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PLURALISM, LIBERALISM AND ISLAMISM:
RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK OF MUHAMMADIYAH

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Ahmad Najib Burhani

Pluralism, Liberalism and Islamism: Religious Outlook of Muhammadiyah

Abstract: *Muhammadiyah has been perceived as an example of a successful blend between Islam and modernity. By adopting modern spirit of discipline, equality, and a hard work ethics, this organization has become a vibrant and independent movement. The number of Muhammadiyah educational and health institutions is only surpassed by those owned by the Indonesian government. Muhammadiyah has 177 universities; thousands of secondary, middle, and elementary schools, as well as hundreds of hospitals and other health institutions. However, the organization's successes in social, educational, and economic do not necessarily indicate that it also embraces pluralistic values and religious tolerance. This paper, therefore, intends to describe Muhammadiyah's position in the context of pluralism, liberalism, and Islamism. It argues that although Muhammadiyah is predominated by members with moderate religious inclinations, but a significant number of them are exclusively puritan in their theology. The organization's focus on social services is the reason why Muhammadiyah has evaded Islamist tendencies.*

Keywords: Puritanism, Liberalism, Islamism, Muhammadiyah, Pragmatism, Religious Exclusivism.

Abstrak: Muhammadiyah kerap dipandang sebagai contoh sukses dari perpaduan antara Islam dan kemandirian. Dengan mengadopsi semangat disiplin, kesejajaran, dan kerja keras, Muhammadiyah telah menjadi organisasi yang kaya dan mandiri. Secara kuantitatif, institusi pendidikan dan kesehatan yang dimiliki oleh Muhammadiyah hanya diungguli jumlahnya oleh institusi yang dimiliki oleh pemerintah Indonesia. Muhammadiyah memiliki 177 perguruan tinggi; ribuan sekolah tingkat atas, tingkat menengah, dan tingkat dasar; serta ratusan rumah sakit dan balai kesehatan. Namun demikian, kesuksesan dalam bidang pendidikan, kesehatan dan ekonomi tentu saja tak mengindikasikan bahwa organisasi itu juga memegang nilai pluralisme dan toleransi keagamaan. Karena itu, artikel ini ingin mendeskripsikan posisi Muhammadiyah dalam kaitannya dengan pluralisme, liberalisme, dan Islamisme. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa meski Muhammadiyah didominasi oleh anggota yang memiliki keberagaman yang moderat, namun sejumlah warganya memiliki cenderung eksklusif atau puritan dalam hal teologi. Kesibukan Muhammadiyah dalam memberikan pelayanan sosial menjadi faktor yang berhasil menetralkan organisasi ini dari keterjebakan dalam Islamisme.

Kata kunci: Puritanisme, Liberalism, Islamisme, Muhammadiyah, Pragmatisme, Keberagaman, Eksklusivisme.

ملخص: اعتبرت المحمدية نموذجا ناجحا للمزج بين الإسلام والحداثة. فمن خلال تبني أخلاقيات الانضباط والمساواة والجدية في العمل، أصبحت المحمدية منظمة غنية ومعتمدة على نفسها. فمن حيث عدد المؤسسات التعليمية والصحية التابعة للمحمدية، فلا تتفوق عليها إلا المؤسسات التي تملكها الحكومة الإندونيسية. إن المحمدية تملك ١٧٧ معهدا عاليا وجامعة، وآلاف من المدارس الثانوية والإعدادية والابتدائية، ومئات من المستشفيات والمؤسسات الصحية الأخرى. إلا أن النجاح في المجالات التعليمية والصحية والاقتصادية لا يعني بالضرورة مؤشرا في تمسك المنظمة بقيم التعددية والتسامح الديني. ومن هنا، ستقوم هذه المقالة بوصف موقف المحمدية وعلاقتها بالتعددية والليبرالية والإسلاموية. واستندت هذه المقالة إلى أن المحمدية على الرغم من هيمنة الأعضاء الذين يميلون إلى التنوع المعتدل، إلا أن عددا منهم يملكون ميولا متفردة أو تزموا في الألوهيات. وأصبح انشغال المحمدية بتقديم الخدمات الاجتماعية عاملا ناجحا في حياد هذه المنظمة بعيدا عن الوقوع في فخ الإسلاموية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التزم، الليبرالية، الإسلاموية، المحمدية، البراغماتية، التنوع، التفرد.

Since the downfall of Suharto (often spelled Soeharto), the second Indonesian president, in 1998, Muhammadiyah has often been perceived as having a more conservative bent. Muhammadiyah is also often said to be influenced by Wahhabist doctrines, and the organization has even been called Indonesian Wahhabism (Gillespie 2007; Schwartz 2005).¹ After the election of Din Syamsuddin as Muhammadiyah's president and the ousting of a few liberal-minded leading figures in the 45th Congress in Malang in 2005, several analysts and journalists (Baidhawiy 2006; Diani 2006; Mulyadi 2005; Pradana 2007a, 2007b) have asserted that Muhammadiyah was in the process of shifting from a moderate to a conservative religious stance.

However, two years after Din Syamsuddin's election, Muhammadiyah appeared to be revising its conservative outlook. The rift between Muhammadiyah and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), generally seen as a moderate Islamist party, is commonly cited as a signal of this trend. Previously, Muhammadiyah had a close relationship with the PKS, particularly during and after the 1999 and 2004 elections (Sulistiyanto 2006). However, several events ruptured this relationship, including certain Muhammadiyah members' disagreement of the decision of Majelis Tarjih (the Council of Islamic Law) about Eid al-Adha, an Islamic festival marking the culmination of the hajj (pilgrimage) rites. Further, during the Tanwir (the second most important national Muhammadiyah assembly, following the Congress or Mukhtamar) in Yogyakarta in May 2007, Muhammadiyah considered the PKS to have an ideology incongruent with its own. The teachings and doctrines of the PKS were not considered to be in line with those of Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah also differentiated itself from other Islamist groups, such as Hizb al-Tahrir and Wahdah Islamiyah.

This article therefore aims to describe the religious outlook of Muhammadiyah. If Muhammadiyah's Islamic viewpoint has been conceived as moderate, this study will provide a better understanding of its moderation. If Muhammadiyah has been oscillating between liberalism and Islamism, then uncovering the reasons for this oscillation may help to explicate the state of its religious affairs. Based predominantly on data from the survey on the religious attitudes of Muhammadiyah members, conducted during the Tanwir of Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta in 2007,² interviews with

Muhammadiyah leaders, participant observations of Muhammadiyah's activities, and news reports, this study has three objectives: to describe the religious attitudes of Muhammadiyah towards pluralism, liberalism and Islamism; to assess common understandings of the moderate position of Muhammadiyah; and to establish the composition of its leaders based on its religious stances.

Muhammadiyah: An Overview

Muhammadiyah claims to have approximately 35 million supporters and sympathizers (Syamsuddin 2015, 147). Although this number is contentious, with some researchers, such as Robin Bush (2014), arguing that Muhammadiyah has far less numbers than claimed, the organization nevertheless remains one of the most influential Muslim movements in Indonesia. It was established in Yogyakarta in 1912 by Ahmad Dahlan, an entrepreneur, *abdi dalem* (servant) of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta, and *ulama* (Islamic scholar). Many scholars have devoted themselves to studying the role Muhammadiyah has played (Alfian 1989; Ali 1957; Mehden 1963; Shihab 1998). Deciding the most important role played by this movement throughout its history is not an easy task. However, this study characterizes Muhammadiyah's roles in four ways: as a religious reform movement, as a political force, as a form of resistance to Christianity, and as a social movement.

As a religious reform movement, Muhammadiyah is well known for its efforts to purify the Islamic faith and its call for a pure and pristine Islam (Peacock 1978, 1992). The impurity of the faith is believed to be the cause of the 'backwardness' of Muslim societies. Therefore, Muhammadiyah advocates that the way to revive Islam is by purifying it from external elements. To implement this vision, Muhammadiyah employs two different methods. Firstly, inspired by an Islamic theologian Ibn Taymīyah (1263-1328), Muhammadiyah displays an unforgiving attitude towards *takhayyul*, *bid'ah* and *churafat/khurāfah* (TBC), that is, superstition, unorthodoxy, or innovation that has no precedence in prophetic traditions and the Quran. Under this method, this organization is often seen as having strict attitudes on matters of religious principles. Secondly, inspired by an Egyptian scholar, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Muhammadiyah has rationalized and modernized religious beliefs through education (Ali 1990; Fuad

2004; Lubis 1993). In this second method, Muhammadiyah gives the highest priority to reason or logic in theory and reforms the education system in praxis.

In the political sphere, Muhammadiyah has cooperated with authorities throughout most of its history, both under colonial rule and Indonesian administration (Alfian 1989; Fuad 2004). Muhammadiyah has also been drawn into the arena of political activities and party politics several times. The organization was actively involved in the struggle for Indonesian independence during the 1940s. Muhammadiyah also became the strongest component of the Masyumi party in the 1950s and 60s. In the New Order regime, which started after Suharto came to power in 1966, Muhammadiyah participated in the establishment of Parmusi (*Partai Muslimin Indonesia*, the Indonesian Muslim Party) in 1968. However, since 1969, Muhammadiyah has adopted a neutral stance towards political parties in Indonesia, while allowing its members complete freedom to participate in political activities. After the demise of Suharto in 1998, Muhammadiyah has been continuously encouraged by its politically inclined members to transform its social and religious activities into political ones (Fuad 2004).

Currently, Muhammadiyah formally refuses to side with any political party, but some of its members consistently attempt to involve Muhammadiyah in politics. Muhammadiyah has used slightly different slogans in its political position. During the leadership of Ahmad Syafii Maarif (1998-2005), Muhammadiyah adopted the slogan “*menjaga jarak yang sama dengan semua partai politik*” (keep the same distance from all political parties) (Maarif 2009, 234). During the leadership of Din Syamsuddin (2005-2015), the slogan is “*menjaga kedekatan yang sama dengan semua partai politik*” (stay close to [but keep a healthy distance from] all political parties) (Jainuri 2015, 50).

Muhammadiyah has, from its beginning, had an ambivalent relationship with Christianity. As individuals, the Muhammadiyah leaders have friendly relations with Christian people. However, in organizational terms, Muhammadiyah was established to pose as an active opponent to the penetration of the Christian missions. This attitude was partly stimulated by the missionaries' activities and by the Dutch colonial authorities' discriminatory and unequal policy towards

Islam and Christianity in Indonesia (Shihab 1998). After Indonesian independence, fears about Christian proselytization remained strong. This is partly due to the New Order government's favored treatment of Christians via its bureaucracy (Mujiburrahman 2006). Despite this organizational stance, Muhammadiyah leaders enjoy a close relationship with Christian leaders. In line with this ambivalent attitude, it is no accident that Muhammadiyah's social and educational work is replicating and competing with the work of missionary schools and hospitals.

Currently, social activities are the main focus of Muhammadiyah. The organization classifies its social activities, commonly called AUM (Amal Usaha Muhammadiyah, *Muhammadiyah Entrepreneurial Activities*), into four groups: educational activities, health services, social welfare activities, and economic activities. Muhammadiyah currently has 2,604 elementary schools, 1,722 middle schools, 745 high schools, 546 vocational schools, 160 *pesantren*, and 177 colleges and universities (PP Muhammadiyah 2015a). Muhammadiyah's health services are classified into three groups; hospitals, clinics, and maternity and paediatric clinics. There are over 400 health institutions belonging to Muhammadiyah, and over 300 social welfare institutions. However, Muhammadiyah's economic activities fail to match its social activities (Njoto-Feillard 2014). The organization has economic institutions all over the country, but its social activities are its primary and most apparent focus. The strength of Muhammadiyah lies in these social activities, rather than in its religious reforms.

Between Pluralism, Liberalism and Islamism

Indonesian Muslims, particularly Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, are frequently characterized as moderate Muslims in terms of their religiosity (Hefner 2005; Wanandi 2002). The concept of moderate Islam is often seen to be equivalent with the Arabic term *al-dīn al-wasat* in the Quran (2: 143). Muslim exegetes, throughout Islamic history, provide diverse interpretations of the word *wasat*, but in the contemporary Indonesian context it is often translated as the midway between extreme-liberalism and extreme-Islamism (Burhani 2012). Here, this article intends to examine the moderate status of Muhammadiyah by analyzing its attitude to pluralism, liberalism, and Islamism.

Pluralism

As an Islamic movement, Muhammadiyah has had a long relationship with non-Muslims, both at the national and international levels. One of the reasons for its establishment was a response to the deepening penetration of the Christian missions. Since Suharto's resignation in 1998, various interfaith issues have emerged in Muhammadiyah. These issues are discussed to explicate Muhammadiyah's stance on inter-religious encounters.

1. Din Syamsuddin and Christmas

The issue of religious tolerance became predominant in Muhammadiyah when its chairman, Din Syamsuddin, stated that all of the buildings and facilities belonging to Muhammadiyah, except for the mosques, could be used for celebrating Christmas (Bahari 2005; Ulag 2005). Considering the historical background of the Muhammadiyah as a counter movement to Christian missionaries (Fuad 2004; Shihab 1998), Syamsuddin's mandate sparked confusion and controversy.

The survey data in Figure 1 suggests that two thirds of Muhammadiyah provincial leaders opposed Syamsuddin's initiative to offer Muhammadiyah facilities, except for mosques, for celebrating Christmas.

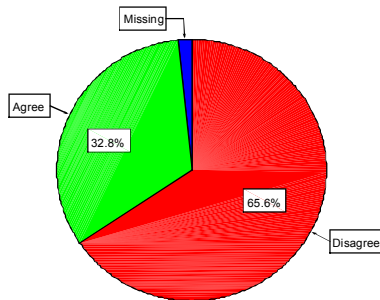


Figure 1. Muhammadiyah and Christmas celebration

The disagreement of some Muhammadiyah leaders of Syamsuddin's initiative can be contrasted to the organization's activities in Muslim minority regions such as Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and Moluccas. As shown by Mu'ti and Haq (2009), some Muhammadiyah schools and colleges in these regions contain about 80 percent non-Muslim

students, teachers, and lecturers. It was not unusual for these schools and universities to hold Christmas celebrations in Muhammadiyah venues. The purpose of allowing those activities is beyond the scope of this article, but show that this kind of practice is common in Muhammadiyah.

It is interesting to note Syamsuddin's response to the criticism and opposition of Muhammadiyah members to his tactful offer to Christians. For political reasons, Syamsuddin does not reply to the opposition with great consistency. On occasion, he has convinced his audience that his statement was based on and supported by religious doctrines and teachings, both from the Quran and the Sunnah. However, he also often replied to critics by claiming that the mandate was delivered as a very special condition, which has enabled him to avoid further questioning. At that time, he was chairing inter-religious meetings that promoted religious peace and tolerance. One of the attendees at the meeting told him about the difficulties that some Christians experienced in performing religious rituals due to the lack of venues. Syamsuddin spontaneously replied that all Muhammadiyah facilities could be used to celebrate Christmas. Syamsuddin's inconsistency strengthens the assumption that he is more concerned about political than religious agendas, given that his political vision often supersedes his religious one.

2. Thematic Exegesis and the Case of Dawam Rahardjo

In 2000, the Muhammadiyah published a controversial book entitled *Tafsir Tematik Alquran tentang Hubungan Antar Umat Beragama* (Thematic Exegesis of the Quran on Interfaith Relations). This book attempts to address religious issues using multiple approaches. For instance, it not only uses traditional Islamic sources, which are commonly used by Majelis Tarjih, but also contemporary sources from both liberal Muslims scholars (such as Mohammed Arkoun, Farid Essack and Mahmoud Ayoub) and non-Muslims (such as Ninian Smart, Hans Kung, Paul F. Knitter and John Hick). Among the most controversial topics found in this book concern inter-religious marriages and pluralism. This book considers that salvation does not belong exclusively to the Muslim community. There is also salvation in other religions (Majelis Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam 2000).

The responses of some members of Muhammadiyah towards this book was surprising. Some members insisted that the Muhammadiyah ban the book and retrieve the copies that were already in circulation (Burhani 2011). It is also said that Amin Abdullah once incited the full wrath of some members of the Muhammadiyah. Although the Muhammadiyah did not ban the book, it decided to stop printing it and is no longer recommending its members to read it.

A further issue that is often commented on by the media about Muhammadiyah's attitude towards pluralism and religious minorities in Indonesia concerns the stance of Dawam Rahardjo, a former executive board member of Muhammadiyah. Rahardjo has put forward his case in articles in several newspapers, such as the *Koran Tempo* (1 August 2005), which defended Ahmadiyah, an Islamic minority group, and Lia Aminuddin, a leader of the New Age movement in Jakarta. In his writing, Rahardjo identified himself as a Muhammadiyah leader; however, since this was no longer the case, several members of Muhammadiyah reported him and complained to the central board of Muhammadiyah (Husaini 2006; Rahardjo 2005). In addition to this falsehood, the resistance of Muhammadiyah members towards Rahardjo was mainly due to the stance of some Muhammadiyah members towards Ahmadiyah, liberalism, and Lia Aminuddin. They considered these three elements to be deviating from Islam. Thus, when Rahardjo spoke and wrote on behalf of Muhammadiyah, some members became agitated and inflamed.

3. Java and Non-Java

It is striking that, in the quantitative findings, as reported in Figure 2, the responses of the Muhammadiyah leaders from the three regions differ widely. To the question, 'Do you agree or disagree with Syamsuddin's statement that all Muhammadiyah facilities, except mosques, can be used for Christmas?', nearly 50% of the leaders in Java agreed with Syamsuddin's political initiative to offer Muhammadiyah facilities for celebrating Christmas. In Sumatra and the small islands surrounding it, almost four fifths of the leaders rejected that idea. Based on this figure, Muhammadiyah in Java is more inclusive than in other regions of Indonesia.

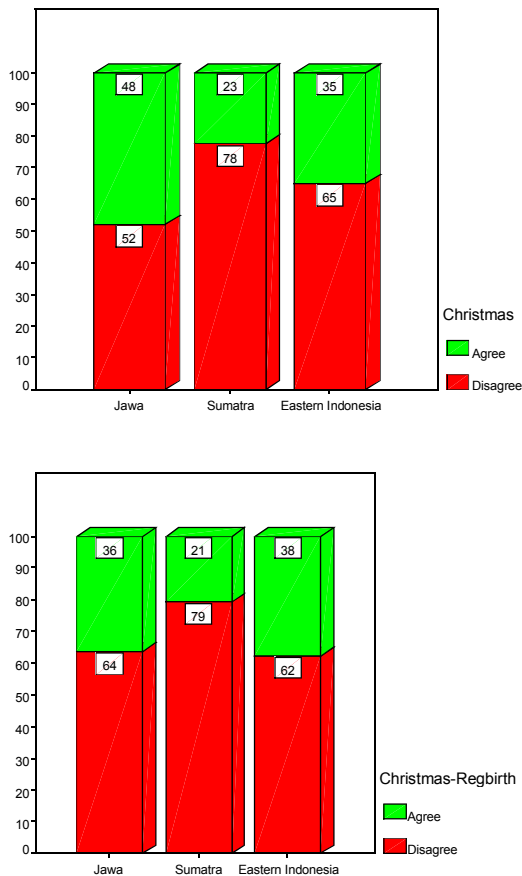


Figure 2. Christmas in Muhammadiyah facilities by region and region of birth

The figure above, on the right, also shows that the Muhammadiyah leaders who were born in Sumatra or the nearby islands are in greater disagreement about offering Muhammadiyah facilities for Christmas celebrations than those born in Java or Eastern Indonesia. In historical terms, Muhammadiyah in Sumatra, particularly West Sumatra, were culturally different from those in Java. The cultural and religious characteristics of Muhammadiyah in Sumatra were mostly inspired and shaped by Haji Rasul as the founding father. He was well known as an unvarnished purist and revivalist *‘alim* (Islamic scholar) (Alfian 1989).

However, the Pearson Chi-Squared test, as shown in Table 1, shows that the association between region and exclusive attitudes is statistically insignificant (the ‘p value’ of the association is 0.113 or

more than 0.05). The association between exclusive stance and region of birth is also statistically insignificant (the p value is 0.255). The Phi and Cramers V test, as shown in Table 2, also indicates that there is a weak relationship between region and exclusiveness (Cramers V value is 0.186 or near 0). The association between region of birth and exclusiveness is even smaller (0.147).

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.358 ^a	2	.113
Likelihood Ratio	4.391	2	.111
N of Valid Cases	126		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.67.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.730 ^a	2	.255
Likelihood Ratio	2.898	2	.235
N of Valid Cases	126		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.67.

Table 1. Significant association between exclusiveness and region and region of birth

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.186	.113
	Cramer's V	.186	.113
N of Valid Cases		126	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
 b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.147	.255
	Cramer's V	.147	.255
N of Valid Cases		126	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
 b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 2. Strong association between exclusiveness and region and region of birth

Sumatrans are often considered to be less tolerant than Javanese people. The latter population are also better liked due to their syncretistic beliefs. M.C. Ricklefs even states that intolerance is a foreign characteristic to Javanese people (Ricklefs 1979, 1998). Ricklefs (1979, 126–27) has stated:

“Islam became the religion of nearly all Javanese in the period after the fourteenth century largely because it adapted successfully to the main configurations of preexisting Javanese religion. ... it was tolerant.”

Muhammad Hatta, former Prime Minister of Indonesia and a member of Muhammadiyah from Sumatra, has also stated: “The Muhammadiyah movement never will be able to realize its ideal of purifying the faith if it does not free from its Yogyakarta *kauman* roots” (Beck 1995, 281).

However, the tables show that the association between region and exclusiveness, and also region of birth and exclusiveness cannot be generalized to the whole population.³ It seems that neither region nor region of birth create exclusive attitudes among Muhammadiyah members. This is clear from looking at people such as Syafii Maarif. He is from Sumpur Kudus, West Sumatra, yet became one of the proponents of the liberal camp of the movement. He is different from Yunahar Ilyas, who was also from Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, and became one of the proponents of the Islamist group. The historically puritan attitudes of the Muhammadiyah in Sumatra cannot be claimed to persist today, and it is an anachronism to portray modern Muhammadiyah as it was in the past.

Liberalism

For several years Muhammadiyah has become an ideological battleground between liberal and puritan ideas. Figure 3 shows that, on the one hand, there are some opponents of the *Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah* (‘JIMM’, the Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network), and liberal ideas, in Muhammadiyah and, on the other hand, some leaders of Muhammadiyah believe that the JIMM retains Islamic teachings and that, therefore, this movement is not deviating from Islam.

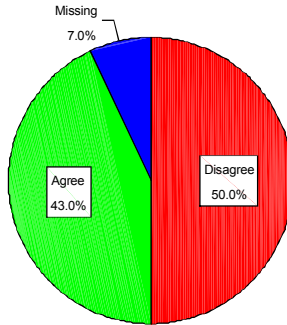


Figure 3. Muhammadiyah's view of JIMM

As shown in Figure 3, 43% of Muhammadiyah leaders agree that the JIMM is deviating from Muhammadiyah and Islam. However, the Figure fails to reflect the dynamic competition between the progressive and puritan wing in Muhammadiyah⁴. This dynamic picture can be drawn from various contemporary instances in this organization.

1. Condemning Liberalism

At the 44th Congress of Muhammadiyah in Jakarta in 2000, some proponents of liberal and progressive ideas, such as Amin Abdullah and Abdul Munir Mul Khan, were elected as the national leaders of Muhammadiyah and, accordingly, the practice of integrating liberal ideas into this movement, as was accomplished by *Majelis Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam* ('MTPPI'), was strengthened. A further programme of reforming religious thought in Muhammadiyah was even initiated at the Congress; namely, *dakwah kultural* (religious propagation using cultural strategy). This programme is against puritanism that resists any elements external to religion, such as local culture.

Gradually, the state of affairs after the 44th Congress of Muhammadiyah shifted in a different direction. The puritan wing of Muhammadiyah appeared to be strong and solid after the Congress. They were relentlessly challenging any ideas released by the progressive wing of the organization. The divergence in religious thought between the puritan and progressive wing groups increased after Ahmad Syafii Maarif, the chairman of Muhammadiyah in 1998-2005, and the late Moeslim Abdurrahman, a respected Muhammadiyah intellectual, initiated the establishment of the Maarif Institute and the JIMM which become

shelters for young progressive intellectuals of Muhammadiyah who were not formally involved in the formal structure of Muhammadiyah. Since its informal founding, the JIMM has been actively trying to deconstruct certain Muhammadiyah doctrines and teachings which they consider to be outdated. The main issues promoted by the JIMM were new interpretations of the Quran, and the need to use critical theories to understand the new social movement. JIMM's interpretation of the Quran received a hostile response from the puritan wing, particularly in the context of dealing with non-Muslims. For example, most JIMM activists believe that Muslims may regard their faith as absolute, but that non-Muslims have the same right to believe in the absoluteness of their faith.

The puritan wing of Muhammadiyah responded to the ideas launched by the JIMM activists via various media, such as publications, the Friday sermons, seminars and promotion counters. Numerous issues of *Tabligh* magazine, the main publication used by the puritan wing to challenge the progressive members, were dominated by articles that condemned the progressive wing's ideas. Among the headlines of *Tabligh* magazine are *'Laisa Minna: Liberalisme, Pluralisme, Inklusivisme'* (Those who believe in liberalism, pluralism, and inclusivism are no longer part of our group [in Muhammadiyah and in Islam]), *'Virus Liberal di Muhammadiyah'* (a virus named liberalism is attacking Muhammadiyah), *'Islam Liberal Meracuni Kalangan Muda'* (the idea of liberal Islam is poisoning the younger generation of Muhammadiyah) and *Talbis Iblis Fiqih Pluralis* (Satan's delusion is the idea behind pluralist Islamic law).⁵ During the 45th Congress of Muhammadiyah in Malang in 2005, the puritan group opened a shopping stand named *Pojok Anti Liberal* (Anti Liberalist corner), which sold anti-liberal books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and merchandise. The phrase 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Anti Liberalism Muhammadiyah) was written strikingly on one of the t-shirts sold on this stand (Burhani 2006).

Over time, the challenge to progressive ideas became stronger and more solid. The 45th Congress of Muhammadiyah became the strongest challenge to the progressive wing of the organization. Seven of the thirteen new high officials are considered 'newcomers' to the upper ranks of the leadership. These are: Bambang Sudibyo, Sudibyo Markus, Dahlan Rais, Zamroni, Fasich, Yunahar Ilyas and Goodwill Zubir, the final two of whom are known to belong to the right wing. In

examining the leadership structure in detail, it is interesting to note that such personalities as Ahmad Syafii Maarif, Amin Abdullah and Abdul Munir Mul Khan are no longer on the executive board. Maarif decided not to run for the candidacy, whereas Abdullah and Mul Khan failed to get enough votes to become national leaders of Muhammadiyah. It is suspected that their failure to attract voters is closely related to the fact that they are considered to belong to the progressive wing.

Before the Congress, various articles were distributed, with the intention of alarming the Muhammadiyah delegations for not choosing liberalist leaders (Komisi Rekomendasi Minta JIMM Dibubarkan 2005). Din Syamsuddin, who at that time was also linked to the puritan wing, smoothly succeeded Syafii Maarif partly because of his religious associations. Besides the leadership change, several religious contests occurred during the Congress. Many voices at the Congress even asked Muhammadiyah to mitigate the spread of liberalism and ban the JIMM. The Congress also displayed signs of a growing resistance to the inclusion of women in the Muhammadiyah. Although, under the leadership of Maarif, women were provided with ample opportunities to be elected as high-ranking officials, this practice was annulled by the Congress.

In terms of the organisational stance towards liberalism, Muhammadiyah fares better (in the liberals' view) and worse (in the Islamists' view) than the Nahdlatul Ulama ('NU'). Efforts to ban liberal ideas and liberal groups at the 45th Congress of Muhammadiyah in Malang in 2005 ultimately failed, whereas the 31st Congress of the NU in Solo in 2004 formally forbade liberal Islam in the organization.

2. Stumbling Blocks

Since the establishment of the JIL (*Jaringan Islam Liberal*, Liberal Islam Network) in 2001, the terms "liberal" and "liberalism" have been loaded with negative meanings. It is even often perceived to be equivalent with the term "evil" and "devil". This can be seen, for instance, from the way some people misrepresented the abbreviation of JIL into *Jaringan Iblis Laknatullah* (Satan's Network, God curse them!). To underline the threat and danger of liberalism, one of my respondents, a Yogyakarta provincial leader of Muhammadiyah, even describes that 'Liberalism stabs the fundamentals of religion' (2007, pers. comm., 27 April).

From the condemnations instigated by the puritan wing of Muhammadiyah, it seems that liberalism is what they disliked most. The puritan wing considers anything that is opposed to conventional thought, normal life, and accepted doctrines and teachings to be liberal ideas. Their reasoning operates in oppositional terms: 'If you are not surrendering to these norms, doctrines and teachings that we are following, you are liberals.' In the JIMM's view, for instance, in order to produce new meanings, the Quran should be interpreted using new tools of analysis, such as hermeneutics. The puritan wing considered this method to be a product of Western and Christian thought that is incompatible with the Quran. Therefore, it should be rejected (Pasha 2004).

Another example of the puritan wing's generalized objections to liberalism is the *dakwah kultural* (cultural propagation). In the Denpasar *Tanwir*, during January 2002, Muhammadiyah sought to improve its relationship with the indigenous culture by addressing the topic *Dakwah Kultural untuk Pencerahan Bangsa* (Cultural Dissemination for National Enlightenment). In choosing this topic, Muhammadiyah intended to take multiculturalism seriously. Even though this cultural agenda was adopted and accepted by the Tanwir in Makassar in 2003, its progress, however, has not been smooth. The Islamist group perceived this agenda to have a connection with the liberal agenda and, therefore, tried to block its progress.

For Abdurrahman Wahid, the former Indonesian president and former chairman of the NU, the use of a 'liberal' label is an incorrect strategy for disseminating progressive ideas in Indonesia. For over twenty years, he has been struggling to introduce liberal ideas into the Muslim community in Indonesia from within, and they have slowly been accepted. This is because he avoids using labels (El-Baroroh 2005). The 'liberal' label and the aggressive language applied by liberal groups in Indonesia have proved to be counter-productive. They have failed to appeal to Muslims, and have also provoked antipathy from some Muslims and strengthened the militancy of some Islamist groups.

A number of other factors that have contributed to resistance towards the dissemination of liberal ideas in the Muhammadiyah. In contemporary Indonesia, socio-economic problems and the sense of being under siege among some Muslim communities have fermented opposition to liberal ideology. These circumstances are not conducive

to liberal thought, which is frequently associated with Western values (Mazrui n.d.). Collaboration between some liberal groups and Western funded organizations, and the support of the JIL for the liberal economic system in Indonesia, such as the government initiative to reduce fuel (BBM) subsidies, only serve to fortify the allegation that liberal groups are the agents of a cultural imperialist Western agenda (El-Dardiry 2005; Latif 2007).

Interviews with Muhammadiyah leaders show that some of them do not understand, or give clear reasons for, why they disagree with JIMM. Some leaders simply state that it is against Islamic teaching. Among the reasons cited by the Muhammadiyah leaders who disagree with JIMM include the promotion of freethinking, the ignorance of Islamic rituals, secularism and liberalism, pluralism and inter-religious marriage, hedonistic and arrogant attitudes, and the preference for reason over revelation.

3. Java and Non-Java

Consistent with the finding about pluralism, which suggests that the Muhammadiyah leaders in Java are more sensitive to other religions than those in other regions, this group is also more tolerant to the JIMM than leaders from other regions. This finding is reported in Figure 4.

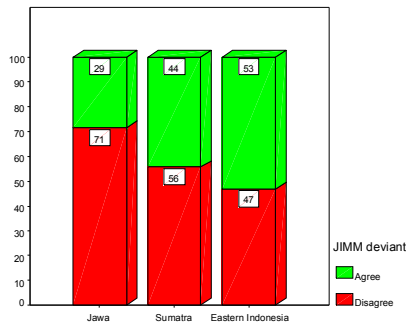


Figure 4. Muhammadiyah and JIMM

When asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement that JIMM is deviating from Islam and Muhammadiyah, almost three quarters of Muhammadiyah leaders in Java disagreed, while about 50% of leaders in other regions disagreed. Some Muhammadiyah leaders regard JIMM as less liberal than JIL, despite the JIMM members still observing five sessions of prayer.

However, the Pearson Chi-Squared test, as reported in Table 3, shows that the association between region and attitude towards JIMM is statistically insignificant (the 'p value' of the association is 0.142, or more than 0.05). The Phi and Cramers V test also indicate a weak relationship between region and exclusiveness (Cramers V value is 0.181 or near 0).

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.901 ^a	2	.142
Likelihood Ratio	4.007	2	.135
N of Valid Cases	119		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.71.

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Phi	.181	.142
Nominal by Cramer's V	.181	.142
N of Valid Cases	119	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 3. Association between region and the attitude towards JIMM

Islamism

Since its beginnings, Muhammadiyah has struggled to uphold and honour the dignity of Islam and to develop a 'real' Islamic community (*masyarakat Islam yang sebenar-benarnya*). This is a statutory objective of Muhammadiyah (Anggaran Dasar dan Anggaran Rumah Tangga Muhammadiyah 2002; Hoofdcomite Moehammadijah 1935). This objective can be likened to that of Islamist groups, such as the PKS, the MMI (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, Indonesian Jihad Fighters Council), the HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia). What makes Muhammadiyah different from or similar to them? In order to explore this question, this article will discuss three areas that are often associated with Islamism; namely, Islam as political ideology, Islamic *Shari'ah*, and pan-Islamism (Roy 1994).

1. *Al-Din wa al-Dawlah*

Historically, Muhammadiyah has adopted a cultural agenda to achieve its objectives. However, on several occasions, Muhammadiyah

has been drawn to the political parties, such as *Sarekat Islam* (the Muslim Union) in the 1920s, the Masyumi Party in the 1950s and the Parmusi (*Partai Muslimin Indonesia*, Indonesian Muslim Party) in the 1970s. Political agendas are again drawing Muhammadiyah into Islamist organizations. The *Rapat Pleno Diperluas* (Extended Plenary Meeting) in Yogyakarta in February 2004, for instance, became a ‘mini’ Tanwir that functioned as a forum for vitiating the decision of the Tanwir Makassar, which protected Muhammadiyah throughout its history as a cultural movement. One of the decisions of this plenary meeting was that Muhammadiyah would participate in Indonesian politics by supporting Amien Rais, the former chairman of Muhammadiyah, in his bid to become president of Indonesia. Without advocating a political stance, Muhammadiyah strengthened its political bargaining power and exerted a greater influence on Indonesian politics. This strategic position suggests that Muhammadiyah exercised similar approaches to the Islamist parties.

In term of political ideology, the aforementioned incidents can be analyzed differently. Although Muhammadiyah is often lured towards political interests, most of its history has been oriented towards social and cultural concerns. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah’s affiliation to certain political parties does not mean that they conceive Islam as a political ideology. In other words, Muhammadiyah’s character is not that of a political party or an organization that uses politics as a method for achieving its objectives. This is the difference between Muhammadiyah and the PKS and the HTI, which are political parties that believe that Islam is *al-din wa al-dawlah* (Islam is a religion as well as a political ideology).

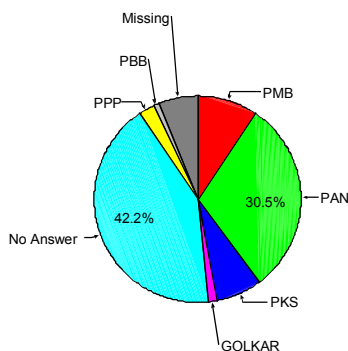
Muhammadiyah’s stance towards Islamist groups became more apparent when Amien Rais, the former chairman of Muhammadiyah and the most important figure in the Indonesian reformation of 1998, failed to win the Indonesian presidential election in 2004. As a result, Muhammadiyah again withdrew from politics. The disappointment of some Muhammadiyah activists aligned with PAN (the National Mandate Party), a party that was promoted by Muhammadiyah, but then allegedly failed to accommodate the aspirations of the Muhammadiyah, bolstered their withdrawal from politics. Following these events, Muhammadiyah officially , adopted a neutral stance towards all political parties in Indonesia, refusing to affiliate with any of them, as it did on several occasions.

The end of the relationship between Muhammadiyah and the PKS is indicative of their stance towards Islamist groups and their agendas. The PKS is a political party that originated from the *Tarbiyah* movement and was known for its Islamic agenda. The rupture was initially triggered by an economic dispute. It is reported that a number of PKS supporters, some of whom were also Muhammadiyah members, who were also working at its institutions, such as hospitals, mosques, and schools, failed to show their loyalty to Muhammadiyah and even campaigned for the PKS and organized the its programmes in Muhammadiyah institutions (Zuhri 2016). They were also trying to take over Muhammadiyah schools and rename *sekolah Islam terpadu* (integrated Islamic schools).

In response to these incidents, Muhammadiyah issued a decision letter (*Surat Keputusan*) on 1 December 2006, popularly known as SK 149/2006, about organizational and entrepreneurial consolidation. In this letter, Muhammadiyah obligated all of its components to free themselves of any kind of external infiltration and political activity, to show loyalty, integrity, and commitment to Muhammadiyah, and to optimize the cadres' training and to uphold the organizational discipline. The content of the letter is implicitly directed at the PKS, and SK 149/2006 even explicitly mentions at one point that the PKS is the subject of this policy.

Despite the issuance of that decree, some Muhammadiyah activists, as individuals, do indeed still participate in party politics. However, their individual political objectives are not associated with Muhammadiyah. As shown in Figure 5, the majority of Muhammadiyah activists are neutral in terms of their political inclination, but some of them support certain political parties, such as the PAN, PKS, and PMB (Partai Matahari Bangsa, Sun of the Nation Party).

The most appealing party



Pol parties' expected support by Muhammadiyah

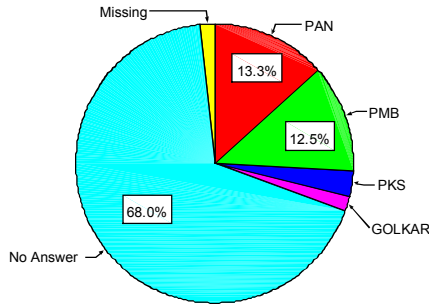


Figure 5. Muhammadiyah and the political parties

2. Islamic *Shari'ah*

Further efforts to involve Muhammadiyah in Islamist activities currently occurs with the implementation of the Islamic *shari'ah* nationwide. Syafii Maarif, chairman of Muhammadiyah's 1998-2005 leadership, once said that as long as he was chairman of Muhammadiyah, he guaranteed that the movement would not endorse the formalization of *shari'ah* in Indonesia. Not long after he stepped down from the leadership, the proposal to support the implementation of *shari'ah* became apparent. During the 45th Congress in Malang, for instance, it was proposed that Muhammadiyah should issue a decree supporting the formalization of *shari'ah*. This effort failed and Muhammadiyah did not support or reject the formalization of the Islamic *shari'ah*. However, proponents of Muhammadiyah mostly agree that it is disrespectful to claim that Muhammadiyah is against Islamic *shari'ah* or discourages the implementation of Islamic *shari'ah* in Indonesia. All of Muhammadiyah's endeavors for almost a hundred years have been for the sake of Islam. Matters of method and interpretation differentiate Muhammadiyah from Islamist groups.

Many proponents of the formalization of the Islamic *shari'ah* in some Indonesian provinces and districts, such as in Aceh, Banten, and Sulawesi Selatan, are Muhammadiyah members. Special note should be made here that what the proponents Islamic *shari'ah* want to implement is different from that understood by Ba'asyir. As shown in Figure 6, over two thirds of the Muhammadiyah leaders disagree with Ba'asyir's version of the Islamic *shari'ah*. 19 percent of the leaders share the same opinion as Ba'asyir on this issue.



Figure 6. Muhammadiyah and the implementation of shari'ah ala Ba'asyir

One of the striking differences between Muhammadiyah and Ba'asyir in their stance towards Islamic *shari'ah* relates to the *hudud* (penal code). Some Muhammadiyah leaders believe that it is not necessary to implement the *hudud* in Indonesia. Rather, they want a contextualized Islamic *shari'ah* to be implemented. From the interview, what they mean by Islamic *shari'ah* is primarily related to the five pillars of Islam and six pillars of *imān* (belief), such as giving alms (*zakāh*) and endowment (*waqaf*), regulating *hājj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca) and improving literacy of the Quran. Muhammadiyah attempts to endorse its agenda within the framework of Indonesian law.

In terms of education and the economy, Muhammadiyah prefers a conventional system to the *shari'ah* one. Muhammadiyah's own bank, the Bank Persyarikatan applies a secular system.⁶ Most of Muhammadiyah's educational institutions, such as SD (*Sekolah Dasar*, Elementary School), SMP (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama*, Junior High School) and SMU (*Sekolah Menengah Umum*, Senior High School), are not recognized as religious institutions within the Indonesian school system. This means that they are managed by the Ministry of Religious affairs not the Ministry of Education. Therefore, unlike the common understanding about Islamic *shari'ah*, Muhammadiyah's implementation is distinctly Indonesian. From the interviews with some provincial leaders of Muhammadiyah, three main pillars, or a triangular model of Islamic *shari'ah* can be inferred; namely, Islam (the Quran and hadiths), modernity, and nationality (*keindonesiaan*).

3. Trans-Nationalism

Purifying the faith was the main agenda of most Islamic revival movements in the 18th and 19th centuries. The reasoning behind

these movements was the belief that Muslim society was backwards and in decline. It was understood that Muslim countries were under colonial administration and control because they did not practice true and pristine Islam. They attached themselves to Islam but deviated from its teachings and doctrines. In the 20th century, following the Second World War, the Islamic revival movements, in response to the decolonization, re-oriented its efforts to establishing an Islamic state and implementing *shari'ah*, rather than purifying the faith. In the 21st century, with the challenge of globalisation and regionalism, some Islamic revival movements sought to restore the caliphate and create a global Islamic network instead of establishing an Islamic state and an Islamic code of law.

In Indonesia, the idea of restoring the Islamic caliphate attracted strong support from Hizb al-Tahrir (HT, or the Party of Liberation, a trans-national Islamic movement). Hizb al-Tahrir not only calls people to stand behind its agenda, but it also maintains a network of Muslims from different countries. The responsibilities of the caliphate include issuing fatwa, and managing and governing political and religious matters. The caliphate was never of much importance to Muhammadiyah members, and some leaders regarded it as a distant and mythical authority. As shown in Figure 7, almost 80% of Muhammadiyah leaders choose Pancasila as the final ideology of Indonesia.

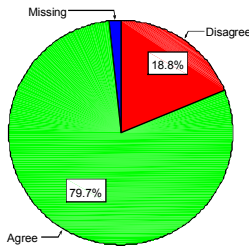


Figure 7. Muhammadiyah and Pancasila as Indonesia's final ideology

The above data can be interpreted in several ways. From the interviews, it can be understood that Muhammadiyah, as one of Indonesia's stakeholders, disagrees with the idea of replacing Pancasila with Islam as the national ideology. Most of the Muhammadiyah leaders prefer nationalism over pan-Islamism or trans-nationalism, as it is proposed and promoted by Islamist groups such as Hizb al-Tahrir. Muhammadiyah leaders criticize the concept of trans-national

Islam, arguing that it attempts to solve short term problems, such as a famine, with a long-term answer, that is, a caliphate. They consider the caliphate to be a utopian concept that is unrealistic and problematic. Several questions have been raised about its practicality as a solution to short-term problems in Indonesia: who will be the leader? How will this system consider fellow Muslims who disagree with the caliphate? What is its authority?

Muhammadiyah: The Pragmatic Moderatism

From the above discussion, it is difficult to classify Muhammadiyah as a pluralist movement. Muhammadiyah accept the existence of other religions, but most of its leaders still find it difficult to celebrate pluralism, such as considering other religions as friends rather than enemies. It is still common for Muhammadiyah members to react with suspicion and fear to those who adhere to different religions.

Muhammadiyah also cannot be classified as either a liberal or an Islamist group. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah, stated that religious teachings must be examined with reason. Dahlan has also stated: "People must follow the true terms and conditions which are in accordance with holy intellect" (Dahlan 1923; Mulkhan 1986, 10). However, some Muhammadiyah leaders have criticized liberal groups for placing human reason above the Quran. Muhammadiyah shares some similarities with Islamism, but also differentiates itself from Islamist groups in many ways, such as considering Islam a political ideology, and its rejection of the formalization of Islamic shar'ia and trans-national Islam.

The research findings show that Muhammadiyah identifies itself with moderate Islam, adopting a position between liberalism and Islamism. However, the tug-of-war between two opposing ideologies –liberal and puritan– and the oscillation between them, indicates that Muhammadiyah is sensitive to ideological change.. Each group was and is still trying to pull Muhammadiyah in opposite directions to reflect their own interests. The moderate position of Muhammadiyah is primarily a result of its pragmatism. Some young people in the Muhammadiyah regard its attitude towards Islamism as inconsequential and superficial. However, some activists who were dissatisfied with and disputed the Muhammadiyah agenda, left to join Islamist movements, such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, the PKS, and

Wahdah Islamiyah.⁷ They felt that their interests no longer aligned with the programmes of Muhammadiyah. As a result, numerous people in Indonesian Islamist movements had former ties with Muhammadiyah. In the opposing camp, there are Muhammadiyah members who consider the movement to show extreme right-wing tendencies. They are convinced that the Muhammadiyah is too Islamist. In their eyes, Muhammadiyah is too rigid and conservative, and is no longer capable of catering to their interests and vision. The Muhammadiyah is not a safe sanctuary for liberal ideologies. In this respect, it is no wonder that some liberal activists also have a Muhammadiyah background.

Moderate in Practice, Conservative in Belief

The lack of a strong ideological basis for moderatism in the Muhammadiyah has fostered ambivalence towards religious beliefs and practices. Polygamy is a good example of this. Polygamy became a heated national issue at the end of 2006. The Indonesian government was planning to revise PP No. 45/1990. The proposed revision sought to implement stricter requirements for polygamy for the entire population. In response, supporters of polygamy held several demonstrations. Proponents of monogamy also held demonstrations in favor of the proposed revision.

However, the issue of polygamy did not attract a lot of attention in the Muhammadiyah. Firstly, the survey data shows that 76.6% of Muhammadiyah leaders are civil servants. It is strongly assumed that Muhammadiyah members are also dominated by government employees who follow government regulations about practicing monogamy. Secondly, polygamy is considered taboo in Muhammadiyah. In their view, monogamy is better than polygamy, and it is believed that creating harmony, happiness, and prosperity in a monogamous family is easier than in a polygamous one. Therefore, people who practice polygamy in the Muhammadiyah are very rare.

However, Muhammadiyah members believe that polygamy is permitted in Islam. They do not forbid anyone who wants to practice polygamous marriage. Moreover, as shown in Figure 8, a high percentage of Muhammadiyah leaders (69.5%) opposed the government plan to revise PP No. 45/1990 and only 29% of them supported it.

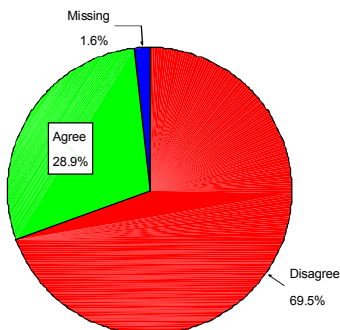


Figure 8. Muhammadiyah and polygamy

These findings show that supporters of polygamy do not automatically perceive it to be the best practice for themselves. The Muhammadiyah leaders' stance appears ambiguous. However, a pragmatic approach underlies their choice.

Weighing Liberalism and Puritanism

In order to determine the religious tendencies of the Muhammadiyah leaders, three questions were asked; namely, self-identification, the Islamic paradigms with which they most agreed, and preference for collaboration with the two main Islamic ideologies. In answer to the first question, as shown in Figure 9, the majority of Muhammadiyah leaders identify themselves as moderate Muslims. However, a few of the leaders also identify themselves as belonging to either liberal or fundamentalist groups.

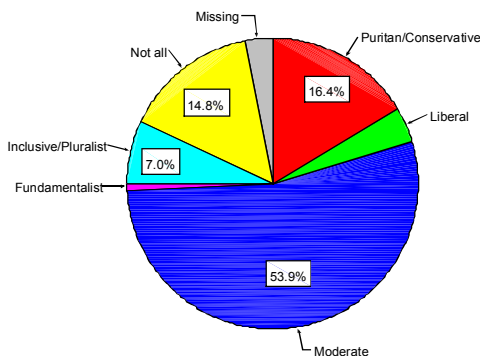


Figure 9. Self-identification of Muhammadiyah leaders

By assessing the religious tendencies of Muhammadiyah as an organization, it appears that the puritan wing constitutes a higher

percentage than the progressive wing. Figure 9 shows that over fifty percent of Muhammadiyah leaders call themselves moderate Muslims. The combination of puritan/conservative (16.4%) and fundamentalist (0.8%) also indicates that members who explicitly classify themselves as puritan (17.2%) outnumber those who categorize themselves as progressive (10.9%); that is, a combination of inclusive/pluralist (7.0%) and liberal (3.9%). Some of the respondents (14.8%) preferred to call themselves simply Muslim, rejecting any additional labels.

The second question was posed for the following reason. Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's Islamic paradigm is commonly known as conservative and scriptural. Prior to splitting and establishing *Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid* (JAT), Ba'asyir was the chairman of *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (Indonesian Jihadist Council), an organization which strongly promotes the strict implementation of Islamic *shari'ah*, including the traditional *hudud*. Ulil Abshar Abdalla is a leading proponent of liberal Islam in Indonesia. His organization, *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (JIL, Liberal Islam Network), is well known for its opposition to the enforcement of the Islamic *shari'ah*.⁸ It also promotes pluralism and secularism.

When we asked Muhammadiyah leaders about their preferences, as reported in Figure 10 below, the majority did not agree with the Islamic notions promoted by both Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Ulil Abshar Abdalla.

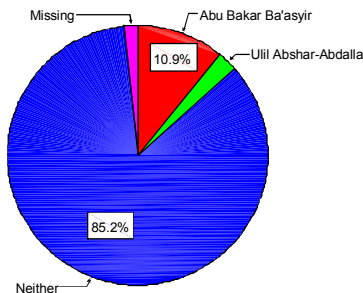


Figure 10. Muhammadiyah's views on Ba'asyir and Abdalla

However, if we compare the percentage of respondents who choose Ba'asyir and Abdallah, it is clear that Ba'asyir is favored (10.9%) to Abdallah (2.3%). A similar result was found when the respondents were asked about the organizations that Muhammadiyah should collaborate with.

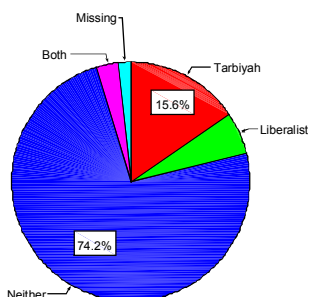


Figure 11. Muhammadiyah and collaboration with Tarbiyah or Liberal Muslims

As reported in Figure 11, most of the Muhammadiyah leaders (74.2%) were hesitant about working with either liberal or *tarbiyah* groups. However, the percentage of people who choose to collaborate with *tarbiyah* is higher (15.6%) than that those who choose to collaborate with liberal groups (5.5%).

The percentage of Muhammadiyah leaders who self-identified as fundamentalist or puritan/conservative Muslims, as reported in Figure 9, is closely related to the results shown in Figures 10 and 11. Around 11% of the Muhammadiyah leaders agree with Ba'asyir's Islamic *shari'ah* and 16% agree with collaborating with the *Tarbiyah* movement. This data is corroborates with the data reported in Figure 6, which indicates that 19% of the leaders share the opinion of Ba'asyir. To conclude, 10-20% of Muhammadiyah belong to the puritan group, while 10% belong to the progressive group.

Current Development of Muhammadiyah

The survey for this article was conducted in 2007 and there are have been developments, changes, and continuity in Muhammadiyah since then. After serving for two terms, from 2005-2010 and 2010-2015, Din Syamsuddin decided to step down from the national leadership of Muhammadiyah to give others a chance to lead the movement. The new chairman, Haedar Nashir, elected during the Congress in Makassar in 2015, is considered to be a "liberal". He did not deny that characterization, however he tried to put it into perspective: that his characterization as a 'liberal' is dependent upon the motives of the person claiming it. In his own statement, as quoted by Luthfi Assyaukanie (2015), he said, "In Muhammadiyah, I have been considered as [a]

liberal person. However, compared to the liberalism of JIL, I am very conservative”.⁹

Moving away from the debate on whether Nashir has liberal inclinations, it is well known that he is behind Muhammadiyah's decision to sever its ties with the PKS in 2007 and perceive the *Tarbiyah* ideology as a threat to Muhammadiyah. His position on the issue of Islamism can be seen from his books, such as *Islam Syariat: Reproduksi Salafiyah Ideologis di Indonesia (Shari'ah -Minded Islam: The Reproduction of Ideological Salafy in Indonesia)* and *Manifestasi Gerakan Tarbiyah: Bagaimana Sikap Muhammadiyah?* (How Muhammadiyah should Deal with the Tarbiyah Movement?). These two books explain the Salafy and Tarbiyah ideologies, the differences between them and the Muhammadiyah, and the response that should be taken by Muhammadiyah. He perceives them as political movement that differ from Muhammadiyah, which defines itself as cultural movement.

Quite similar to Nashir, the current secretary general of Muhammadiyah, Abdul Mu'ti, is also known for his firm position on the protection of religious minorities. He wrote some articles and op-eds on religious minorities, including “Minoritas dalam Pilkada” (Minority Groups in the Local Elections). Mu'ti's statements on the issue of Ahmadiyah and *Penghayat Kepercayaan* (Believers of Faith) are also very daring with respect to his position as a leading figure of Muhammadiyah. For instance, he has stated: “Ahmadiyah sect are members of Islamic society despite some of their beliefs differing from more mainstream forms of the religion.”¹⁰ In regards to the ruling of the Constitutional Court that granted followers of *Penghayat Kepercayaan* the right to state their beliefs on their ID cards, he stated: “There is no need to limit native-faith followers by [deciding] who are recognized or not... Regulations related to public services such as [the] civil administration registry, marriage, religious education and others should also be revised” (NU, Muhammadiyah Welcome Wider Rights for Native-Faith Followers 2017). In the Indonesian context, these two issues are used as a litmus test to determine whether someone is pluralist and inclusive.

During the Congress in Makassar in 2015, Muhammadiyah issued decisions that clarified its official position on religious, political, and social issues. On issues of Pancasila, statehood, and caliphate,

Muhammadiyah's position was summarized in the declaration of "Negara Pancasila sebagai *Dār al-'Ahd wa al-Shahādah*" (Pancasila State as the Abode of Covenant and the Space of Testimony). Muhammadiyah demonstrated its strong commitment to Indonesia and its unwavering acceptance of the nation-state and Pancasila, the national ideology. It is an indirect refutation of the utopic vision of a caliphate that is promoted by the Islamic Liberation Party (*Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr al-Islāmī*) and the temptation to create an Islamic state in Indonesia (PP Muhammadiyah 2015b). Besides this political declaration, and with the background of sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shi'ah, Muhammadiyah prefers to find commonalities between Muslim groups or sects, minimizing differences, rather than directing blame towards those who have different beliefs. Given the rise of intolerance and discrimination towards religious minorities, Muhammadiyah also issued a decree on its commitment to protect minorities and defend the rights of minority groups (PP Muhammadiyah 2015b).

The intentions of the Muhammadiyah chairman and secretary general, and the organization's decrees and declaration at the Congress, can be regarded as the official position of Muhammadiyah. These actions can be classified as progressive compared to the position of Muhammadiyah during the survey data collection. However, when considering the opinions of common members, the statements of local leaders, and even the leaders of Muhammadiyah's wing organizations, such as Pemuda Muhammadiyah (Youth of Muhammadiyah), different ideological bearings are also apparent. As reported in the survey, the religious position of the Muhammadiyah leaders is not monolithic. For certain issues, the ideological spectrum can be very diverse. Several recent cases can enlighten our understanding about Muhammadiyah.

The banning of the HTI on 19 July 2017 is indicative of the diverse response of Muhammadiyah members and leaders. Although Muhammadiyah has firmly declared its position on the issue of caliphate, nation-state, and Pancasila, the banning of the HTI suggests that the doctrine of "Negara Pancasila sebagai *Dār al-'Ahd wa al-Shahādah*" has not yet been fully embraced or adopted by Muhammadiyah members and leaders. While the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) firmly supported, and even recommended, the banning of the HTI, Muhammadiyah appears to be uncertain about this issue (PP Muhammadiyah 2017). The

Kokam, a paramilitary group under Pemuda Muhammadiyah, even provided protection to Felix Siauw, a former activist of the HTI, in his religious sermon in Sukoharjo, Central Java, on 17 July 2017 (Dijaga KOKAM, Pengajian Ust. Felix Siauw Berjalan Lancar: Terima Kasih Muhammadiyah! 2017). Siauw was also invited and provided a stage to give a religious talk to Muhammadiyah members at the heart of its headquarters in Kauman, Yogyakarta on 31 December 2017 (Akhir Tahun, Kajian Ustadz Felix Siauw Membludak 2018). In concert with the survey results, although two opposite ideological wings still exist and compete in Muhammadiyah, the its members and leaders appear to be primarily neutral towards both Felix Siauw and the HTI. Muhammadiyah are not on the extreme right or left, they are moderates who exercise pragmatism, particularly in maintaining their system of social services.

Conclusion

Throughout its history, Muhammadiyah has been working to revive religious and political participation and empower the socio-economic circumstances of the Indonesian Muslim population. However, for several decades its role in reforming religious life had been suffering an internal decline. Since the 43rd Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995, the dynamics of Muhammadiyah religious bearings were made apparent. This process, however, was only short-lived. A reverse ideological shift took place at the Congress in Malang in 2005, with puritan Islam appearing to regain its grip on Muhammadiyah. This article surveyed and discussed the three most pertinent issues during this period: pluralism, liberalism, and Islamism.

Muhammadiyah displayed an ambivalent attitude towards pluralism; friendly in individual relationships, particularly at the elite levels, but often showing fear and mistrust. Muhammadiyah perceives pluralism as simple and plain plurality. Its members tolerate the existence of other religions and communicates with them, however they frequently regard people who follow different religions as enemies and political challengers. Celebrating pluralism is still a 'foreign' practice. In sum, Muhammadiyah members show a tolerant yet exclusive attitude towards pluralism. Its history and national condition contributed to the formation of this outlook.

In terms of Islamic religious reform, Muhammadiyah seems to be lagging behind. In early times, Muhammadiyah was championed for

its progressive ideas, and its rational and modern thinking. As reported in the survey, some Muhammadiyah members felt hesitant about adopting new methods of religious study and rebelling against their predecessors' religious thoughts. In its foundational stages, returning to the Quran and prophetic traditions meant liberalizing Islam from antiquated doctrines. Currently, the idea of returning to the Quran entails adopting scriptural understandings and preserving common beliefs. Liberal ideology is perceived as a product of Western thought that is harmful to Islamic values.

In the political context, although Muhammadiyah has been lured several times into political activities, this does not mean that it perceives Islam to be a political ideology. The views of Muhammadiyah leaders towards the implementation of the Islamic *shari'ah* follows a triangular model: Islam (*shari'ah*), modernity, and nationality (state and customary law). They do not regard Islamic *shari'ah* to be in binary opposition to the state law. Muhammadiyah also regards pan-Islamism or the caliphate as an unrealistic utopic vision for dealing with the problems of the *ummah* (Muslim community).

Although Muhammadiyah is dominated by moderate Muslims, there are two opposing minority groups within the movement: puritan and progressive groups, both of which attempt to direct steer to their camp. In the late 1990s, there was a revival of intellectualism in Muhammadiyah circles. This was reflected in the leaders elected at the 45th Congress in 2000, who included well-known progressive thinkers, such as Amin Abdullah. However, in 2005, there was a strong sense that puritanism was taking control. The fact that Muhammadiyah can be easily drawn to both progressive and puritan ideologies is problematic. Some activists in the Islamist movements, such as PKS, MMI, Wahdah Islamiyah, HTI, and the Indonesian liberal movements, such as JIL, are genealogically connected to Muhammadiyah. These groups split from Muhammadiyah due to dissatisfaction about its stance towards their ideological bearings. At the ideological level, the moderate tendency of Muhammadiyah has a pragmatic function. The Muhammadiyah leaders maintain a moderate stance primarily because it is the most appropriate, given their interest in promoting social activities that require cooperation with the demands of society and the market.

Endnotes

- Some parts of this article are updated and revised version of my MSc thesis submitted to the University of Manchester, UK in 2007.
- 1. Wahhabist religious mindsets are commonly pictured as extremely puritanical, fanatic, anti-modernity, extreme, backward-looking, scriptural, full of indoctrination, and intolerant (Rashid 2000, 2002; Schwartz 2003).
- 2. Using non-proportional stratified sampling, the quantitative data were collected from delegates of the Tanwir in Yogyakarta from 26 to 29 April 2007. The Tanwir was held at the Hotel Inna Garuda, Jl. Malioboro No. 60, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. All of participants in the Tanwir stayed at that hotel. At the first level, following the Muhammadiyah leadership structure, the delegates at this Tanwir were stratified into 32 groups, based on their provinces or PWM (Pimpinan Wilayah Muhammadiyah, Provincial Leadership of Muhammadiyah). At the second level, this research systematically chose four individuals from each province (delegate 1 to 4). If one of these individuals refused to participate in the survey, delegate 5 or subsequent numbers would substitute for him accordingly. Each province sent between five and ten delegates based on the quantitative number of Muhammadiyah members (as shown by its branches) in that province. The total sample employed in the survey was 128 individuals. The delegates of the Tanwir were representing the voices of the Muhammadiyah leaders from all provinces of Indonesia. Therefore, the results of this study can be generalized to all leaders of Muhammadiyah in Indonesia, from the national to the ward level.
- 3. This is probably because the sample size of this survey is small (128 respondents). Therefore, it is difficult to obtain statistically significant results.
- 4. The terms “progressive” and “puritan” in this article refer to the Figure 9 when this survey asked the respondents to identify themselves. The “progressive” wing is a combination of those who identify themselves as “liberal” and “inclusive/pluralist” Muslim. Whereas the “puritan” wing refers to those who identify themselves as “puritan/conservative” and “fundamentalist”.
- 5. *Talbīs Iblīs* was initially the title of al-Ghazālī’s book, and was later used by Ibn al-Jawzī against al-Ghazālī and others, to express Ibn al-Jawzī’s hostility towards tasawwuf.
- 6. Bank Persyarikatan is now defunct. Information about this bank has been elaborated in Njoto-Feillard (2014).
- 7. The history of the establishment of Wahdah Islamiyah should be noted. Some members of Muhammadiyah in Sulawesi were angry with the organization’s decision to accept Pancasila in the 1980s. They split from Muhammadiyah and established Wahdah Islamiyah. Similar to Muhammadiyah, Wahdah Islamiyah is also active in education, health, and social welfare activities (IPAC 2018).
- 8. One of Abdalla’s most interesting and controversial articles is “Menyegarkan Kembali Pemahaman Islam” (Refreshing Islamic Thoughts) (2002).
- 9. Concerns about the liberal inclinations of Haedar Nashir were apparent in the news before and after his election as the new chairman of Muhammadiyah. These include the following: “Benarkah Ketua Umum NU dan Muhammadiyah yang Baru adalah Tokoh Liberal?” (2015) and “Innaa lillaahi...Muhammadiyah Akan Dicaplok Antek Syiah, Liberal, dan Jaringan Yahudi Lewat Muktamar” (2015).
- 10. This statement was originally published by *The Jakarta Post* (Muslim Figure Says Ahmadiyah a Form of Islam 2012).

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Guidelines

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S*tudia Islamika*, published three times a year since 1994, is a bilingual (English and Arabic), peer-reviewed journal, and specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular and Southeast Asian Islamic studies in general. The aim is to provide readers with a better understanding of Indonesia and Southeast Asia's Muslim history and present developments through the publication of articles, research reports, and book reviews.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

Articles should be written in American English between approximately 10,000-15,000 words including text, all tables and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submission must include 150 words abstract and 5 keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should

be translated into English. *Studia Islamika* accepts only electronic submissions. All manuscripts should be sent in Ms. Word to: <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika>.

All notes must appear in the text as citations. A citation usually requires only the last name of the author(s), year of publication, and (sometimes) page numbers. For example: (Hefner 2009a, 45; Geertz 1966, 114). Explanatory footnotes may be included but should not be used for simple citations. All works cited must appear in the reference list at the end of the article. In matter of bibliographical style, *Studia Islamika* follows the American Political Science Association (APSA) manual style, such as below:

1. Hefner, Robert. 2009a. "Introduction: The Political Cultures of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia," in *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert Hefner, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
2. 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.
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5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

Arabic romanization should be written as follows:

Letters: ' b, t, th, j, ḥ, kh, d, dh, r, z, s, sh, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, ḏ, ḡ, f, q, l, m, n, h, w, y. Short vowels: a, i, u. long vowels: ā, ī, ū. Diphthongs: aw, ay. *Tā marbūṭā*: t. Article: al-. For detail information on Arabic Romanization, please refer the transliteration system of the Library of Congress (LC) Guidelines.

ستوديا إسلاميكا (ISSN 0215-0492; E-ISSN: 2355-6145) مجلة علمية دولية محكمة تصدر عن مركز دراسات الإسلام والمجتمع (PPIM) بجامعة شريف هداية الله الإسلامية الحكومية بجاكرتا، تعنى بدراسة الإسلام في إندونيسيا خاصة وفي جنوب شرقي آسيا عامة. وتستهدف المجلة نشر البحوث العلمية الأصيلة والقضايا المعاصرة حول الموضوع، كما ترحب بإسهامات الباحثين أصحاب التخصصات ذات الصلة. وتخضع جميع الأبحاث المقدمة للمجلة للتحكيم من قبل لجنة مختصة.

تم اعتماد ستوديا إسلاميكا من قبل وزارة البحوث والتكنولوجيا والتعليم العالي بجمهورية إندونيسيا باعتبارها دورية علمية (رقم القرار: 32a/E/KPT/2017).

ستوديا إسلاميكا عضو في CrossRef (الإحالات الثابتة في الأديبات الأكاديمية) منذ ٢٠١٤، وبالتالي فإن جميع المقالات التي نشرتها مرقمة حسب معرف الوثيقة الرقمية (DOI).

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