



LEARNING FROM MUHAMMADIYĀH AND AL-WASHLIYĀH: DEVELOPMENTAL POLITIC OF ISLAMIC CIVIL SOCIETY

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Abstract

This study provides an insight of the model and orientation of developmental politics of Islamic civil societies i.e. Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah. The two societies have demonstrated a different political model. Muhammadiyah represents a modern Islamic perspective, while Al-Washliyah intends to a conservative thinking model. The two developmental politics are indeed different in regard with ideological thoughts. The Al-Washliyah's political orientations are strongly influenced by the Mazhab (school of thoughts) as the fundamental-ideological reference. Meanwhile, the Muhammadiyah's thinking is more progressive with their Islamic modern perspective to the existing condition. The both societies have given a lot of peculiar positive impacts in levelling up the society's welfare in the city of Medan, such as in education, healthcare and economic sectors. In spite of the enhanced societal developments, the both societies are also actively involved in the political practices, with the primary aim to obtain strategic political posts. Most of political preference is mainly to accommodate the interests of Muslim society as well as Mardhatillah (worship). It is worth noting that the knowledge of Islamic developmental model is beneficial as an alternative model of developmental politic in devoting to the society's welfare enhancements.

Keywords: Developmental Model, Muhammadiyah, Al-Washliyah, Islamic Civil Society

INTRODUCTION

The developmental politic can be perceived as an essential direction or orientation towards developmental choices, like ideology, approaches, system, and strategies or developing model on the development processes. Developmental politics play a significant role in determining the orientation or directional purposes in the societal developments (Kusmanto & Amin, 2022). Currently, the developmental politics have implied the emerging of a numerous paradoxical phenomena within the society that are indicated by the growing number of poverty, criminal actions, environmental destruction, and so forth. Directional purposes or orientation of the development tend to create secularistic, capitalistic and materialistic points of view which implicitly causing a number of social phenomena within the society (Salleh, 2003; Gasper, 2004).

Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah are two Islamic civil society having the largest number of followers in the city of Medan (Indonesia). From the political perspective points of view, both civil societies are well-recognized for their significant contributions in improving the society's welfare through the implementation of effective developmental models in education, healthcare and economic sectors. During the reformation era, the both civil societies are even known to have had involved in the political practices, indicating by their movements in encouraging the Islamic societies to drive reformation processes (Kusmanto, 2013). Democracy that was resulted from the reformation processes apparently implied to the rise of Islamic developmental politics which eventually facilitating the involvement of civil society and individual person in all aspects of political practices. It can be noted that the both civil societies had played an important role in the Indonesia's history, driving this country into the democratisation era (Kusmanto, 2017).

In spite of those positive contributions in the political developments, the existence of both civil societies has significantly given a lots of advantageous developments for the society in religious aspects, social, economy and education. The most significant contribution is noticed in the education sector, and economic activities. Therefore, a lot of attempts in economic activities will be needed to support the enhanced society's welfare including the establishment of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In fact, many civil societies and people have no access to the several economic stimulus programs that are created by the government (Kusmanto, 2021).

The role of both civil societies in the political developments and social activities is apparent in levelling-up the society's welfare, especially their followers and members. The models of developmental politic that are performed clearly enable to drive the development processes, although these two civil societies were

initially established to spread out the Islamic ideology through education and preaching activities. Many of their members eventually involved in the political practices (Warjio, 2003).

This article is devoted to analyse the role of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in the societal developments in the city of Medan, and to elaborate their models of developmental politic and political orientation. There are two important hypotheses proposed in this study. Firstly, the development is not merely resulted through the economic processes, indeed it could be derived from the political orientation. Secondly, the developmental politics clearly determine the directional purposes or orientation of societal development. It is noted the meaningful societal contributions of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah as the two largest civil societies in the city of Medan. The fruitfulness of their models of developmental politic has inspired the Author to learn and analyse their Islamic political strategies, conceptual thoughts, and the directional purposes. The knowledge of their Islamic development models is beneficial to construct an alternative developmental policy in the city of Medan.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approaches

Qualitative research methodology was used to elaborate the obtained qualitative data such as political model, orientation, strategy, and developmental politics of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah in the city of Medan. The city of Medan (Indonesia) was used as the research locus, considering this city as the initial place of Al-Washliyah Islamic society was established. Furthermore, this city also gives an apparent political impact in the developmental politic in Indonesia. The method for data collection consisted of observation, interview, literature review or documentation, and forum group discussion (FGD), respectively. The FGD was aimed to obtain more insight and re-examination all the data obtained from the observation and interview stages.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through a consecutive two-stage method i.e. data description and data analysis. In the first stage, the collected data was described and categorized according to the type of data. In the second stage, all the categorized data was analyzed according to fundamental thinking approaches of developmental politics. The fundamental approaches and observation data were aligned, briefly discussed and analysed, respectively.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Historical perspective of Islamization in Indonesia

The spread of Islam in Southeast Asian countries was initially conducted by Arab traders during the trading period from 1450 to 1680 (Faillard, 1993). Most of the Arab traders were also known as Islamic scholars. During the trading activities, they also preached about Islam and then attracted the local leaders/king to accept Islam as their belief. However, Islam might have been spread throughout Indonesia before the arrival of Arab traders carried out by other Islamic scholars who deliberately spread the Islam, as evidenced by the existence of tombstones from the XI century in East Java (Abdullah, 1991).

The role of ulāma (Islamic scholars) was proven from the Islamization process which tended to be a King-centric (Hefner, 2009). All the kings were preached to embrace Islam as their belief, aiming for an Islamization process that was more progressive. According to an archaeological evidence (such as tombstones in Samudera Pasai) and traditional historiography (such as the story of the Pasai Kingdom and Malay history) which have precise accuracy regarding the history of Islam in Indonesia, it could be affirmed that the Islamic Kingdom was built at the end of the thirteenth century in Aceh (Abdullah, 1991).

The spread of Islam by scholars to indigenous peoples was mainly carried out personally or privately through a Sufistic approach (purification of the soul) (Hefner, 2009). This sufistic approach was reported successful to influence the native people to embrace Islam as their true belief, gradually leaving the ancient myths as their faith.

Likewise, Islamization with a formal approach (aqidāh, shari'ah, ubudiyah, muamalah, etc.), Sufism underwent a domestication process along with Animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Accordingly, it then caused the rise of the flow of Syncretism. Some cases had shown a number of attempts to uphold or purify the religion of Islam, such as the case of Sheikh Siti Jenar who had been punished by Wali Songo (Nine Ulāma) and the burning out of the holy book belonging to Hamzah Fansuri and Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani.

Efforts to purify religion had increased along with the increasing number of Indonesian young people who studied about Islam in the Middle-East countries. On the other hand, the spread of Wahhabi movement implied to the high concern for fiqh (Islamic rule) enforcements. As a result, the Padre war was happened in West Sumatra. Efforts to purify and teach the fiqh rule had encouraged the rise of Islamic civil society and Islamic boarding schools in Java and Sumatra (Abdullah, 1991).



Islamic civil society: conceptual thinking

Studies of Islamic civil societies shall be placed under the context of Islamic society to discover the characteristics of the independence and volunteerism of Islamic organizations toward the society. Hikam had written about the relationship between Islam and civil society as well as democracy (Hikam, 2000). The study is a compilation from published articles in the Media Indonesia newspaper, reporting the struggle of Islamic societies in a number of aspects of life during the New Order era. The issues discussed were about Islam and the a number challenges of social pluralism and national unity, Islam and human rights, Islam against modernization, Islam against the fundamentalism movement, Islam and civil society in an effort to democratize. It is worth noting from this paper that Islamic organizations actually had played a significant role in determining the processes of government establishment or democracy policies.

In another study, Hefner reported the political struggles of Islamic civil societies and democratization efforts in the early New Order era until the fall of the Suharto government (Hefner, 2009). This study concluded that Muslim society in Indonesia have many differences in ideology, socioeconomic level, and political tendencies. Furthermore, Muslims in Indonesia have a power orientation and have had a major impact on the emergence of various Islamic organizations and political parties which in the end are indicated as pluralism. The importance of having influence in power is the reason for Muslims to accept democracy and freedom. Hefner noted that Nahdlatul Ulāma (NU) as the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia played a major role in providing direction and shape for the future of the Indonesia people (Kusmanto, 2021).

The idea of civil society also emerged from an Islamic terminology as a substitute for the term of civil society. Nurcholish Madjid explained the importance of civil society as the main pillar of democratic political life that can establish the relations with the state (Kusmanto, 2017). Azyumardi Azra wrote a normative understanding of civil society as a civilized society. He noted that it was very important to be able to realize the civil society in a democratic nation life along with cultural strategy.

The concept of civil society is clearly different as compared to the study of civil society as stated by Akram Diya 'Al-Umari about the civil society at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Civil society was established through the Hijrah (moving out) process by the Prophet with his followers from Mecca to Medina (Al-Umari, 2000). The hijrah process formed a community of brotherhood tied by the Islamic creed while the relationship between groups or people religiously dictated through Mitsaq al-Madināh, a constitution in the institutionalization of the city of Medina. This historical presentation clearly showed that civil society was essentially a state according to the concept of a modern state, rather than just a civilized society.

Development of Islamic civil society in Indonesia

Civil society can be defined as a group or organization formed by a community to achieve certain goals and benefits for the community (Setiawan, 1996). In general, civil society consists of a voluntary character, independent (independent) and commitment to norms and doctrines (Hikam, 2000). Essentially, Indonesian civil society is quite equal to civilized society. The concept of civilized society was originally known from Anwar Ibrahim's lecture delivered at the Jakarta Istiqlal Festival on September 26, 1995 (Rahardjo, 1999). In the end, the concept of civilized society became the main topic of interest and was often discussed by many Islamic Indonesian scholars such as Nurcholish Madjid, Dawam Rahardjo, Emil Salim, and Amien Rais. Several authors asserted that civilized society was a Muslim civil society or civil Islam (Hefner, 2009).

Civil society can be interpreted as a voluntary organization that is different from civilized society which has the authority to regulate the life of the tribe, nation, or nation. Civilized society tends to have a character as a policy or city, state or government that is associated with elements of government such as the existence of Islam as an ideology and legal constitution in accordance with Mitsaq al-Madinah.

Islamic civil society is an established organization with the ideology comes from the Islam and devotes itself to realize the best society (Khairu Ummāh) based on the Qur'an (Rahardjo, 1999). The Islamic organizations that exist in Indonesia today are Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah, Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), Al-Irsyad, Nahdlatul Wathan (NW), etc. These organizations aim to develop Khairu Ummah, mainly through da'wāh (preach) and education (Khalimi, 2010).

Islamic civil society is different from conventional civil society, although the both societies have identical characteristics and functions. This of course lies in the concept of Islam, while Islamic civil society shall move to follow the God's orders (Al-Umari, 2000). All the human activities shall refer to God Almighty to get the pleasure of God (Salleh, 2003). It is noted that Islamic civil society is a community unit or organization that is connected by the Qur'an, Islam and the brotherhood as Muslims. Therefore, Islamic civil society can conclusively be defined as an organization that is founded following the basic concepts of Islamic ideology, the Qur'an and brotherhood as Muslims. This is essentially aimed at bringing together all the Muslims in a single community before achieving a triumph and to gain the pleasure of the God, by emphasizing the distinction between Islamic civil society and civil society in general.



Developmental perspective of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah

The Islamic civil societies of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah are known to have different perspective on the developmental activities in Medan. The differences perspective on the developmental concepts as the direction or orientation thoughts, strategies, and the model of development that were constructed in order to strengthen their influential role and existences on all aspects. For example, it can be observed from the number of social facilities built up and provided to improve the developmental activities in education, economic and health promotion sectors (Kusmanto, 2021). The both of civil societies possess a significant different of the number the belonging social facilities, which then determine their political influence on the developmental politics in Medan.

A number of studies about Muhammadiyah and its political role during the Indonesia's New Order regime have been reported. Nakamura (1983) studied the Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta and Ahmad Dahlan's interaction with the Java aristocracy. Damami (2000) investigated the political activities of Muhammadiyah during the Dutch colonialization era. It was reported that the Muhammadiyah activities tended to Islamic education, preachings, and health promotion rather than giving political responses. Meanwhile, Suwarno (2002) studied the historical perspective of the political involvement of Muhammadiyah's members in struggling for independence.

On contrary, the number of studies about Al-Washliyah reported are very limited. To the best of our knowledge, Al-Washliyah was established in Medan, and it has no branches in other cities in Indonesia. Indeed, this becomes one of the difficulties to obtain more information regarding its existences and political role. As a civil society, Al-Washliyah is only recognized in North Sumatera. Therefore, the studies about its fundamental thoughts and developmental politics in the forms of report and journals are quite difficult to be found.

One of the studies reported by Sulaiman (1995) was about the 25 years of Al-Jam'iatul Al-Wahliyah 13 Nov 1930 - 13 Nov 1955. This article reported the history and activities of Al-Washliyah within the period of 25 years. This article did not give clear information about the political thoughts of the Al-Washliyah. Hasanuddin (1988) studied the historical perspective on the early establishment of Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah at the time of Dutch colonialization era from 1930 until 1942 in North Sumatera. She reported the Al-Washliyah's role in struggling the movements of Dutch and Germany missionarists spreading the Christian religion in North Sumatera. As a consequence, the conflict were often raised against the Dutch Colonial that clearly protected the missionarist movements. This study presented a comprehensive report of the Al-Washliyah's role and contribution in struggling the Christianization efforts in North Sumatera.

Model and orientation of developmental politic of Muhammadiyah and Al Washliyah

The development of Muhammadiyah Islamic civil society is experienced by the upper middle class society such as the merchant community and the ulama. Therefore, financial funds devoted to social activities are more easily mobilized around the community. Through this fundraising, they were able to establish a number of institutions aimed at accommodating the needs of the community, such as madrasas, cooperatives, orphanages and nursing homes, health clinics, and hospitals, and others (Hambali, 2006). In addition to established social facilities, they also carry out economic ijtihad in order to emphasize the implementation of Islamic conceptual thinking in building and developing economic activities, such as in the development of Islamic Rural Banks, Baitul Mal Wattanwil, etc. (Jurdi, 2010).

The political concept of Muhammadiyah's development in Medan is driven more by the Islamic modernization cultural movement. This concept perceives Muhammadiyah as an ideal thought that is far from political movements (Nashir, 2006). Although Muhammadiyah is not considered as an ideology, it is often faced with ideological concepts and urgency along with its development. Discussion forums are always held regarding the role of Islamic ideology in the Principles of Nationality, Islamic society, and Islamic political concepts (Suwarno, 2002).

As an ideological thought, Nashir (2006) noted that the proposal to implement tajdid in Muhammadiyah was agreed upon in the 37th Muhammadiyah Congress in 1968 which was held in Yogyakarta. Tajdid includes ideology (beliefs and life goals), the struggle for independence, and economic endeavors. Nevertheless, the use of the term "ideology" is still avoided, instead they use the term "belief and purpose of life" as their ideological concept. This is intended to avoid misinterpretation of ideology in accordance with the Principles of Nationality. The ideological movements of Muhammadiyah could be understood according to its direction and essential thoughts, which are as follows:

1. The ideological movements of Muhammadiyah can be defined as the principle doctrines of struggling for independence which are devoted to perform the Islamic thoughts in all aspects of life.
2. The ideological movements of Muhammadiyah are the manhaj (system, methodology) to bring human beings to belief in God.
3. The ideological movements of Muhammadiyah are the Islamic system and Islamic struggling for tajdid (modernation) towards a better future.

4. The ideological movements of Muhammadiyah comprise of the frame of thoughts in the Principle Statute, beliefs and life-goals, Islamic guidances, and formal thoughts.
5. The ideological movements of Muhammadiyah are the theory and strategy of a comprehensive Islamic struggling which encompasses all aspects of life prior to the raise of Islamic society.
6. The ideological movements of Muhammadiyah are the connecting movements which are realized in the system organizations, jama'ah, leaderships and economical efforts in order to achieve a goal "Islam as the mercy to all creation".

These ideological movements have shaped the politics of Muhammadiyah development in all aspects in Medan such as da'wah, education, social and economic development (Syaifullah, 1997). On the other hand, the political concept of Al-Washliyah development initiated by the scholars is to spread Islamic teachings and thoughts, and prevent Christianization in North Sumatra (Nasution, 2001). Then, they built educational infrastructure ranging from Islamic Kindergartens to Islamic Colleges, orphanages and nursing homes in Medan. In addition, cooperation and Baitul Mal Wattanwil were also established, but the economic effort was not as big as Muhammadiyah (Ja'far, 2011).

Initially, Al-Washliyah was only an organization that was founded and established in North Sumatra, then tried to be developed at the national level by moving the center of Al-Washliyah from Medan to Jakarta (Ja'far, 2014). This organization was able to develop and survive in Jakarta since the Colonialization era, the Old Order, the New Order, until the current reform era. This shows that Al-Washliyah has made many significant contributions in development activities for the entire community in Jakarta, together with Muhammadiyah and other Islamic organizations (Ja'far, 2015).

Al-Washliyah is an Islamic organization that puts forward cultural movements as role models for the development of the spread of Islamic ideology and thought (Ja'far and Mushlih, 2007). Islamic ideology as an essential thought of cultural movements is more effective in developing Islamic culture than Islamic formality movements that want the revival of an Islamic State (Ja'far, 2011). It should be noted that this kind of development policy has been the main factor in the continued existence of Al-Washliyah, since the Dutch colonial era until the current reform era.

In spite of carrying out preaching and society developments, the Islamic civil societies were indeed involved in political practices through two models of political involvement in order to obtain the political position and power, fighting for the interests of Muslims. The first model had been shown by the involvement of the society's members in a number of political parties. Then they fought through the political parties to achieve the political position in legislative and executive boards. The second model was exhibited by the establishment of political parties. It was shown that the Muhammadiyah used the second model to obtain political position and power in Indonesia by establishing the Partai Amanah Rakyat, PAN (People's Trust Party), while the Al-Washliyah adopted the first model. Therefore, most of the Muhammadiyah's members would be the PAN's constituents, in meantime, the Al-Washliyah's members were spread out according to their political parties. In North Sumatera, the Al-Washliyah are the main voters for the election of Regional Representative Council, because the enormous number of Al-Washliyah members as compared with the Muhammadiyah.


CONCLUSION

The Islamic civil societies of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah are known to have different perspective on the developmental activities in Medan. The Muhammadiyah represents modern thought, while the Al-Washliyah still keeps the conventional thought. The differences perspective on the developmental concepts as the direction or orientation thoughts, and the model of development are constructed to strengthen their influential role and existences on all aspects. Their developmental politics have contributed positively to the society formation which are obviously different than the capitalistic developmental politics that only emphasize on the materialistic achievements.

The developmental politics of Muhammadiyah in Medan are mostly driven by the cultural movements of Islamic modernization. The concept perceives Muhammadiyah as an ideal thought which is far from political movements. Nevertheless, it often deals against with the ideological concepts and urgencies along with its development. Meanwhile, the concepts of developmental politics belong to Al-Washliyah that is initiated by the Islamic scholars, aiming to spread the Islamic teachings and thoughts, and to prevent the Christianization movements in North Sumatera. Conclusively, the role effects and formative politics of Muhammadiyah and Al-Washliyah have provided a lot of contributions on the developmental activities in the city of Medan. The fruitfulness of their Islamic developmental politics is beneficial in constructing an alternative role model of developmental politics towards a better development in the city of Medan.

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