvement in the Board of Peace (BoP), which aims to promote dialogue, humanitarian solidarity, and peaceful conflict resolution. In a global context marked by increasing conflict and geopolitical tensions, the presence of religious organizations in international peace forums is increasingly important. Organizations like Muhammadiyah can bring moral and humanitarian perspectives that are often underrepresented in formal state diplomacy.

Its role in international forums such as these also demonstrates that Muhammadiyah functions not only as a domestic social organization but also as part of a transnational civil society network that contributes to building global peace and solidarity. Through socio-religious diplomacy, Muhammadiyah

strives to promote a moderate model of Islam that prioritizes the values of tolerance, dialogue, and humanity. This approach also strengthens Indonesia's position as a country with an inclusive and democratic Islamic tradition in the global arena.

Overall, Muhammadiyah's various forms of involvement in the cabinet, strategic economic sectors, government social programs, and global peace forums demonstrate a transformation in the organization's strategy to strengthen its role as a civil society actor. This strategy demonstrates that Muhammadiyah serves not only as an external critic of the state but also as a dialogue partner capable of contributing constructively in various development areas. With this approach, Muhammadiyah strives to maintain a balance between moral independence as a civil society organization and practical involvement in the nation's development process.

This transformation ultimately demonstrates that Muhammadiyah's role in society is no longer limited to da'wah activities and social services, but also encompasses participation in broader political, economic, and humanitarian processes. In this context, Muhammadiyah can be understood as a bridge connecting the state and society, where religious moral values are translated into public policy practices and social actions aimed at improving welfare and maintaining the sustainability of democracy in Indonesia.

Increasing the Participation of Muhammadiyah Cadres in the National Government Structure

The transformation of Muhammadiyah's political strategy in recent years has significant implications for the dynamics of relations between religion and state in Indonesia. In the context of pluralistic democracy, religious organizations no longer serve solely as moral forces outside the state but also as strategic partners contributing to the national development process. The civil Islam perspective developed by Robert W. Hefner explains that Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah can strengthen democracy through public participation, strengthening civil society, and contributing ethically to state policy (Hefner, 2008). With its extensive educational, health, and social networks, Muhammadiyah plays a role in building a culture of democracy while strengthening civil society's capacity to monitor state power.

One concrete implication of this transformation was the increased participation of Muhammadiyah cadres in the national government structure during the Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka administrations, through the formation of the Red and White Cabinet. This involvement reflected the state's recognition of the intellectual and professional capacity of Muhammadiyah cadres and demonstrated that civil society organizations can contribute constructively to governance without transforming into political parties.

Several Muhammadiyah figures hold important positions in the cabinet, including Abdul Mu'ti as Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Muhadjir Effendy as Special Advisor to the President for Hajj, and Raja Juli Antoni as Minister of Forestry. Additionally, Fauzan and Fajar Riza UI Haq serve as deputy ministers for education and science, and Dzulfikar Ahmad Tawalla and Dahnil Anzar Simanjuntak, respectively, in the areas of migrant worker protection and Hajj management.

The presence of Muhammadiyah cadres within the government structure demonstrates two important dimensions. First, Muhammadiyah not only produces professional and competent human resources, but also brings ethical values, integrity, and the principles of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (proselytizing and enjoining good and forbidding evil) into the public policy formulation process. Second, this involvement affirms Muhammadiyah's position as a civil society force that maintains its moral independence while still contributing constructively to national development.

Thus, the increased participation of Muhammadiyah cadres in government demonstrates the development of a more dialogical relationship between religion and state in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah maintains its position as a moral force in civil society while also serving as a strategic partner for the state in promoting public policies oriented toward social justice, education, and public welfare.

Mining Issues as a Strategic Test for Muhammadiyah's Transformation

The mining issue has become one of the most complex strategic challenges in the transformation of Muhammadiyah's political thinking during the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka administration. The discourse on the involvement of religious organizations in natural resource management emerged in line with government policies that opened up the possibility of granting Mining Business Permits (IUP) to community organizations through new regulations. In this context, Muhammadiyah faces a strategic dilemma: maintaining its moral standing as a critical civil society force against the state and opening up the possibility of participation in economic resource management, which could potentially strengthen the organization's independence.

On the one hand, some senior Muhammadiyah leaders and intellectuals view involvement in natural resource management as part of a strategy to strengthen the organization's economic independence. This approach is based on the consideration that ethical resource management can provide funding for various Muhammadiyah charitable endeavors, such as education, health, and community empowerment programs. With its extensive network of social institutions, Muhammadiyah is considered to have the capacity to manage economic resources more responsibly than the exploitation model, which has often been criticized for its social and ecological impacts.

However, on the other hand, criticism has also emerged from young intellectuals and civil society activists who worry that involvement in the mining sector could weaken Muhammadiyah's critical stance on environmental issues, agrarian conflicts, and the economic inequality that often accompanies natural resource exploitation. These concerns reflect the tension between the Islamic movement's moral idealism and increasingly complex political and economic realities. This phenomenon marks a significant shift in the organization's dynamics: from a movement that previously emphasized moral criticism from outside the system to a more realistic and strategic approach to addressing the dynamics of national development.

In response to these dynamics, the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership has finally decided to consider accepting the offer of a Mining Business Permit (IUP) as stipulated in Government Regulation Number 25 of 2024 concerning the Implementation of Mineral and Coal Mining Business Activities. This decision was made after careful organizational consideration and affirms Muhammadiyah's autonomy in determining its stance on state policy. The General Chair of PP Muhammadiyah, Haedar Nashir, emphasized that the decision was not made under pressure from any party and remains subject to evaluation if it is later proven to have more negative impacts than expected social benefits.

According to Haedar Nashir, Muhammadiyah's readiness to consider mining management is based on the organization's primary goal, which is to achieve social justice and the welfare of the wider community. Within this framework, Muhammadiyah is committed to making natural resource management a means of social empowerment rather than a profit-oriented economic activity. Profits generated from this sector are planned to be returned to strengthen Muhammadiyah's charitable endeavors, such as building schools, hospitals, and various community empowerment programs in various regions.

This approach demonstrates Muhammadiyah's efforts to frame mining issues within a social ethics and economic justice framework. Muhammadiyah emphasizes that mining should not be viewed solely as a source of unlimited economic profit, but also as a source of risk that must be completely avoided. This moderate approach reflects the organization's efforts to balance economic pragmatism with moral responsibility to the environment and society.

This view is further reinforced by the theological perspective presented by DikDik Dahlan Lukman in this research interview. He emphasized that in Islamic law, humans are positioned not only as servants of God performing ritual worship, but also as caliphs on earth with the responsibility to prosper and wisely manage natural resources. Therefore, involvement in mining management is fundamentally possible as long as the entire process, from upstream to downstream, is conducted in a manner that benefits the people, nation, and state.

The author's interviews with four other sources on March 11–12, 2026, revealed a fairly diverse spectrum of views regarding the policy of granting IUPs to religious organizations. The four sources were Rizal Fadilah, Tia Mutia Umar, Imam Suprayogo, and Agus Rahmat Nugraha, an activist with the Garut Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership (PDM). These differing views reflect the dynamics of internal discourse within the Muslim community regarding the relationship between religious mission, socio-economic interests, and the moral responsibility of organizations in the public sphere.

Organizationally, Muhammadiyah is open to the possibility of accepting mining concessions based on a comprehensive study as part of the organization's social and religious responsibilities. This discourse was seriously discussed at the Tanwir Muhammadiyah forum in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, which emphasized the organization's commitment to contributing to improving the governance of national mining resources, which has often been criticized for issues of transparency, benefit distribution, and environmental impact. However, at the time of this research, Muhammadiyah had not officially received the mining business permit.

Muhammadiyah also emphasized that involvement in the mining sector must be based on the principle of not-for-profit. This means that mine management is not aimed at accumulating corporate profits, but rather to support the organization's social mission through community empowerment programs, strengthening education, and improving health services. To uphold this principle, Muhammadiyah plans to implement

professional management through partnerships with the Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah Higher Education (PTMA) network and by establishing strict oversight mechanisms to ensure activities remain oriented toward social welfare and environmental sustainability.

Amidst this organizational position, normative debates have also emerged among intellectuals and civil society activists. Rizal Fadilah argued that Muhammadiyah should reject the offer to manage the mine because it could potentially drag the Islamic missionary institution into a vested political-economic arena and risk weakening the organization's independence and critical thinking. Conversely, Tia Mutia Umar opened up the possibility of involvement, provided that management adheres to sharia law, is ecologically responsible, and prioritizes the welfare of the community.

Meanwhile, Imam Suprayogo places this issue within a broader philosophical framework, emphasizing that the primary mission of religious institutions is to safeguard the morality and character of society. Therefore, religious organizations need to be careful not to become too involved in technical economic matters that could potentially create a conflict of interest. Contrary to this view, Agus Rahmat Nugraha views Muhammadiyah's involvement in natural resource management as an opportunity to strengthen the organization's economic independence while simultaneously increasing its social contribution, as long as it remains within the framework of da'wah values and social ethics.

Overall, these various perspectives demonstrate that the discourse on Muhammadiyah's involvement in the mining sector falls within a broad spectrum of normative and strategic debates. Some emphasize the importance of maintaining moral independence and a focus on da'wah (Islamic outreach), while others see the possibility of ethically utilizing economic resources to improve the welfare of the community. In this context, Muhammadiyah's approach, which emphasizes the principle of not-for-profit, an orientation toward social welfare, and a commitment to environmental sustainability, can be understood as an effort to negotiate a new role for Islamic civil society in the political economy of natural resources without losing its commitment to its da'wah mission and the organization's moral responsibility.

Muhammadiyah's Attitude towards the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG)

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) initiated by the government is viewed by Muhammadiyah as a strategic policy to improve the quality of Indonesian human resources, especially for children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers. Following up on the memorandum of understanding between the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership and the National Nutrition Agency in the 2024 Muhammadiyah Tanwir, Haedar Nashir emphasized Muhammadiyah's readiness to support the implementation of the program through the development of Nutrition Fulfillment Service Units (SPPG) in various regions, with an initial pilot project in Minggir, Sleman, Yogyakarta. This support is based on the view that improving the quality of community nutrition is part of an effort to strengthen the nation's competitiveness while realizing Muhammadiyah's social da'wah mission based on the values of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar and the social ethics of Al-Ma'un.

With its extensive network of charitable enterprises—including schools, Islamic boarding schools, universities, hospitals, and various social institutions—Muhammadiyah has the institutional infrastructure and managerial capacity to significantly contribute to the implementation of development programs based on improving human quality. This is reflected in the launch of 105 SPPG kitchens at Muhammadiyah University Surakarta on October 24, 2024, which symbolized Muhammadiyah's concrete contribution to supporting the MBG program. Through this service network, hundreds of nutrition service units have been established to reach hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries, supported by professional staff in the fields of nutrition, management, and administration.

Interviews with several sources revealed a spectrum of views on the implementation of the MBG program. DikDik Dahlan Lukman emphasized that the involvement of religious organizations in state social programs is permissible as long as it is based on the principles of benefit and fair distribution of benefits. Meanwhile, Rizal Fadilah highlighted the potential for policy deviations if the program is not accompanied by a strong oversight mechanism. Tia Mutia Umar emphasized the importance of community-based oversight involving parents and teachers to ensure the program truly achieves its goal of improving nutrition. From a moderate perspective, Prof. Imam Suprayogo views the MBG as a program with good intentions and the potential for broad socio-economic impacts, but requires careful planning and oversight for effective implementation.

On the other hand, Agus Rahmat Nugraha views Muhammadiyah's involvement as a form of active civil society contribution to the implementation of public policy. Muhammadiyah plays a role through the

development of SPPG (Nursing and Nutrition Program), national and regional coordination, and strengthening nutritional quality control and service distribution. This program is implemented through various service models—based in schools, Islamic boarding schools, orphanages, campuses, and communities—based on the principles of not-for-profit, empowerment of local MSMEs, and social and environmental sustainability.

Conceptually, Muhammadiyah's involvement in the MBG program reflects a blend of religious ethical values and organizational pragmatism in responding to state policy. Muhammadiyah acts not only as a moral watchdog of public policy, but also as a hybrid actor that combines the roles of civil society and social service provider. Within this framework, the MBG program can be understood as a meeting point between the Islamic philanthropic tradition long developed by Muhammadiyah through zakat, infaq, sedekah, and social services with the welfare state policies expanded by the government. Muhammadiyah's involvement demonstrates how religious organizations can bridge the relationship between the state and society through professional, participatory, and public-benefit-oriented social services.

Thus, Muhammadiyah's stance on the MBG program is not merely operational but also strategic. This organizational support demonstrates Muhammadiyah's transformation from a social philanthropy movement to a key actor in the national welfare policy ecosystem. This position strengthens Muhammadiyah's role as a civil society force capable of collaborating with the state to improve community welfare while maintaining its moral independence and missionary orientation.

Muhammadiyah's Attitude towards the Board of Peace (BoP) Initiative

In the dynamics of international diplomacy related to the Gaza conflict, the global community, through the United Nations Security Council, is working to reduce the escalation of violence and the humanitarian crisis. One important step was the adoption of Resolution 2728 on March 25, 2024, which called for a ceasefire during Ramadan, the release of hostages, and expanded access to humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza. The resolution reflects the international consensus on the urgency of protecting civilians and is part of global diplomatic efforts to pave the way for a more sustainable peace process.

In this context, Muhammadiyah, through the Institute for International Relations and Cooperation (LHKI), held a Focus Group Discussion on February 5, 2026, to examine the Indonesian government's policy on the Board of Peace (BoP) initiative. This forum aimed to provide strategic input to the government to ensure Indonesia's involvement in international peace mechanisms remains in line with its constitutional mandate and principles of global justice.

In general, Muhammadiyah believes that any peacemaking effort must be based on the principles of justice, the legitimacy of international law, and respect for human rights. The organization highlights several issues with the BoP initiative, including the unclear legal basis for its establishment in relation to UN resolutions, the lack of a clear roadmap to Palestinian independence, and the potential concentration of power within the institution's leadership structure. For Muhammadiyah, a peacemaking mechanism that fails to address the root of the conflict—namely, ending the occupation and colonization of Palestinian territories—risks creating a false and unsustainable peace.

Interviews with several sources revealed a diverse spectrum of views regarding the BoP initiative and Indonesia's involvement. Dikdik Dahlan Lukman emphasized that any peacemaking mechanism must involve all parties affected by the conflict, including Palestine, so that the aspirations of the Gazan people can be directly incorporated into the decision-making process. He also emphasized the importance of involving neutral international actors committed to global peace, free from specific geopolitical interests.

Meanwhile, Rizal Fadilah views the BoP as an initiative fraught with geopolitical interests and potentially benefiting certain parties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He even criticized the mechanism as a form of "Blood of Peace," because, according to him, the peace offered does not address the root causes of the occupation of Palestinian territories and has the potential to ignore the suffering of victims of the conflict in Gaza. A similar criticism was expressed by Tia Mutia Umar, who highlighted the risks to Indonesia's moral legitimacy if it participates in a mechanism that could potentially favor the strategic interests of certain countries, especially those related to global geopolitical dynamics.

From a more moderate perspective, Prof. Imam Suprayogo places the BoP issue within a normative framework, emphasizing that good intentions in peace initiatives do not always guarantee successful implementation. He believes that peace can only be achieved if the mechanisms established are fair, transparent, and involve all parties involved in the conflict. Without these principles, Indonesia's involvement could place the country in a diplomatic dilemma.

A more strategic view was expressed by Agus Rahmat Nugraha, who referred to Muhammadiyah's official stance on the BoP. He highlighted several fundamental problems, such as the weak legal basis for the initiative's formation, its inconsistency with several UN resolutions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the potential dominance of certain actors, which could create an unaccountable global authority structure. Agus also emphasized the imbalance in representation within the BoP's membership, where Israel is allowed to participate while Palestine is denied equal representation.

Based on this study, Muhammadiyah formulated several strategic recommendations to the Indonesian government, including postponing its commitment to permanent membership until the organization's legitimacy is clear, ensuring Palestinian representation within the BoP structure, directing Indonesia's contributions to humanitarian missions and the reconstruction of Gaza, and considering the option of withdrawing if the principles of justice and Palestinian sovereignty are not accommodated. These recommendations reflect a values-based diplomatic approach that grounds every international peace initiative in the principle of no peace without justice.

Thus, the analysis of the interview results indicates that Muhammadiyah's stance on the BoP is critical yet constructive. The organization supports global peace efforts but emphasizes that sustainable peace must be based on justice, the legitimacy of international law, and respect for the rights of the Palestinian people. This position demonstrates Muhammadiyah's role as a civil society actor not only involved in global humanitarian diplomacy but also serves as a moral force providing ethical guidance for Indonesian foreign policy.

Table 1.
Research Findings of the Author

Findings Categories	Empirical Indicators	Interview Data	Theoretical Analysis	Implications
Transformation of Muhammadiyah's political thinking	A shift from moral criticism of the state to strategic engagement in public policy	Several sources stated that Muhammadiyah currently prefers a dialogical and participatory approach in responding to state policies.	The concept of civil Islam explains that moderate Islamic organizations can act as democratic actors that bridge religious values and modern political practices (Robert W. Hefner)	Muhammadiyah strengthens its position as an adaptive civil society actor in Indonesian democracy.
Participation in government	The involvement of Muhammadiyah cadres in the government structure during the leadership era of Prabowo Subianto – Gibran Rakabuming Raka	The source assessed that the involvement of cadres in government is a form of national contribution, not subordination of the organization to the state.	The state–civil society negotiation perspective explains that the relationship between the state and civil society is dynamic and involves a process of negotiating interests.	Opening up communication space between the state and civil society in the policy-making process
Participation in strategic economic policies (IUP)	Discourse on Muhammadiyah's involvement in managing natural resources through mining business permits	The resource person assessed that this involvement needs to remain oriented towards public welfare and environmental ethics.	Institutional analysis shows that civil society organizations can play a role in economic governance through institutional mechanisms (Douglass C. North)	Describes the expanding role of civil society in the economic and resource management sectors.
Collaboration on social welfare programs	Muhammadiyah's support for the Free Nutritious Meals program through its	The resource person assessed that Muhammadiyah's education and health	The concept of Islamic civic engagement explains that religious	Strengthening partnerships between the state and civil society in

	network of charitable enterprises	network enables the organization to contribute directly to social welfare programs.	organizations can be important actors in community social services.	social development
Global humanitarian diplomacy	Muhammadiyah's involvement in international discourse regarding peace and humanity, including the Palestinian issue	The resource person assessed that Muhammadiyah has a moral responsibility to be involved in global humanitarian issues.	The transnational civil society perspective explains that civil society organizations can play a role in non-state diplomacy and global advocacy.	Expanding Muhammadiyah's role as an actor of moral diplomacy at the international level
Dynamics of internal organizational discourse	Differences of opinion among Muhammadiyah figures regarding the strategy of engagement with the state	The interviewees showed a spectrum of views from critical to collaborative.	The theory of deliberative democracy emphasizes the importance of internal dialogue spaces in civil society organizations (Jurgen Habermas)	Shows that the internal dynamics of an organization are part of the democratic process in civil society.
Model of religion-state relations	Muhammadiyah maintains an independent and dialogical position towards the state.	The resource person emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between the moral oversight function and policy cooperation.	The concept of twin tolerations explains the relationship of mutual respect between religious and state institutions in a democratic system (Alfred Stepan)	Demonstrates a constructive model of religion-state relations in Indonesian democracy.

CONCLUSION

Several main findings can be summarized as follows. This research shows that Muhammadiyah's intellectual political thinking during the Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka administrations underwent a transformation toward a more strategic and adaptive approach to contemporary political dynamics. This change demonstrates Muhammadiyah's ability to reinterpret its political role within the framework of social da'wah and national responsibility without abandoning its identity as a progressive Islamic movement. This transformation has implications for Muhammadiyah's evolving strategy to strengthen civil society through a combination of critical, participatory, and collaborative roles across public policy, social services, and humanitarian diplomacy. This underscores Muhammadiyah's capacity as a civil society actor with the institutional resources and moral legitimacy to promote more inclusive social development. In the context of religion-state relations in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah's position demonstrates a constructive and dialogical relationship. This organization maintains its moral function as a social watchdog while contributing to the nation's development process, thus demonstrating a model of religion-state relations that balances public participation, organizational independence, and a commitment to democratic values and social justice.

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