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Partisanship, Religion, and Social Class: Attitudes and Behaviors in the Early Stages of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Burhanuddin Muhtadi & Seth Soderborg

Islamism and Muslim Support for Islamist Movement Organizations: Evidence from Indonesia

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BANJARESE MUSLIM FIGURES IN THE WORKS OF KAREL A. STEENBRINK AND MARTIN VAN BRUINESSEN

Mujiburrahman

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Document

Civilized Congress: Election and Organization of the 48th Muktamar of Muhammadiyah in Solo, Indonesia

Ahmad Najib Burhani

The theme of this 48th Congress of Muhammadiyah is "*Memajukan Indonesia, Mencerahkan Semesta*" (Advancing Indonesia, Enlightening the Universe). What was happening there accurately reflected and implemented this theme. From the process of election, side events of the congress, to the activities of participants correctly called "*penggembira*" (cheerful and happy supporters).

After three times rescheduling and two years of delay, Muhammadiyah successfully organized its Muktamar or Congress in Surakarta, Central Java, on 18-20 November 2022. Muktamar is actually a five-yearly event and the previous congress, the 47th congress, was held in Makassar in 2015. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic that has made gathering a large number of people impossible, Muhammadiyah decided to extend the mandate of the chairmen and all its structure, at first, until 2021 and then extended again until 2022. Muhammadiyah had tried to have a virtual congress or hybrid and had developed a technological device for that, but in the end, the congress was organized fully offline. In this Congress, Haedar Nashir and Abdul Mu'ti were reelected again as chairman and secretary for 2022 to 2027, the second term for both of them at the helm of Muhammadiyah. They received the highest number of votes, number one and two, from 2519 representatives from all provinces and districts in Indonesia: 2203 for Nashir and 2159 for Mu'ti. It is actually not something automatic or mandatory that those who received the highest votes would be elected as the chairman. During the congress, this organization elected 13 leaders and they would have deliberation to decide the chairman, general secretary, and other positions in the central leadership. If needed, they have also the right to add or appoint people outside the 13 elected to have certain positions in the central leadership.

Different from other organizations and even national elections in Indonesia, during the Muhammadiyah election, the representatives did not vote for only one candidate, but they have to vote for 13 names from 39 candidates, no more and no less. Why 13? No specific reason, but as a rationalist organization Muhammadiyah always likes to challenge any taboo, irrational belief (*takhayyul*), and do away with the unnecessary sacralization of things other than God. For instance, many believe that 13 is an unlucky number, bringing suffering and death. To challenge this belief, Muhammadiyah took it as the number of its leadership. In Muhammadiyah's strict monotheism, followers believe that the only source of power is God. The system of 13 leaderships has been adopted since the 1980s. Previously, Muhammadiyah adopted the System of Nine where they elected nine people for the central leadership of Muhammadiyah.

The system of election is quite unique. First, the central board and committee of congress distributed application forms to its regional offices, district offices, departments, and its *organisasi otonom* (autonomic institutions) like *Pemuda Muhammadiyah* (Youth Muhammadiyah) and *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* (Youth Aisyiyah). They then send the names of candidates to the committee of Congress. At first, the organizer received 216 candidates. After the first administrative scrutiny, the number became 126 and after the next level of scrutiny then came out 92 candidates were eligible to be elected. A day before the congress, in the forum called *Tanwir* (literally mean Enlightenment), which is the second highest and largest meeting in the Muhammadiyah, representatives from regional offices of Muhammadiyah voted 39 names, no more and no less. And finally, during the Muktamar, the number is further reduced to 13 people that will be the definitive chairmen of Muhammadiyah.

Those 13 names are Haedar Nashir, Abdul Mu'ti, Anwar Abbas, Busyro Muqoddas, Hilman Latief, Muhadjir Effendy, Syamsul Anwar, Agung Danarto, Saad Ibrahim, Syafiq A Mughni, Dadang Kahmad, Ahmad Dahlan Rais, and Irwan Akib.



Compared to the previous leadership, there are four newcomers in the leadership of Muhammadiyah 2022-2027: Hilman Latief, Syamsul Anwar, Saat Ibrahim, and Irwan Akib. Hilman Latief (b. 1975) is the Director General of Hajj and Umrah at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. He is the one promoted by Din Syamsuddin, chairman of Muhammadiyah 2005-2015, as *darah segar* (fresh blood) that needs to be included in the leadership. Latief's father, Maman Abdurrahman, is a former chairman of Persatuan Islam (Unity of Islam), the third-largest Islamic organization in the country.

Syamsul Anwar (b. 1956) is not young, but this is the first time he is willing to run for 13 Muhammadiyah Central Leadership. Previously he always rejected to fill out the application until the late Ahmad Syafii Maarif, chairman of Muhammadiyah 1998-2005, before his death in 2022 asked him to apply. He was the head of the Council of Tarjih and Tajdid (Council of Fatwa and Reform) since 2020. Saad Ibrahim (b. 1954) is the chairman of Regional Board Muhammadiyah in East Java. He and Anwar can be seen as representing the outlook of Muhammadiyah in its humility and modesty. Besides living humble lifestyles, both of them have been serving Muhammadiyah for a long time without eyeing positions on the national board. They are religious experts with no political interest in their minds.

Special mention needs to be given to the last name, Irwan Akib, born in Pare-pare, South Sulawesi, in 1963. For the first time in the history of Muhammadiyah, this organization has a representative from the eastern part of Indonesia on the national board. Although the Muhammadiyah has been flourishing in all provinces since its early stages, including in Eastern provinces, this region failed to have a representative in the central board because Java and Sumatra have always dominated the number of branches and representatives.

After the election, the 13 elected leaders decided to add Agus Taufiqurrohman, M Izzul Muslimin, Muhammad Sayuti, and Marpuji Ali to the central or national leadership of Muhammadiyah. Chairwomen of Aisyiah, a sister organization of Muhammadiyah, Salmah Orbayinah is also an ex-officio part of the national leadership of Muhammadiyah. Hence, in total, there are five additions next to 13 elected leaders.

The process of election was smooth, peaceful, orderly, and very quick. This is often seen as "not normal" in the contemporary Indonesian context because fighting and conflict were the feature, and sometimes seen as the "nature", of election in the congress of several mass organizations in the country. Harsh competition and even polarization were seen as a portrait of democracy. No banner or flyer or pamphlet or ballyhoo was distributed by each candidate or his/her team. There was no campaigning, the election was based on the track record and the activities of the candidates in previous terms. No booking and occupying of certain hotels by certain candidates and teams to engineer or plot the election. No fighting and flying chairs. As stated by some observers, it is *adem* (cool and peaceful) congress.

The process was quick because of the use of e-voting. Participants who have the right to vote were given tokens with barcodes. During election time, they go to the voting booth orderly. There are more than 20 booths located in front of the Edutorium Hall at the University of Muhammadiyah of Surakarta (UMS). Once they are already inside the booth they need to scan the QR code and automatically appear 39 names in the touch screen monitor. They must elect 13 candidates. When it is done, they need to press the "submit" button and their vote would be automatically printed. This printed receipt is proof that they have successfully voted. Their vote is also automatically tabulated. Technically, the result could be shown immediately, but it will affect other voters. So the result was only displayed after the voting process was concluded.

Using e-voting, it took less than four hours to complete the election. At 11.43 PM, 2519 voters have used their rights to vote. The organizing committee can display the final result immediately after the election concluded, but, with the direction from the National Board of Muhammadiyah, the announcement of the result would be displayed in the big video Tron monitor at 00.00 AM, with participants in the hall were counting down until 00.00, just like during the new year.

What can we learn from this process of election? First, this e-voting not only made the process fast, effective, and efficient, but it also became the soft way to educate or "force" leaders of Muhammadiyah to use digital technology. Surprisingly, however, Muhammadiyah leaders from the X generation and even Baby Boomers did not find it a real challenge. They were happy with the system and had no difficulty to follow the process. Second, the smooth and peaceful election in Muhammadiyah is also a lesson learned for Indonesia which will have national elections in 2024. Democracy does not always mean sharp polarization, conflict, social distrust, and segregation. Muhammadiyah has shown that a peaceful election is very possible, an election without money politics is also very feasible in Indonesia.

Besides the process of election, positive notes should be mentioned in regard to the organization, participants or supporters, and side events or activities of the congress. It is said that millions of people gathered in Solo to participate in and celebrate the congress. The Manahan Stadium and its surrounding venues were full of people from all over Indonesia who want to witness and enliven the opening ceremony and the congress. Instead of using the term *rombongan liar* (wild and illegal entourage), which is often abbreviated as *romli*, Muhammadiyah used a very sympathetic and apt term "*penggembira*" or those who come and join the congress not as representatives from districts or provinces of Muhammadiyah, but to support and join happiness of the event. They came there not to vote, but to show their love for the activities and success of Muhammadiyah.

There were several side events during the congress, such as book launches, music performances, and business expos. However, the largest

one is Muhammadiyah Innovation & Tech Expo (MITE). This is an innovation that had never been done before in the previous Muktamar of any other Islamic mass organization in Indonesia. It can be said that what happened there is a pioneer in this matter. This event was held at De Tjolomadoe, located three kilometers from the main venue of the Congress. Although the location is not near, surprisingly it was packed with visitors every day during the congress. Muhammadiyah has contributed a lot to education, health, and social welfare. This event shows that Muhammadiyah tries to start contributing to research and innovation.

After the congress, in March 2023, Muhammadiyah announced 31 departments or bodies or bureaus at the national leadership of Muhammadiyah. Some of them are old departments, such as the Department of Propagation, the Department of Tarjih and Tajdid (Law and Reform), and the Department of Higher Education. New bureaus were also introduced, such as Bureau for Communication and Public Services, Bureau for Organizational Development. New institutions at the National Leadership include Institute for Disaster Resilience and Institute for Study and Strategic Partnership. In total, there are more than 1300 people included in the national leadership of Muhammadiyah.

Ahmad Najib Burhani, *National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)*, *Indonesia; ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore.* Email: najibburhani@ gmail.com. Earlier version of this article appeared at *ISEAS Fulcrum*, 6 December 2022, entitled "A Peaceful Election at Muhammadiyah's 48th Congress Can Be an Example for Indonesia".

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- Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
- 3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
- 4. Wahid, Din. 2014. Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia. PhD dissertation. Utrecht University.
- 5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
- 6. Ms. Undhang-Undhang Banten, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
- Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

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Religious Commodification: Muslim Housing and Identity Affirmation in Lombok, Indonesia

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