ISLAM AND THE STATE IN INDONESIA: A Sociological and Historical Perspective

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Abstract: This paper presents an analysis of the process of the birth of the new Muslim intellectual generation in Indonesia who prefer cultural to political movements. This new generation promotes a pivotal movement in driving and encouraging changes in the political concept of Pancasila and Islamic state. In Indonesian history, Muslim intellectuals were considered less dominating than Nationalist intellectuals in shaping the form of the state. In the early history of Indonesian independence, they attempted to promote the importance of Islam as the state official ideology. However, since 1970s there had been changes in the orientation of the Muslim intellectuals’ struggle in that they preferred cultural approaches in the shaping of Indonesian state. As a result, many Muslim intellectuals did not have strong eagerness to promote Islam as the state ideology, but still managed to exert their influences to the state through social and professional organizations. As discussed in this paper, one notable example of these organizations is ICMI, whose establishment and growth have been significant in recent Indonesian history.

Keywords: Islam, the state, multiculturalism, Intellectualism, Indonesia

From Political Parties to Cultural Organizations

The development of political Islam in Indonesia has been characterized by severe tension. This can be seen throughout history, since the early days of Indonesian independence. Soekarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesia’s independence on 17 August 1945, shortly after the surrender of the Japanese to the Allies. Indonesian leaders then prepared to write the state constitution and found the state. In discussing the foundation of the state, there was a heated debate between the nationalists and the Islamists. The Islamists, such as Kiyai Wahid Hasyim and H. Agus Salim, proposed that Islam become the foundation of the state (Thaba, 1996).

The nationalists, such as Soekarno and Hatta, rejected this proposal. However, both the nationalists and the Islamists agreed to form ‘panitia sembilan’ or the Nine Committee. This committee consisted of nine members, five nationalists and four Islamists. The nasionalists were Soekarno, Mohammad Hatta, Ahmad Subarjo, Muhammad Yamin and A.A Maramis, while Kiyai Wahid Hasyim, H. Agus Salim, Abikusno, and Kahar Muzakkar represented the Islamists. This committee
succeeded in composing the Jakarta Charter. In this charter, there were seven additional words, after the first principle in Pancasila, stating that Indonesian people were obliged to practice Islamic Law. However, some nationalists refused to accept these additional words. Finally, after a lengthy debate, the Islamists accepted that these seven words being deleted from Pancasila (Thaba, 1996).

Despite this failure, Islamic leaders did not want to give up. They continued their struggle in another political arena, that of the general election. In 1955, Islamic parties, such as NU and Masyumi, competed in the general election, but neither of them gained a majority of seats. PNI (Partai Nasionalis Indonesia or Indonesian Nationalist Party), the nationalist party, won 22.3% of the votes. Masyumi took 20.9% of the votes and NU received 18.4%. PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia or Indonesian Communist Party), the communist party, gained 16.4% (Thantowi, 2005).

In this case, the Islamic parties only had 230 seats while other parties had 286. Although Islamic parties were not in the majority, in Majelis Konstituante, they continued their attempt to make Islam as the state ideology. In essence, there were three different ideologies promoted by the political parties. The first was an Islamic ideology. It was promoted by Masyumi, NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), PSII (Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia or Indonesian Islamic League Party) and Perti (Pergerakan Tarbiyah Islamiyah or Movement of Islamic Education). The second was Pancasila, supported by PNI, PKI, PSI (Partai Sosialis Indonesia or Indonesian Sosialist Party), IPKI (Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia or League of Supporters of Indonesian Independence), Partai Katholik Republik Indonesia (Indonesian Republic of Catholics Party) and Partai Kristen Indonesia or Indonesian Christian Party. The third was the social-economy ideology. This was presented by the Partai Murba (Partai Musyawarah Rakyat Banyak or People’s Conference Party) (Zuhri, 1987).

But, the ‘real’ competition was between the Islamic ideology proposed by the Islamic parties and Pancasila promoted by the nationalist parties. In fact, there were two votes in the Majelis Konstituante. In the first ballot, the Islamic camp supporting the Jakarta Charter gained 268 votes, while the nationalist camp received 210. And the subsequent ballot, the Islamic group took 265 votes and the nationalist group 210 (Thantowi, 2005). Because there was no majority, the result of this election could not be legalized. It meant that Islamic parties’ effort had failed again (Thaba, 1996).

After the fall of Soekarno’s regime in 1966, the Indonesian people were ruled by a different regime, namely the New Order regime. At the beginning of this era, Indonesian Muslims had great expectations for the future of Indonesian politics. Shortly after the establishment of this new administration, the need for the foundation of an Islamic party was felt by some Muslim leaders. Moh. Hatta, for

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1 The seven additional words in Jakarta Charter or tujuh kata dalam piagam Jakarta are... dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya (Indonesian Muslims are obliged to practice their Islamic law).

2 It is because under Soekarno’s regime, Muslims were dissappointed with his government’s policy. Under this regime, the communist party was legalized and the dissapointment of Muslim community became acute to Soekarno when he did not ban the communist party in Indonesia after Gerakan Tiga Puluh September 1965 known as Gestapu (September’s rebellion in 1965) carried out by the Partai Komunis Indonesia, or Indonesian Communist Party.
instance, wanted to set up an Islamic party called the PDDI (Partai Demokrasi Islam Indonesia, or Indonesian Islamic Democratic Party) in 1966. He sent several letters to Soeharto in order to get support for his efforts to found the party. Unfortunately, Soeharto, in his letter of 17 May 1967, rejected Hatta’s proposal of establishing the party (Noer, 1990).

Another attempt to establish a new Islamic party in modernist Muslim circles came from Muljadi Djoomartono, Lukman Harun, and Mochammad Natsir. In the first place, Muljadi and Harun tried to revive the PII (Partai Islam Indonesia or Indonesian Islamic Party), established in 1938. However, Natsir, one of the ex-Masyumi leaders, succeeded in persuading them to support the idea of the Masyumi’s rehabilitation, instead of reviving the PII (Syamsuddin, 1991).

The former Masyumi’s leaders and the party’s supporters were very optimistic what they intended would be supported by the New Order government. Their great enthusiasm, however, was dampened when ABRI (the Indonesian Armed Force) declared on 21 December 1966 that Masyumi, like the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia or Indonesian Communist Party), had deviated from the Pancasila and the 1945 constitution (Syamsuddin, 1991). Therefore, in line with ABRI’s statement, Soeharto issued a decree on 6 January 1967, stating that he did not accept the idea of rehabilitating the Masyumi (Bajasut, 1972).

It can be assumed that the New Order government’s rejection of the rehabilitation of the Masyumi party was based on the fact that several Masyumi leaders had been involved in the PRRI rebellion of 1958. Also, in the view of the New Order government, this rehabilitation would lead to a new political threat. As a result, former Masyumi leaders and members felt deeply frustrated by this strict government policy (Ismail, 2001).

Another policy that was considered against the Muslim aspirations was Soeharto’s policy proposing Pancasila to be the only ideological foundation for all political parties and mass organizations. Some Muslim scholars, such as Abdul Qadir Jaelani, refused to accept this decision, and as a result, he was sent to prison (Ismail, 2001). This kind of decision forced the Muslim community to accept this policy. Gradually, the Muslim community accepted Pancasila as the only ideological foundation for political parties and mass organizations. It seemed that the government was satisfied with this acceptance (Ismail, 2001).

In return, the government tended to accommodate Islam in some of its policies. However, according to Atho Mudzhar (1990), this accommodation had only to do with cultural Islam, while toward political Islam the government remained suspicious. The establishment of the MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia or Indonesian Council of Ulama) in 1975, for instance, was considered as creating good understanding between the New Order government and Islam. This organization played an important role in bridging the gap between the Muslim community and the government. Some MUI’s programs were very advantageous to Muslim society. In 1991, for instance, the MUI and the New Order government succeeded in sending one thousand Muslim preachers to provide Islamic instruction to Muslim people in various regions in Indonesia.

According to Prof. H.M. Frederspiel (1998), the New Order political system has five prominent characteristics. Firstly, its emphasis on state internal security
and domestic peace, using a military-controlled system. Secondly, its political system which relies on the army, civil servants, and peasant groups to mobilize much of the electorate in each general election. Thirdly, its trust in technocrats in order to further the country’s economic development. Fourthly, its system actively aimed at agriculture development. Fifthly, the active promotion of Pancasila (the five principles) as the only legitimate foundation for all social and political organizations in Indonesia. These five characteristics were strengthened by two realities of the New Order policy. The first was Soeharto’s disagreement to any political activities outside his direct control. The second was potential of political Islam as a potent political force (Schwarz, 1994).

Subsequent to the rise of the New Order, the Indonesian military viewed political Islam negatively. This is not strange, since the military were of the opinion that political Islam had great potency to create instability. Because the New Order focused on economic development, it needed national stability. Therefore, the New Order constructed a new political framework, under which four old Islamic parties (NU, Parmusi, PSII, Perti) became Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) or the United Development Party (Effendy, 2003, See also, Riadi, 1984; Zuhri, 1984). This political party was obliged to replace Islam with Pancasila as its ideological foundation. Furthermore, prior to the general election in 1987, this party also changed its symbol from the Ka`bah to the Star (Tamara, 1988).

There were Muslim intellectuals who could be be divided into two main groups, with regard to their response to the New Order’s policy towards political Islam. The first group was that of scripturalistic Islam. This was represented by an organization called the DDII or Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (Indonesian Council for Islamic Mission). This group felt that Islam should be practiced in all of Indonesia (kaffah) (Nugroho, 2003). This meant that Islamic teaching would formally be governed by the state. Besides the DDII, there were other radical groups promoting political Islam. One of these radical groups was a religious group in the port area of Tanjung Priok. Because of its radical nature, the government attacked this group and killed some of its members.4

The second group responding to the New Order’s policy was that of cultural Islam. This group felt that Islam could be realized in a cultural fashion. This group was against Islam being governed formally by the state. Abdurrahman Wahid was a prominent figure in this group. He said that “[...] using religious politics is a dangerous tendency. Let the government govern and let the religious groups take care of their own affairs.” (Schwarz, 1994, p. 162).

There was a common perception in Indonesian Muslim thought that establishing an Islamic party in Indonesia was impossible, under the New Order administration. Therefore, the latter group was regarded as a rational choice by Muslim intellectuals. They thought that Islamic parties were no longer important tools for pursuing Muslim political interests under the New Order government. Most characteristic of Islamic non-political activities under the New Order

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3*Ka`bah* is a holy shrine in Mecca towards which all Muslims in the world orient their faces during their five daily prayers. This symbol was very important in attracting Muslim to choose PPP.

4This group was informally led by Amir Biki. This group organized religious lectures critical of the New Order policies. Because of this, the military attacked this group and killed many people. This tragedy was called *Peristiwa Tanjung Priok*. 
government was the development of a new Islamic thought. In 1970, Nurcholish Madjid stated that “Islam, yes! Islamic parties, no!” (Madjid, 1991, pp. 178-253). This statement encouraged Muslim people in Indonesia to strengthen and develop their social, cultural and intellectual foundation, in an effort to achieve, progress for Islam.

This new orientation was caused by two main reasons. While the first reason is sociological, the second reason is political (Effendy, 2003). The first reason for this phenomenon is the fact that access to modern education was easier than during the Old Order. This created the rise of new Muslim intellectuals with a background different from the older generation’s. Many of the new Muslim intellectuals were more educated in various disciplines in different universities. They also studied abroad, such as at western educational institutions.

Furthermore, since the 1990s, many Muslim students from the Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) have been sent by the government to study at western universities, such as Leiden University in the Netherlands, and McGill University in Canada. This program has played an important role in creating a new generation of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, promoting cultural Islam rather than political Islam (Vatikiotis, 1993).

While Muslim students from Islamic educational institutions have been sent to western universities, Muslim students from ‘secular’ educational institutions, such as the Indonesian University (UI) and the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) have taken part in many forms of religious activity. One of these activities was religious guidance for the students at the university mosques. While in the 1950s and 1960s the universities there was only place for secular education, since the 1970s there has been a place for Muslim activities. A good example is the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB). On this campus, the Salman Mosques have been centers of activity for Muslim students under Imaduddin Abdurrahim’s guidance, a key figure of the ICMI foundation.

These new Muslim intellectuals entered into various professions, such as the civil service and the sciences. This caused the uprise of the well-educated Muslim in Indonesia (Abdillah, 1997). They can no longer be seen as a marginal group, such as during the Dutch colonial, and the early independence, period. Therefore, the Muslim middle class has grown, due to Muslims’ better education (Abdillah, 1997).

In this sense, Rahardjo argued that there were three empirical phenomena that explain the rise of Muslim middle class in Indonesia. The first phenomenon was the growth of institutions concerned with education and thought. Two of them were the Yayasan Waqaf Paramadina or Paramadina Foundation and the Lembaga Studi Agama dan Filsafat (LSAF) or Institute for Religion and Philosophy Studies. The second phenomenon was the rise of the NGOs or the non-governmental organizations. The third phenomenon was the fact that the government employed many Muslim graduates as civil servants (Rahardjo, 1995).

The second reason that orientation shifted from political parties to cultural organizations is political. In this case, the new Muslim intellectual thought can be understood as adaptation to the New Order system, which was highly suspicious
of political Islam.5 Therefore, they promoted a new format of political Islam. While most of the older generation of Muslim intellectuals who identified as Islamic had struggled for Islamic political parties, as well as for the establishment of an Islamic state, the new generation of Muslim intellectuals did not need an Islamic party to enhance Muslim development. Rather, they participated in cultural organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah, rather than establishing an Islamic party or joining a political party. Gus Dur, for instance, chaired the biggest Muslim organization in Indonesia, the NU. Nurcholish Madjid was also more interested in establishing education institutions, namely Universitas Paramadina (Paramadina University) and Sekolah Madania (Madania School), rather than a political party.

In addition, some prominent Indonesian Muslim intellectual figures promoted Islam, in light of modern methods of scholarship. Although they used various terms, such as Nurcholis Madjid’s inclusive theology, Dawam Rahardjo’s transformative theology, Amien Rais’ horizon of Islam, Kuntowijoyo’s Islamic paradigm, or Syafi’i Maarif’s cultural Islamization, the essence of their thought was similar, that is promoting Islam as a peaceful religion which is an important element in improving the national development (Anwar, 1992).

However, some Muslim intellectuals felt that an organization was an important vehicle towards realizing their aim, and promoting their thought. Therefore, an effort to establish an organization representing educated people was needed. In 1964, a number of Muslim intellectuals created an organization called Persami (Persatuan Sarjana Muslim Indonesia or the Indonesian Muslim Scholars Association). This organization was the first attempt to unite Indonesian Muslim intellectuals. H. Mohammad Subhan Z.E. (the NU General Chairman at that time) was elected as General Chairman and H. Mohammad Sanusi (a member of the Muhammadiyah’s central organizing committee) was chosen as General Secretary (Anwar, 1995).

However, three years after its establishment, there was a conflict within Persami. This internal conflict was basically created by two different factions within Persami, namely the PMII, or Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (the Union of Muslim Students of Indonesia,) and the HMI, or Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Islamic University Students’ Association). The PMII can be identified as an organization falling under the NU, or as a traditionalist group. HMI, however, is linked to the modernist camp. These two organizations competed to gain ascendance in Persami (Uchrowi and Usman Ks, 2000).

As a result, PMII members left Persami in order to establish a new organization called Ikatan Sarjana Islam Indonesia (ISII), or the Affiliation of Indonesian Muslim Scholars. This new organization was created during a NU conference in 1968 (Anwar, 1995). After Subhan and PMII members left Persami, Bintoro Tjokroamidjojo became General Chairman of Persami. However, in 1974, he resigned from Persami’s leadership. After 1974, Persami dissolved (Tempo, 1990). In fact, Persami’s condition was similar to ISII’s. When Subhan passed away in 1970, this organization dissolved (Anwar, 1995).

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5This is because the fact that after the fall of the New Order regime many Muslim intellectuals join political party. Abdurrahman Wahid, for instance, has joined PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa or National Awakening Party). Dawam Rahardjo has become the board of PAN or Partai Amanat Nasional or National Mandate Party.
In 1978, Adi Sasono invited some Muslim intellectuals, including Dawam Rahardjo, Syu’bah Asa, Sugiat S., Ekky Syahruddin, Bur Rusuanto, Utomo Dananjaya, Fachry Ali, Masdar F. Masudi, Muslim Abdurrahman, Mansur Fakih, Abdurrahman Wahid, and many other intellectuals to his home. In this informal meeting, they agreed to modernize Islamic thought in Indonesian society by arranging a weekly discussion, the Majelis Reboan (Wednesday Discussion). This weekly discussion became an important instrument in influencing the new trend of Islamic thought in Indonesia, promoting Islamic values without Islamic parties. They also strongly supported the establishment of the P3M (Pusat Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat or Centre of Pesantren and Society Development) (Wirosardjono, 2000). However, they failed in establishing a Muslim intellectuals’ association.

Because of this failure, in 1984, the Lembaga Studi Agama dan Filsafat (Institute for philosophy and religious studies) and the Majelis Ulama Indonesia, or Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), held a meeting. This meeting was held in Jakarta from 26 to 28 December 1984. There were 31 Indonesian Muslim intellectuals attending the meeting (Anwar, 1992). This meeting was followed by a second meeting. The second meeting was held from 27 and 28 April 1985. Following this meeting, from 15 to 17 May 1985, there was a seminar in Yogyakarta, attended by 75 Muslim intellectuals. This seminar was followed by a gathering in Ciawi, Bogor, on 8 and 9 March in 1986. The participant of this gathering agreed to hold another meeting. Therefore, from 7 and 8 May 1986, there was another meeting in Cibogo. In this meeting, some Muslim intellectuals agreed to form a Muslim intellectuals’ organization. However, they were afraid of the government’s condemnation. In fact, Fuad Amsyari, one of the participants, tried to convince the other participants of the importance of the association. Finally, the participants agreed to form an organization called the Forum Komunikasi Pembangunan Indonesia (FKPI), or Communication Forum for Indonesian Development. They also agreed to choose Ahmad Tirtosudiro as its first general chairman.6

In 1989, Imaduddin Abdur Rahim and Dawam Rahardjo also proposed creating another Muslim intellectuals’ association in Kaliurang, Jogjakarta. This meeting was attended by forty Muslim intellectuals (Hefner, 2000). However, this meeting was disbanded by Indonesian police (Tempo, 1990).

The chronology above shows that Muslim intellectuals were extremely interested in establishing an organization unifying Indonesian Muslim intellectuals. This could not be easily realized for two reasons. The first reason lies in the diverse backgrounds of Muslim intellectuals. Because of their backgrounds were so diverse, they could not be unified easily. The second reason has to do with the state’s approval. Without the state’s permission, it was very difficult for Muslim intellectuals to establish an organization during the New Order. This can be seen

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6It is interesting to note here that there were Muslim intellectuals who always attended the above meeting. They were AM.Saefuddin, Nurcholish Madjid, Amin Aziz, Dawam Rahardjo, Adi Sasono, Amien Rais, Watik Pratiknya, Halide, Ika Rochjatun, K.H.O. Gajahnata, Rusi Syarif Sumadiaga, Fuad Amsyari, Malik Fajar, Ahmad Tirtosudiro, Alamsjah Ratuprawiranagara, Hadimulyo, Jimly Assiddiqie, and Sudirman Teba.
from the process of the establishment of the ICMI (Ikatan Cendikiawan Muslim se-Indonesia or the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals) below.

The Establishment of the ICMI and Muslim Intellectuals’ Response

The idea of the establishing the ICMI was initially proposed by five students of Brawijaya University in Malang. They were Eric Salman, Ali Mundzakir, Mohammad Zaenuri, Awang Surya and Muhammad Iqbal. These students originally came from the Rohis, or Islamic religious activists, on the campus (Kompas, 1990).

This idea first appeared when, on 8 November 1989, Imaduddin Abdurrahim gave a speech at Brawijaya University in Malang. After the speech, there was a discussion between Imaduddin and the students. During this discussion, there was unrest among the participants, caused by an opinion that there was fragmentation among Indonesian Muslim intellectuals. Jakarta’s Muslim intellectuals’ group, Nurcholish Madjid, for instance, was seen to be in opposition to Imaduddin Abdurrahim’s group in Bandung. Therefore, the idea arose to quell the dissension of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, and unite. Responding this idea, Imaduddin Abdurrahim suggested Habibie as unifying figure. Then some students, Erik Salman and his friends, planned organizing a symposium to be attended by Muslim intellectuals. This was proposed to the rector and the dean of Technic Faculty of Brawijaya University. The rector and the dean suggested that they write a proposal. After the proposal was approved by the rector and the dean, the students put their idea to Indonesian Muslim intellectuals in Jakarta.

The students told the Muslim intellectuals that they felt that Muslim intellectuals needed a place to better advance national development. Some Muslim intellectuals, such as Imaduddin Abdurrahim and Dawam Rahadjo, responded positively (Salman, 1990). The students also shared their idea of choosing Habibie as General Chairman of Muslim intellectuals’ association. A number of Muslim intellectuals suggested meeting directly with Habibie (Makka and Mashad, 1997).

After their meeting with these Muslim intellectuals, they went on to approach Habibie, who was Minister of Research and Technology at the time, in order to gain his support (Makka and Mashad, 1997). The first meeting with Habibie was carried out after Jum’at prayer in his office. In this meeting, there was no talk of establishing the Islamic intellectuals’ organization. The students only invited Habibie to give a speech at the symposium about Muslim intellectuals’ contribution in the light of the 21st century. Habibie accepted the invitation and he even invited all the symposium participants to have lunch in PT PINDAD (Indonesian Guns Company) (Makka and Mashad, 1997).

Because Habibie was too busy to write a paper for the symposium, the committee of the symposium wanted to interview Habibie. Based on this interview, the committee would compose the paper for the symposium. The proposal to be

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7It is still obscure whether the idea in choosing Habibie came from these students or from Imaduddin Abur Rahim. I assume the latter.
8I assume that in this first meeting, these students did not propose their idea about the establishment of Muslim intellectuals association since they originally aimed at the agenda of symposium.
interviewed was accepted by Habibie. The interview was done in his office. During the interview, there were three Muslim intellectuals accompanying the symposium committee. These Muslim intellectuals were Dawam Rahardjo, Imaduddin Abdurrahim, and Syafi’i Anwar (Makka and Mashad., 1997). During the interview, they proposed that Habibie become General Chairman of Muslim intellectuals’ association. Although Habibie agreed to this, he wanted to consult with Soeharto about the idea, since he was serving as Soeharto’s minister. Therefore, he wanted to ask permission to become the General Chairman of the association. Moreover, Habibie asked the committee to give him Muslim intellectuals’ signatures as proof that he had been asked to be the General Chairman of this association (Makka and Mashad, 1997). Finally, the students were able to collect forty-nine signatures from Indonesian Muslim intellectuals.

On 3 September 1990, the proposal and the proof were delivered to Soeharto. Because Soeharto had given his permission, Habibie then asked his assistant, Wardiman Djojonegoro, to form a committee in order to prepare the symposium. As a result, the symposium committee was enlarged by adding some Habibie’s assistants as members. The committee’s modification made it more solid.

The symposium committee thus succeeded in inviting President Soeharto to open the symposium and to deliver the keynote speech. Besides the President, many people attending the symposium were directly involved in government, both at the central and provincial level. There were also ministers from the ruling cabinet and an ex-minister from the previous cabinet attending the symposium. They were the State Secretary Minister, Moerdiono, SH; the Highest ABRI Commander, General Try Sutrisno; the Minister of Information Affairs, H. Harmoko; the Minister of Transportation, Ir. Anwar Anas; the Minister of Religious Affairs, H. Munawir Syadzili; the Minister of Education and Culture, Fuad Hassan; and the former Minister of Public Welfare, Alamsyah Ratu Prawiranegara. This reflected the unprecedented government support for the birth of the ICMI.

On the second day of the symposium, Habibie was elected unanimously by the symposium participants, at University Brawijaya Malang, to be the first General Chairman of the organization. This was hardly surprising, since the issue of Habibie becoming the General Chairman of the ICMI had emerged a few days

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9These forty nine Indonesian Muslim intellectuals are: Dr. Ir. Muslimin Nasution, Dr. Saleh Syafradjii, Dr. Ing. Suparno Satika, Suwarto Martosudiro, Ph.D., Prof. Jusuf A. Faisal, Dr. Dipo Alam, Dr. Miftah W, Dr. M. Amin Aziz, Dr. Marwah Daud Ibrahim, Dr. A. Rahman Djay, Prof. A. Baiquni, M.Sc., Dr. Ir. Imamuddin Abdurrahim, dr. H. Sugiat Ahmad Sumadi, Dr. Untung Sukandar, Drs. A. Makmur Makka, Dr. Ir. Ichwanuddin Mawardi, Dr. Muslimin Nasution, Dr. Ir. Syafrie Mangkuprawira, Dr. Ir. Aida Vitalaya S. Hubeis, Dr. Ir. Murasa Sarkaniputra, Dr. Ir. Sri Bintang Pamungkas, Dr. Ir. Isti Rasminah Chailani Syamsidi, Dr. Ir. Zuhal, Msc, Dr. Nurcholish Madjid, Dr. H. Peunoh Daly, Prof. Dr. H.R. Daldiri, Dr. H. Saleh Al-Djufri, Dr. Umar Nimran, MA, Dr. Ir. Lukman Hakim, MS, Dr. Ir. Latief Abadi, M.A., Dr. M.S. Idrus, Dr. Syekhfani, Dr. Huzaimah, Dr. Ir. Ika Rohjatun S, Dr. Muhammad Amin Suma, Dr. Aqib Suminto, Prof. Dr. Harun Nasution, Dr. Satrya Effendi M. Zein, Drs. M. Dawam Rahardjo, Dr. M. Amien Rais, Dr. Yahya Muhaimin, Dr. Ahmad W. Praktinya, Ir. Basit Wahid, Dr. Kuntowijoyo, Dr. Umar Ajenie, Dr. Bambang Setiawan, Dr. Riswandha Imawan, and Dr. Bambang Sudibyo.
before the symposium. After his election, Habibie also was given full authority to form the executive leadership.

With this authority, other members could not interfere with the forming of the ICMI’s executive leadership. Habibie thus chose the ICMI’s board without the agreement of the founders. It came as no surprise that many state officials were been chosen for the ICMI’s board. Dawam Rahardjo, as independent Muslim intellectual, was not chosen as the executive secretary. Rather, Habibie chose Wardiman Djojonegoro, his assistant, for that position. Nurcholish Madjid, a well-known Muslim Intellectual, became the vice president of the council.

In this sense, Habibie differentiated between state-Muslim intellectuals and non-state or independent Muslim intellectuals. The former were state officials, while the latter were not affiliated with the state bureaucracy (Editor, 1991).

Because they disapproved of this decision, some independent Muslim intellectuals group felt disappointed. However, Dawam Rahardjo remained a member of the ICMI’s board. He became the vice president of the council. In contrast, Sri Bintang Pamungkas withdrew from the ICMI directly, after he was chosen by the members of the science and technology department (Makka and Mashad, 1997).

Shortly after the establishment of the ICMI, there were three main responses from Indonesian intellectuals. The first was a favourable response. This response generally declared that the establishment of the ICMI illustrated an effort to integrate Muslims, and to afford them a prominent role in national development. The second was the opposite response. This response particularly declared that the ICMI was a symbol of sectarianism and co-optation of Islam by the state. The third was a neutral response. Indonesian intellectuals in this group argued that there was nothing wrong with the birth of the ICMI. However, they did not join the ICMI (Mardatillah, 1997).

Among Muslim intellectuals, Abdurrahman Wahid was one of the strongest opponents of the establishment of the ICMI. In fact, Abdur Rahman Wahid was the leader of Nahdhatul Ulama organization. This is the largest Muslim traditionalists’ organization in Indonesia. He refused the invitation from some Muslim intellectuals to join the ICMI. Although his name was listed as the ICMI’s advisor, he said that it was illegal. He argued that this organization tended to make Islam more exclusive (Wahid, 1995). He even suspected that the ICMI would found an Islamic state in Indonesia.

Furthermore, Abdurrahman Wahid challenged the ICMI by founding a new organization called Democratic Forum or Fordem (Forum Demokrasi). This organization was established on 16 March 1991 in Cisarua, Bogor. Its members came from various backgrounds. There were Muslim intellectuals such as Abdurrahman Wahid, Djohan Effendy and Aswab Mahasin. However, Christian scholars such as YB Mangunwijaya, Frans-Magnis Suseno, Marsilam Simanjutak, Arief Budiman, Mudji Sutrisno, Aristides Katoppo, Marianne Katoppo, and Chris

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10 In this case, CSIS or centre for strategic of international studies provided a useful document about this interview. In this document, there were some articles and news from 1990 to 1993 about the ICMI from Indonesian newspaper and magazines. This document has useful information about the ICMI. However, only some mass-media had critical news, two of them were Editor and Tempo magazines. It is not surprising since at that time, mass-media was strongly controlled by the state in Indonesia.
Siner Key Timu were also prominent figures supporting the establishment of Fordem (Sahrasad, 2005).

The members of this organization criticized the ICMI. Marsilam Simanjutak said that Habibie and other Muslim intellectuals used the ICMI as a political instrument to gain power. Furthermore, Djohan Effendy felt that the ICMI revived political Islam. He argued that, in fact, political Islam did not make a positive contribution to the Muslim community in Indonesia. On the contrary, he added, from Indonesian experience, reviving political Islam made the state discriminate the Muslim group (Sahrasad, 2005).

However, the majority of Muslim intellectuals supported the establishment of the ICMI or *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals) in 1990, as an organization for the well-educated Muslims in Indonesia. These Muslim intellectuals came from different Muslim organizations in Indonesia, such as Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, and even from NGOs. Also, there were Muslim traditionalists, Ulama, Muslim intellectuals and Muslim modernists. Therefore, the idea of Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002, p. 145) stating that “[…] the ‘ulama and the university-educated Islamists were able to comprehend and interact with each other much more effectively than they had ever done before.” was applicable in this association. Because of the intensive interaction among members of the ICMI, their political agenda cannot be easily elucidated from their discussions and missions.

**The ICMI and Its Political Tendency**

Some scholars view the birth of the ICMI as a corrective measure of the New Order government, which had a preference for the Muslim group. This opinion is represented by R. William Liddle. He divides of the relationship between the Muslim group and the New Order into three parts.

The first period was in the mid-to-late 1960s. In this period, the state concentrated its attention on communism. Liddle (1999) explains:

… perhaps half a million members of the PKI or its affiliated labour, farmer, youth, student, women’s, and other organization were killed in the aftermath of the assassination of six senior army generals on 1 October 1965. Many of these killing were carried out spontaneously by civilians, particularly the religiously devout … but the armed forces, effectively headed after 1 October by Major General Soeharto, played a key role in stimulating and organizing the massacre. (p. 48).

The hegemony of the state began in this period. Soeharto coerced his enemies by using the armed forces as his main base of support. He continued to strengthen his political power by strictly regulating the Muslim activists in Indonesia. Liddle observed that this began in the late 1960s and continued until the mid-1980s. He (1999) writes: “Muslim daily newspaper were closed down or taken over” (p. 48). And even “[…] preachers in Mosques were closely watched and subjected to interrogation” (p. 48).

However, in the mid-1980s, Soeharto no longer regarded the Muslim group as his opponents. Some Muslim scholars then felt they should participate in the
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regime of the New Order. They thought that this was the best opportunity to change some of the state discrimination practiced in the late 1960s to the mid-1980s. It is not surprising that the ICMI programme then tried to improve the quality of human resources in Muslim society. According to Rahardjo (1995), one of the ICMI’s missions is to enhance the quality of Indonesian human resources. He stated that the human quality can be simplified into five K or 5K, namely Kualitas Iman (the quality of belief), Kualitas Pikir (the quality of thought), Kualitas Kerja (the quality of work), Kualitas Karya (the quality of service) and Kualitas Hidup (the quality of life). The ICMI was directed to struggle on the cultural level, in order to achieve this mission.

A further mission of the ICMI is social change and development. The ICMI also has as a mission the encouragement of participation of Muslims and the improvement of the quality of that participation (Rahardjo, 1995). However, in its developmental stage the organization contributed significantly to Indonesian politics during the New Order period. The fact that many of the ICMI members got important positions during the New Order period proves this (Pelita, 1991).

Taufik Abdullah (1996) wrote:

…its birth, nonetheless, reflects prevailing intellectuals and political spheres that have been emerging in Indonesia in two last decades. The latest political events-the general election, the re-election of President Soeharto, and the formation of the new cabinet-have emphasized the political significance of the emergence of ICMI. (p. 57).

In Indonesian politics, this process was called as “penghijauan” (greening) (Hefner, 1997). It is a political term indicating that many Muslims were playing more prominent roles in Indonesian politics. It can be seen from the fact that there many Muslims were appointed as members of the Indonesian people’s consultative assembly (DPR), reflecting the political clout of the ICMI.

Therefore, it can be assumed that there was a political tendency in the ICMI. There were at least two factors. The first factor is that there was a the ICMI members felt a need to get support from the state in order to enhance Islamic values both in the state and in society. It is not surprising that some of the founders of this organization were ex-Masyumi members and “[...] many of them long-standing critics of the New Order’s policies toward Islam and even of the regime itself” (Liddle, 1999, p. 49).

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

Moreover, Soeharto allowed some Islamic programmes to be implemented together with other (national) programmes. This can be seen from the ICMI
programme supported by Soeharto. The publication of the Islamic newspaper, Republika, is only one example of this programs. This Islamic newspaper is published in order to counter ‘secular’ newspapers such as Kompas and Suara Pembaruan.

Therefore, many Islamic scholars viewed that the birth of the ICMI as symbolic of the Islamization of bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{11} Rahardjo agreed that there was a process of Islamization. He said that the evidence for this included the granting of increased facilities for religious activities, the absence of discrimination against pious civil servants, and the incorporation of religious values in the development process.

If Huq (1999) demonstrated that “[…] print in contemporary Bangladesh is Islamizing secular discourse” (p. 136), it can be connected with the motive of some members of the ICMI, which was to Islamize the New Order government. Although the ICMI is not a political party, its role was as significant as that of Islamic parties. Its members greatly influenced the New Order government’s policy towards Muslim society. Zaim Uchrowi and Usman Ks explained some successful examples of the ICMI programme. One of these examples was the establishment of the Indonesian Sharia Bank or Bank Muamalat Indonesia (BMI). Habibie, the General Chairman of the ICMI, promoted the idea of the establishment of Bank Muamalat Indonesia (BMI) to Soeharto. Although the economics cabinet was dominated by non-Muslim people, the Indonesian Sharia Bank or BMI was established successfully. Shortly after the establishment of the BMI, the New Order government established other Sharia banks. For example, Bank Syariah Mandiri (BSM) or Mandiri Sharia Bank, BNI Syariah, BPR Syariah, and so on.

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

The second factor in the political tendency of the ICMI is that the New Order government needed political support from Muslims. In the Muslim societies, the government always tries to manipulate Islamic symbols in order to get political power. Zaman (2002) writes that in Egypt, the government elite “[…] have depended on the the ‘ulama for religious legitimacy. But, as elsewhere, they have

\textsuperscript{11}The concept of islamization can be traced back to the famous Mecca conference on Islamic education in 1975. Islamizing knowledge was the slogan promoted during the conference. Then the concept of Islamization gained a broader meaning after the revolution of Iran in 1979. Georg Stauth defined the concept of Islamization “[…] it was to describe a process of cultural and social transformation related to the increase in religious expansion in the public sphere with respect to figures of mosque-attendance, women’s veiling, political hegemony of Islamic ideas and that, therefore, the idea that Islam will play a decisive role in the process of restructurisation of society in the Muslim World all over” (Stauth, 2002, p. 9).
often also made efforts to restrict the power of the ‘ulama […]’ (p. 144). Zaman’s description has similar validity in Indonesian Islam, especially under the New Order government. One of the New Order government’s efforts was permitting the establishment of the ICMI. It is true that this association was formed by Muslim intellectuals. However, if there was no support from the state, the ICMI would not survive.

In this case, Hefner is accurate in saying that the involvement of Muslim intellectuals was the decisive factor rather than the initiative of the students from Brawijaya University. The role of Imaduddin Abdurrahim, for instance, was very important. He enjoined the students to be more active, in order to realize the idea as soon as possible. However, Soeharto’s decision was the most important factor among the other factors.

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

Furthermore, Habibie as the General Chairman of the ICMI became a strong lobbyist representing the ICMI’s interests. Some politicians who had a close relationship with the Muslim group were nominated by Habibie to be given strategic positions in the New Order regime.

Soeharto gave more space to the ICMI’s interests in the Golkar when there was a national congress in 1993. This government party’s congress became an arena of rivalry between the military and the ICMI members. Since the rise of the New Order, the General Chairman of Golkar always came from the military wing. It is hardly remarkable that six months before this national congress was held, General Edi Sudrajad said that one of the military members should be nominated to be the General Chairman of Golkar in the upcoming congress. The military group prepared three candidates to be the General Chairman of Golkar. They were Lieutenant General Harsudiono Hartas (ABRI’s former of Chief of Staff for Social and Political Affairs), General Soesilo Soedarman (the Coordinating Minister of Politics and Defence), and General Try Sutrisno (the Vice President and former Commander of Armed Forces).

However, Habibie as the General Chairman of the ICMI, nominated Harmoko to be the candidate for General Chairman of Golkar. This nomination prevented the military’s nominating a candidate. Harmoko thus became the only candidate for General Chairman of Golkar. Harmoko ultimately became the General Chairman of Golkar. For the first time the General Chairman of Golkar was not from the military.

This political victory was very crucial for the ICMI, in light of the presidential succession in 1998. This was because the General Chairman of Golkar would be responsible for the process of presidential succession. Because the General Chairman of Golkar came from the ICMI’s group, it indicated that the political privilege in the Golkar had shifted from the military to the ICMI. Therefore, in the
presidential succession in 1998, the ICMI managed its political role easily. It is not surprising that, in the presidential succession in 1998, Golkar nominated Habibie to be the Vice President.

This nomination would be very crucial to the ICMI in its further struggle in Indonesian politics. Soeharto was too old to remain President. Therefore, in the presidential succession in 1998, the role of his Vice President would be significant. The impact of this nomination was that Habibie replaced Soeharto. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Since its rise, the New Order regime had a negative view of political Islam. This view follows from its policy which prohibited Islamic parties. The New Order emphasized national stability, as well as economic development, as its main policies. The economic development under the New Order regime led to a new crop of Muslim intellectuals. These new Muslim intellectuals were the fruit of various educational institutions, in Indonesia and abroad.

This new generation of Muslim intellectuals was different from the older generation. One of this new generation of Muslim intellectuals, Nurcholish Madjid, promoted a new format of Islamic thought that emphasized cultural Islam rather than political Islam. They preferred strengthening their role in non-political organizations to playing a role in political parties.

In fact, their choice to use non-political organizations can be seen as an adaptation to the New Order policy. Some Muslim intellectuals were still highly motivated to islamize the state. Therefore, some Muslim intellectuals used the New Order’s approval of the ICMI’s establishment to realize their aims. The establishment of the BMI, Bank Muamalat Indonesia or Indonesian Islamic Bank, was one of their Islamization programmes, realized by the government.

On the other hand, Soeharto happily allowed Habibie to head the ICMI, since Soeharto knew that Habibie had great loyalty to him. Therefore, it is clear that Soeharto’s support was the most significant factor in establishing the ICMI. Although the role of students from Brawijaya University was exposed in some newspapers at the time, it can be assumed that both Muslim intellectuals and the New Order government were hiding their real agenda, playing politics. In the case at hand, the New Order government wanted to get support from Muslim intellectuals in order to strengthen its authority in Muslim society.

It is not strange that many reactions were proposed by Muslim intellectuals responding the establishment of the ICMI. Among these Muslim intellectuals, was Abdurrahman Wahid who was regarded as strongly opposed to the establishment of the ICMI, which he challenged by forming an organization called Fordem (Forum Demokrasi or Democratic Forum).

However, the majority of Muslim intellectuals supported the existence of the ICMI. This was because the ICMI became important organization for channelling Muslim group’s interests. Because political Islam was thwarted by Soeharto, it subsequently found an outlet in the ICMI, in order to do battle in Indonesian politics more easily. The ICMI also became a political vehicle for some Muslim
By joining the ICMI, Indonesian Muslim intellectuals could participate in the political arena. Muslim intellectuals have become the political actors in the centre of power. As a result, Muslim intellectuals who joined the state interacted actively with those who did not join the regime. While Yusril Ihza Mahendra was one of these Muslim intellectuals representing the ICMI members who joined the regime, Nurcholish Madjid was one of the ICMI members representing the ICMI members who did not join state power.

Because of this interaction, in 1998, they could muster power in order to force the regime to resign. Not surprisingly, Muslim intellectuals, such as Amien Rais, Yusril Ihza Mahendra, Nurcholish Madjid, and Malik Madjar played an important role in bringing about the fall of Soeharto. Therefore, the New Order’s treatment of Islam, resulting in the birth of the ICMI in Indonesia, can be seen as an important step towards the fall of the regime.

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