THE RESPONSE OF CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN ISLAMIC PARTIES TOWARDS PLURALISM

FIRMAN NOOR[1]

Abstract

Religion-based political parties, particularly Islamic parties, are often perceived as being less committed to preserving pluralism in comparison with secular parties. Some people regard them as having hidden agendas which are not proper for Indonesia as a plural country. By exploring the ideals and practical aspects of several major Islamic parties, this article wants to highlight the views and attitudes of these parties' in relation to political diversity that indicates a real position of pluralism within these parties. To measure the Islamic parties' commitment on pluralism, this article will explore these issues:(1) the main purpose of party establishment, (2) the concept of the ideal form and foundation of a state, including the vision of Pancasila, (3) attitudes towards minority groups, including non-Muslims, Ahmadiyah, Syiah and any other minority groups, (4) policies related to religious concerns, including rights to religious education, the establishment of Islamic Syariah at the local level, and radicalism and (5) developments of political cooperation with secular and non-Muslim parties. The discussion will also touch upon the reasons behind the response towards pluralism as well as addressing the question on whether the response towards pluralism is based on pragmatic interests or Islamic idealism. Discussions about the Islamic parties will also reveal the gradation and level of commitment of the Islamic Parties to pluralism, which in general tend to be supportive towards pluralism.

Keywords: Islamic Parties, Pluralism, Pancasila, Syariah, Minority, Primordial, Nation-State

Abstrak

Partai-partai berbasis agama, khususnya partai-partai Islam, kerap ditengarai memiliki komitmen yang rendah terhadap keberagaman (pluralisme), terutama jika dibandingkan dengan partai-partai sekular. Sebagian kalangan meyakini partai-partai Islam memiliki agenda terselubung, yang tidak cocok untuk Indonesia sebagai sebuah negara plural. Dengan mengekspolrasi cita-cita (idealisme) dan beberapa aspek praktis dari beberapa partai Islam saat ini, artikel ini hendak menunjukkan cara pandang dan penyikapan partai-partai Islam terhadap keberagaman politik, yang pada gilirannya dapat mengindikasikan posisi mereka yang sesungguhnya atas pluralisme dalam kehidupan politik. Untuk mengukur komitmen partai-partai Islam atas pluralisme tersebut, artikel ini membahas beberapa soal yakni,(1) tujuan utama didirikannya partai Islam, (2) konsep partai Islam tentang bentuk negara ideal dan dasar negara, termasuk pandangan mereka tentang Pancasila, (3) sikap mereka terhadap kalangan minoritas termasuk non-Muslim, Ahmadiyah, Syiah dan kelompok minoritas lainnya (4) kebijakan yang mereka kedepankan atau perjuangkan terkait kehidupan beragama (termasuk yang terkait dengan hak mendapatkan pendidikan agama), penegakan Syariah Islam di ranah lokal dan radikalisme, (5) kesediaan membangun kerjasama politik dengan partai sekular dan non-Muslim. Diskusi juga akan menyentuh alasan-alasan dibalik respon partai-partai Islam atas pluralisme, termasuk mengkaji apakah respon tersebut didasarkan pada kepentingan pragmatis atau atas dasar idealisme yang bertumpu pada ajaran-ajaran Islam. Pembahasan terkait dengan hal-hal tersebut

1   Center for Political Research, Indonesian Institute of Sciences. Jakarta, Indonesia. Email: firman.noor@yahoo.co.id. The initial version of this article was presented in the Association of South East Asian Studies in United Kingdom (ASEA-SUK) Conference 2016, hosted by Centre for South East Asian Studies, SOAS, University of London.

juga akan membuka adanya gradasi dan tingkat komitmen partai Islam yang pada umumnya cenderung bersikap mendukung atas keberadaan pluralisme.

Kata Kunci: *Partai Islam, Pluralisme, Pancasila, Syariah, Minoritas, Primordial, Negara Bangsa*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a plural country derived from various ancient backgrounds. Even though Islam is the largest religion in this country, there are six religions formally acknowledged by the state and hundreds of other ethnic groups. For this reason, Indonesia at its heart requires the spirit of pluralism as the back bone of its existence. In relation to Islamic political parties, there are some people who still regard them as having the potential to disintegrate the nation or at least being less devoted in honoring pluralism. In his study on Islamic Parties, Kamarudin, indicates some negative opinions on Islamic parties' existence, including having the potential to break up national unity and to raise the spirit of sectarianism in political life (Kamarudin 2003, 60-61).

Efforts by the Islamic political parties to prove their commitment towards pluralism, at least in the early days of the Reform Era, often conflicted or clashed with the ways of the old Islamic parties of the past, particularly during 1950s. These parties tried to position Islam as the state's foundation. The New Order played a major role in nurturing the idea of Islamic parties as intolerant and exclusive for more than three decades (1966-1998) and also contributed in establishing negative stigmas or sectarian images. In relation to above situation, this article aims to show how pluralism is perceived by Islamic political parties, what the reasons are behind such attitudes, and how pluralism is implemented. The discussion also addresses the question of whether the response towards pluralism is based on pragmatic interests or Islamic idealism.

Pluralism in this article is perceived as an act of acknowledging and being tolerant of the plurality of diverse ethnic groups and cultures. It is also an acknowledgement of the diversity in faith, religions or attitudes that are inherent in communities, organizations or institutions within a state. In addition to this pluralism is related to the spirit of defending political participation which encourages people's autonomy and rejects (state) absolutism (Connolly 2005; Simpson and Weiner 1989, 1089; Abdillah 1999, 146-147, 166). Moreover, pluralism also means a willingness to build tolerance and compromise. This includes providing opportunities to people with different political backgrounds or affiliations to flourish based on their beliefs as well as giving them chances to participate in the decision making process and hold strategic political positions. Also under the spirit of pluralism, differences would be maintained and hence people must consent to co-operate with each other in spite of their differences, which leads to an more equitable society (Madjid 2001: 72) and creates equal co-existence within a given society (Giddens 1989, 271-272, 737).

On some occasions, particularly in the political domain, positive attitudes towards pluralism are motivated by ideological reasons. Certain ideals or beliefs held by a group drives its adherents to respect pluralism. On the other hand, more pragmatic reasons can be the real reason for pluralism. An example of this would be when a group decides to be positive towards pluralism in order to influence people and win a political contest. Hence, softening the rigidity of ideology is the main issue of such a positive attitude (Sanchez-Cuenca 2004, 325-342; Kavanagh 1983, 76-112; Triandafyllidou 1997; Robertson 1976; Shadegg 1964). However, this positive attitude may happen when the interests of idealism and pragmatic interests collide. This mixture indicates that ideological factors may play a significant role but pragmatic calculations are continuing. Indonesia's Islamic parties, which will be explored later, are an example of this, in which ideological factors play a salient role alongside pragmatic interests in establishing their position in pluralism.

In this article, the term Islamic political parties includes all the political parties that adopt Islam as the basis of their ideology or parties whose constituents mainly consist of

Islamic communities and express the aspirations of those communities (Amir 2003, 20-21; Noor 2015, 16). Hence, the Islamic parties in this article include the United Development Party (PPP), the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), the National Awakening Party (PKB) and the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the Star Moon Party (PBB). Several discussions have been conducted by scholars to analyse these parties from many perspectives. However, a deep examination of these parties' attitudes towards pluralism is still quite rare.

Moreover, these Islamic parties do not represent a single school of thought; instead, they are a reflection of the diversity found in Islamic political thought. Such diversity will eventually allow the formation of diverse opinions in a number of cases, as we will see in the next part of the discussion. Although embracing Pancasila (Five Pillars) as their foundation, some elites still regard PKB as the Islamic Party (Iskandar 1998, 24). Yusuf Muhammad, a prominent member of PKB, associates his party as "a bus that would bring people to Mecca" (Huda 1998, 78), indicating that the purpose of this party is actually to fulfill objectives of Islam. PAN, which also embraces Pancasila as one of its fundamentals, is dependent on Muhammadiyah communities for survival in the Indonesian political constellation. The majority of PAN members believe that the party's existence should be in line with Islamic values and the interests of Islamic communities (Interview with Teguh Juwarno, July 28, 2016). The PKB and PAN phenomenon indicates a new stream among Islamic parties which consider upholding Islamic values in politics does not necessarily mean using Islamic symbols, including declaring Islam as the foundation of the party (Noor 2015, 14). It is more important for them to present the essence of Islam to the people rather than presenting its symbols.

THE ORIGINS AND MAIN PURPOSES OF ISLAMIC PARTY ESTABLISHMENT

Islamic parties in the Reform Era were mainly established by Islamic communities that had a profound understanding of the character of Indonesia, in particular as a plural country as well as creating a nation-state. Almost all Islamic parties have a direct or indirect association with Indonesian Muslim politicians or political parties who possessed an understanding about the relationship between Islam and state, and an acknowledgement of the existence of the nation-state and plurality at the same time.

PBB, for instance, is derived from the extended of *Keluarga Bulan Bintang* (the Family of Star Moon) (Amir 2003, 61-67) and the rank and file of Masyumi. Yusril Ihza Mahendra, former the General Chairperson of PBB stated there was indeed an historical link between his party and Masyumi (Mahendra 1998, 265). Along with other Islamic parties, Masyumi attempted to establish an Islamic based state during the Liberal Democracy Era. However, when such an attempt failed, it did not try to impose its will onto others. In fact, Masyumi was popularly known as one of the important bastions of democracy during the 1950s and M. Natsir, Masyumi's leader, was once referred to by Kahin as "one of the giants in the Indonesian nationalist movement" (Kahin 1993, 158).

Meanwhile, PKB has *Nahdlatul Ulama* (Islamic Scholars Awakening/NU) as its main reference point. Prominent leaders of NU, including Abdurrahman Wahid, Muchit Muzadi, Ilyas Ruchiyat, Mustofa Bistri and Munasir Ali were some of the important figures which established the party in 1998. In the political realm, NU embraces *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* teachings and Pancasila (the five principles of the nation), along with tolerance and moderation as its political base (Choirie 2002). Up until the present NU is well known as an important supporter of pluralism and tolerance.

PAN grew in the community of Muhammadiyah, whose main figures, including Soekarno himself, have played a major role in the establishment and preservation of the nation-state. This has led to the belief among its cadres that PAN speaks for all Indonesians and most importantly enhances national pride (Fatwa 2003).

PPP is a "melting pot party", initially created by the New Order Regime in 1973. Up until today PPP becomes the political party for both the traditionalists – represented by NU and

the Islamic Education Union (Perti)— and for the modernists – represented by the Indonesia Muslim Party (Parmusi) and Party of Indonesia Islamic Union (PSII) – (Haris 1991; Rodja 1994). According to Sani these organizations have clearly shown their commitment towards nationalism and pluralism (Interview with Sani, July 29, 2016).

Among the major parties, PKS is the only party that has a connection with either elder politicians or other Islamic political parties from the past (Burhanudin 2004, Damanik 2002, Furqon 2004, Mahmudi 2005). PKS in fact is mostly influenced by *Ikhwanul Muslimin* (Islamic Brotherhood) which has its roots in Egypt and their ideas and methods of proselytizing are quite unique among Indonesians. In terms of political ideas, this party has not specifically renounced the idea of a supra-state. Until today, PKS continues to undergo moderation to be more adaptive in the national political arena. PKS has also held a doctrine of gradualism, which encourages members to develop and contextualize gradual and moderate manners in conducting *dakwah* (Ismail 1998, 33-37; Noor 2006). Consequently, PKS generally shares similar pluralist visions as proposed by the other Islamic parties.

The current Indonesian Islamic parties describe themselves as institutions that will implement the teachings or values of Islam and preserve the existence of the nation-state. In this regard, the parties' official documents highlight their commitment to developing people's sovereignty, maintaining freedom of religion, as well as acknowledging plurality and protecting the rights of minorities. (The Statute of PPP; The Statute of PAN; The Statute of PKS; The Statute of PBB; The Statute of PKB). To them, freedom of religion is a necessity and reflects the example set forth by the Prophet Muhammad and the verses that forbid any forms of coercion with regard to religion (interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29, 2016; with Juwarno, July 28, 2016; with Munasichin, July 25, 2016).

Moreover, the Islamic parties are not attempting to build an exclusive group whose concern is limited solely to "the interest of Islam". The purpose or objective for joining a political party is to promote prosperity by working together with other elements of the state (Mahendra 1998, 23) to build a government that works for all groups, without exception. In contrast, the establishment of a *Khilafah Islami-yah* (the Islamic Emporium) to enforce Islamic laws and create a community of second-class citizens are not stated in any official documents of the Islamic parties. Generally for the Islamic parties the desired form of the nation-state is characterized by law-abiding citizens, respect for freedom of expression and pluralism (Noer 1998).

Based on such foundations and stated objectives, the Islamic parties already have strong social and political capital, namely to respect pluralism as an historical inevitability and a fact in Indonesia.

ON THE IDEAL FORM AND FOUNDATION OF THE STATE

Islamic parties believe in the relevance of Islamic teachings in political activities and government or state matters. The government of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina, for instance, provides examples on the implementation of Islamic teachings in state management, including issues of pluralism within a state. Therefore, when it comes to the state's foundation, they see that Islamic values should be one of the important principles for it.

The main issue is what is the role of Islam in the state's foundation? One important option is to uphold Islamic teachings formally, namely as the foundation of the state. In this case, Islamic law must become the ultimate source of national law and any state regulations. Another salient option is to implement Islamic values as the substance or ethics that guide the state's foundation and policies. This option would mean that the state's foundation would not necessarily be Islamic law. Islamic parties in Indonesian prefer this option.

By upholding the substantial meaning of Islam, the focus of the Islamic parties tends to be on the spirit of Islam, which is centered on justice, humanity, tolerance, and pluralism in

dealing with state management, rather than struggling Islam as the state's foundation (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29, 2016; with Juwarno, July 28, 2016; with Munasichin, July 25, 2016). This tendency differentiates Indonesian Islamic parties from other Islamic parties around the world which embrace fundamentalism, such as *Jamaat-i Al-Islami* in Pakistan, who promote Islam as the state's foundation.

Also, focusing on the spirit of Islam motivates Indonesian Islamic parties to accept Pancasila (the five principles) as a state principle, which has been agreed upon by Indonesians since 1945. To this day, Islamic parties regard Pancasila as the state's foundation whose values are in line with Islamic teachings, including the belief in One God, humanity, the settlement of issues through amicable discussion and social justice. (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29 2016; with Juwarno, July 28, 2016; with Munasichin, July 25, 2016; see also Harahap 2004). Hidayat Nur Wahid, former President of the PKS, states that Pancasila and UUD 1945 (constitution) are not contradictive to Islam (Novia 2016). This situation is in agreement with the attitudes of old Islamic parties, which according to Deliar Noer although claiming Islam as the party's foundation, accepted Pancasila for state affairs (Noer 1984, 112). Munasichin argues that "Pancasila as the state ideology is final. It has been successful to unite different elements in our nation. And if we doubted its existence, Indonesia would never be born". (Interview with Munasichin, July 25, 2016).

Despite accepting Pancasila as the foundation of the state, it did not stop the Islamic Parties from increasing the role of religion (Islam) in political life. This was apparent during the early days of the Reform Era. The PPP and the PBB at one time proposed the idea to ratify the seven words "with the obligation to carry out the teachings of Islam to its adherents" in the Jakarta Charter at the National Constitution during the 2000 Special Assembly of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). These parties argued that the ratification was needed by the majority of people and would not lead to the creation of a secondary class of citizen for non-Muslims since the essence of the Jakarta Charter is about protecting the non-Muslim existence (Hadimulyo 2001). The PPP also claimed that its proposal was not dedicated to degenerate, let alone replace, Pancasila as the state foundation (Indonesia, MPR RI. 2000a, 542 in Basalim 2002, 93).

At the same timePAN and PKS proposed a more moderate proposal, for the state to accommodate adherents of all religions to be able carry out their religions. Under their proposal, not only Muslims would have the privilege to perform their religions with the guarantee of the state (Noor 2008, 50-51). On the other hand, PKB decided not to alter the contents of the UUD 1945 on the role of state in religion matters (Indonesia, General Secretary of MPR RI. 2000b, 489 in Basalim 2002, 186).

After the 2000 MPR Special Assembly, which failed to islamisize the state constitution, the Islamic parties no longer got involved in efforts to increase the role and involvement of the state in religious life or adapt Islamic laws into the constitution. In turn, they begun to focus more on building concepts that synthesize Islamic values into the existence of the nation-state, which are more accomodating and able to maintain the existence of pluralism. The PKS for instance proposes the concept of *Negara Madani* (civilized state) (Party Advisory Assembly of Prosperous Justice Party. 2008).

Over time, the Islamic parties are reorienting themselves to be more pragmatic, open and involved in solidifying the national political system. To the cynics, the claim of not using Islamic principles as the party foundation appears baseless. They consider that such attitudes are nothing more than a strategy to win the election by sacrificing Islamic ideals, including the establishment of Islamic Law. However, Islamic parties believe that moderation is a proper interpretation of Islam. Hilmi Aminuddin says that being open to all people (not just Muslims) is part of Islamic values; therefore the option to open up is not just about gaining more votes from the public (Aminuddin 2008, 56). Moreover, according to Munasichin the proponents of the Islamic parties believe that "if we fail to hold [a] pluralist perspective, we

[will] never be able to understand why Indonesia could stand still amid enormous diversity of its people". (Interview with Munasichin, July 25, 2016).

ATTITUDES TOWARDS MINORITY GROUPS

The minority groups referred to in this article are divided into two separate groups, namely the non-Muslim groups and other minority groups (or the splinter groups) within Islamic groups. In this article, the minority group within Islam is represented by the Syiah and Ahmadiyah groups.

On the Non-Muslims

With regard to the existence of non-Muslims, the Islamic parties tend to follow the tradition of Islamic parties in the past by not involving themselves in sectarian conflict with non-Muslim groups. Back in those days, Islamic Party leaders or elites had a warm and close relationship with Christian and Catholic leaders (Sumual 2008, 260-61; Oetama 2014, 545). Today the Islamic parties try to be consistent on the issue of respecting diversity and religious tolerance, specifically, to prove their own words or promises that their existence is not a threat to minorities. In relation to the non-Muslims, according to Munasichin, "it becomes an obligation for Muslim[s] as [the] majority to protect the (non-Muslim) minority". (Interview with Munasichin, July 25, 2016).

The relationship between Islamic parties and non-Muslim communities is also harmonious. In parts of Kalimantan, for instance, where the majority of the population consists of the non-Muslim Dayak ethnic group, the Islamic parties carry out their activities, and preserve a friendly relationship with the surrounding communities. The same situation applies in other regions such as Bali, Papua, North Sulawesi or East Nusa Tenggara. In those areas Islamic parties continue to build and maintain connections, even though they hold different faith and ideology.

The new election regulations to some extent push Islamic parties to expand their presence in almost all parts of Indonesia. The regulation requires all parties to have provincial committees in all provinces and in at least three-quarters (3/4) of the districts in each province and in half (1/2) of sub-district in each existing district. (Article 8, Law No. 8 Year 2012). Islamic parties also provide access for non-Muslims to be more involved or engaged in their parties. Over time, Islamic parties have managed to have officials, managers, cadres, and members who are non-Muslims. In relation to such political access and opportunity, according to Munasichin "it is also because our constitution has guaranteed the equal right for all citizens before the law and in political activities". (Interview with Munasichin, July, 25, 2016). Moreover, Juwarno believes that "if the minorities are capable in doing things, we should give them opportunity. It is part of consequences of merit system that we believe" (Interview with Juwarno, July, 28, 2016).

PKB and PAN have had party officials with Christian, Catholic, Hindu, or Buddhist backgrounds since the very start of their existence. Nowadays, PKS and PPP in some Christian dominated regions such as in Papua and West Papua Province have non-Muslims, including Preachers or Reverends, as party members of the committee and Members of Parliament, representing their parties. In Teluk Bintuni DPRD, for instance, 4 of 5 PPP's MPs are Christians. (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29, 2016; Amri 2010). Islamic parties also have support bases in regions where the majority of the population is non-Muslim. The PKB, for instance, has a relatively strong support base in Papua and NTT. In Bangka and Belitung, on the other hand, some of the PBB's supporters are of Chinese descent. It shows that these parties are able to adapt and reveal their non-exclusive nature.

Towards the Splinters: Syiah and Ahmadiyah Groups

In relation to the Syiah and Ahmadiyah groups, there is a mixed attitude among the Islamic parties. They tend to be more accommodating towards Syiah in comparison to Ahmadiyah. The Islamic parties, with the exception of PKB

and PAN, are inclined to stereotype Ahmadiyah as a heretical group (Interview with Sani, July 29, 2016; Rahman 2009; DSP PKS 2008) and consistently propose Ahmadiyah members suspend their faith or at least to limit their activities in the public areas (Rahman 2009). On the other hand, they do not label Syiah as a heretical group or attempt to persuade them to terminate their activities let alone ask the government to dismiss them. The PKS for instance tends to have a vague position towards Syiah, and so far has never publicly pushed for this group to dissolve (Tauhidi 2014). While the majority of PPP members tends to regard Syiah as part of Islam (Interview with Sani, July 29, 2016).

With regards to Ahmadiyah, PPP, PBB, and PKS, do not consider them as part of the Muslim community; they put Ahmadiyah in the same category as other religious minorities, such as Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Confucism, or Hinduism. Ahmadiyah is seen as a fringe group that commits serious blasphemy against Islam due to the claim of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the last prophet and *tadzkirah* as the holy book they must follow. To them, the best course for Ahmadiyah is to cease its blasphemous activities. Ahmadiyah may continue their activities if they no longer refer to themselves as Muslim (Rahman 2012, Mahendra 2009).

In relation to that, these parties strongly support the joint decree of by three ministers that stipulated Ahmadiyah halt its activities in spreading Ahmadiyah teachings into Islamic communities (Joint Decree of Three Ministerial, Minister of Religious Affairs, Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs, No: 3/ 2008, No: Kep-003/A/JA/6/2008, No: 199/2008). For the critics, this government policy is unfair and to some extent indicates the influence of radical Islamic groups (International Crisis Group 2008; Anasrudin 2012). However, the essence of the policy, for its supporters, is to maintain social order and in the end protect the Ahmadiyah group from negative responses, particularly from several Islamic communities that have constantly rejected their presence and

activities in the neighborhood (Rachmaningtyas 2013; Rahman 2009; Anasrudin 2012).

On the other hand, on the Syiah and Ahmadiyah issues, PKB and PAN hold a more moderate position. Although they do not regard these groups as part of the Muslim community, they do not publicly stigmatize them as heretics and tend to defend their rights to exist. Abdurrahman Wahid, for instance, was a prominent figure of PKB who consistently defended the Ahmadiyah existence (Wilwatikta 2011; Berita 8.Com 2008). He even claimed that he would protect Ahmadiyah with his life. Interestingly, his view however was opposite with PBNU's position, which up until today clearly and consistently states that Ahmadiyah is a heresy (Mukafi 2008; Ridyasmara 2008). However, in spite of the official positions or statements made by the PKB leadersdefending Ahmadiyah, many of PKB's supporters will abide by and implement the *fatwa* (religious edicts) of the PBNU (PKB-Jatim 2011).

Meanwhile, Amien Rais, a leading figure of PAN, is sometimes criticized for his inconsistent position in regard to these groups (Sumargono 2008). They accuse Rais of secretly supporting both groups. In general, opposite to Rais' tendencies, PAN tends to adopt a more moderate position and many members strongly believe that Ahmadiyah cannot neglect the aspirations of Muslim communities or avoid government's regulation (Interview with Juwarno, July 28, 2016).

Furthermore, there are different attitudes with regard to the violence against Ahmadiyah. The PKB strongly condemns any act of violence perpetrated by some Muslims against these two groups (Wisnubrata 2011) and consistently calls for people to treat Ahmadiyah members fairly (Saputra 2016). There is a similar attitude in the PAN. Juwarno says that "albeit the majority of PAN members believe Ahmadiyah has a potential to trouble religious life, we all agree that we should not use violence in treating its adherents. In fact, we prefer to put forward dialogue". (Interview with Juwarno, July, 28, 2016).

In general, even though it may be concluded that the Islamic parties are quite successful in

providing a positive response towards pluralism to non-Muslim communities, the same positive attitude is not clearly apparent when it comes to Ahmadiyah or Syiah groups. These two groups are not proportionally accommodated in the party's life, nor are they provided with any political support, particularly by PPP, PKS, and PBB. This is not only because of the religious differences between the Islamic parties and the Syiah and the Ahmadiyah; but it can also be seen as an effort to maintain the support of the mainstream Muslim communities. This is one of the weak links in the response by the Islamic parties towards pluralism. Only the PKB and the PAN appear to be consistent and even they are not entirely successful.

POLICIES RELATED TO RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

The drafting and eventually the enactment of various government policies where the representatives of Islamic parties are actively involved in the parliament, indicates the commitment of Islamic parties to providing benefits for all Indonesians. However, some of these policies are seen as only "beneficial to Muslims".. Such exclusive policies will be discussed in the following section – what is the real intention of the Islamic parties on these issues? Can this be interpreted as a rejection of pluralism?

The National Education System Bill

In the *Rancangan Undang Undang Sisdiknas* (National Education System Bill) the main points of the public debate were: (1) whether the students have the right to be taught religion by a teacher of the same faith, (2) allowing the students to be taught religion by a teacher of a different religion, or (3) allowing the students to attend classes of a different religion as a consequence of attending an educational institution managed by a certain religion.

The Islamic parties, NGOs (mainly that engaging in education and Islamic affairs) and a number of non-religious parties responded to the concerns (Ambardi 2009, 203). Together with the Minister of Education and Culture, they drafted a Bill that requires educational institutions to teach the same religion as the one followed by the students and it must be taught by teachers who adhere to the same religion as the students. The Bill was eventually passed by a majority support in the parliament.

For the supporters, this bill would bring an end to the misinterpretation of religious teachings or even the subtle coercion of internalizing certain perspectives, which may occur during the teachings of religion to the students. On the other hand, the opposition regarded it as an unnecessary burden for the schools since they have to hire extra teachers. Private schools would be forced to hire a number of religion teachers, even though their financial capacity might not be up to the extra burden. Above all, this bill was seen as a form of state intervention in religious affairs at a community level. On this basis, PDIP strongly objected to the bill and together with the Faction of Indonesia National United (KKI) and the National Passion Democracy Party (PDKB) they opposed the formulation of this bill in parliament. Groups outside the parliament opposed to the bill launched a big rally to renounce the National Education System Bill.

However, according to the Islamic parties the fact that each student has the right to be taught by teachers of the same religious background, indicates that this regulation does not allow discrimination. (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29, 2016; with Juwarno, July 28, 2016; with Munasichin, July 25, 2016). In fact, this regulation is applied to all schools without exception, including Islamic schools, which means they have to provide non-Muslim teachers of the same religous background for non-Muslims students. Yusuf states "the presence of this regulation is a must. The Muslims students could not be forced to learn Christianity; likewise, the Christian students must not be pushed to learn Islam. The regulation is part of our constitutional order (Article 31)" (Interview with Yusuf, July, 25, 2016).

Furthermore, for Islamic parties, a good religous teaching is something that has to be provided by the government, and it is already agreed upon and written into the constitution; hence, this regulation should be viewed as the

implementation of a fundamental principle and accordingly should not be interpreted as a kind of state intervention or coercion of the people (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29, 2016; with Juwarno, July 28, 2016; with Munasichin, July 25, 2016). The Islamic parties believe that the bill is in line with the spirit of pluralism as it protects the rights of students' with different religous backgrounds.

The Case of the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB) on the Place of Worship

In 2006, the Islamic parties supported the government proposal on the establishment of place of worship regulation. The main reason for this regulation is to prohibit any attempts to establish a place of worship, such as churches or temples, around a Muslim neighborhood, which according to the government could trigger an unsettling effect on the neighborhood. The decree was established by two ministers, the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Internal Affairs (Joint Decree Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Internal Affairs No 9/2006 and No.8/2006).

According to this regulation, a house of worship may only be established if at least 90 worshippers have claimed to require it. Additionally, the construction of a house of worship requires the approval of local residents as well as local stakeholders and the government. Just like the National Education System Regulation, the SKB was initially triggered by the concern of Muslims on the wide spread construction of houses of worship, in particular Churches, in the neighborhood where the majority of the population is Muslim.

This decree created disagreement among people. Some people objected to it because they believed it is a harmful to the freedom of religion, in particular to the freedom of implementing and disseminating faith. In other words, SKB was considered to be violating Human Rights (Sadzali 2004). The opponents of SKB argued that such a regulation was clearly against the mandate provided by the Constitution and the spirit of Pancasila which guarantee and protect freedom of religion. (Sadzali 2004).

\The Islamic parties argue that the SKB is required for the protection of communities from any activities that could generate restlessness and resistance. With the SKB in place, it is expected that all religious groups, including the Muslim communities, are aware of not only the requirements of the regulation but also any impacts of establishing a place of worship. To the PPP the regulation is not only about Muslims' interests, but about respecting the majority of people in a particular area (Interview with Sani, July 29, 2016). In fact, this regulation would potentially make the establishment of a Mosque in non-Muslim regions more complicated. The case of Mosque burning in Tolikara, Papua, is an example of this. The Islamic parties believe that this decree is not contradictive to the spirit of pluralism. They regard the fundamental spirit of pluralism is not dismissed by this regulation, since this regulation is applied indiscriminately.

The Case of Perda Syariah

During the Era of Reform, a number of regions enacted regulations inspired by the *Syariah Islam* (the Islamic law). This was a consequence of the decentralization that enabled the local government to set up local regulations, based on the local people's aspirations and interests. A number of local areas have adopted the conventions and spirits of Islamic law, including a ban on drinking alcohol, the prohibition of prostitution, an obligation for students to recite al-Quran and to wear Muslim clothes etc. Not all of these local regulations are actually a direct application of the Islamic Law. Some of them are only partially adopting or only inspired by Islamic Law. Nevertheless, these regulations are referred to as "*Perda Syariah*".

For some people the failure to establish Islamic law at the national level, including ratifying the seven words in the Jakarta Charter into the *Preambule* (Introduction) of the Constitution, is the main reason for the emergence of the phenomenon of "*Perda Syariah*" (Murod 2016). The supporters of these regulations believe that Islamic Law contain values that have a high degree of relevance to the daily lives of Muslims (Santoso 2003, 67-79). *Perda Syaria* is also intended to protect the

community from various undesirable activities, prohibited by Islam law, such as gambling, drinking alcohol, or prostitution. Thus, in general, they believe *Perda Syaria* becomes an act of rescuing the community from many social problems. Additionally, these regulations are sometimes regarded as a reflection of the local identity and by extension a reflection of national identity (Ka'bah 2007). With those underlying characters, for its supporters *Perda Syariah* is not only symbolic in nature, but are also functional and in line with the spirit of locality. Above all they regard the stipulation of *Perda Syariah* as part of the democratic consequences at the local level. Murod (2016) believes that the existence of *Perda Syariah* should be counted as part of the democratic consequences of the rights of the majority to determine government policies.

However, in some local areas, not all people regard *Perda Syariah* in similar ways to its supporters. For them, *Perda Syariah* tends to ignore the rights of minorities or the non-Muslim groups and creates discrimination (Kamil 2007, 184-207; The Wahid Institute 2008; Mudzakkir 2012). Therefore, it goes against the spirit of pluralism and tolerance. The spirit or majority or majoritarianism often times clashes and overwhelms the spirit of pluralism since *Perda Syariah* only regulates the concerns and interests of the majority group. *Perda Syariah* is also seen as restricting women rights and limiting their role in society (Kamil 2007, 159-184). Additionally, they also believe that the spirit of *Perda Syariah* does not correspond with the national laws. In some areas, the presence of *Perda Syariah* still does not solve social problems and triggers severe debates and contradictions in its implementation (Hooker 2008; Salim 2015). With all the issues hanging over them, *Perda Syariah* is seen as problematic both as a concept and at the level of implementation.

As *Perda Syariah* formed, Islamic parties were sometimes active participants, involved at the initial drafting stages (Adnan & Panggabean 2004; Murod 2016). Other times, Islamic parties only took a passive position becoming active during the discussion in the DPRD. The interesting part is that this regulation exists in areas where the head of the government comes from the Golkar or the PDIP or in regions which are dominated by secular parties such as in South Sulawesi, Bulukumba, Maros, or (in the case where Islamic parties are majority), have significant support from secular parties, such as in Aceh, Padang, Tasikmalaya, (Buehler 2016; Murod 2016; Madinier 2014).

In other words, this process involves all elements, including non-Islamic parties or factions. Secular parties supporting the implementation of *Perda Syariah* in their district may gain political benefits, namely gaining sympathy from the Muslim majority (Buehler 2011; Buehler 2016, 186). Furthermore, the fact that the secular parties actively took part or were involved in the formulation and the implementation of *Perda Syariah*, indicates that such regulations are generally accepted by nationalist oriented groups.

Moreover, in many aspects the essence of this regulation is still in line with the spirit of national law. This is because the local government has to consult with the ministry of home affairs (central government) before stipulating *Perda Syariah*, and any other local regulations, to ensure those regulations do not go against National Law/Regulation (UU) (Isra 2016). Mahfud MD, former Constitutional Court Chairperson states that the creation of local regulations involves the national government, represented by the Minister of Home Affairs, who must comprehensively evaluate the bill and give permission (Rachmaningtyas 2016).

Furthermore the spirit of the national law actually provides opportunity for the establishment of *Perda Syariah*, since Pancasila decrees the respecting of God and the implementation of religous values (Yunus 2015). According to Yusuf "the essence of *Perda Syariah* is in line with the spirit of the first pillar of Pancasila (Believe in One God), hence it must be regarded as part of Pancasila implementation" (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016).

In relation to the implementation problems, from the perspective of the Islamic parties, *Perda Syariah* is basically about regulation for Muslims. They do not see it as a violation of human rights or the spirit of pluralism, since the adherents of other religions can still carry

out what they perceive as correct, even though in a number of regions there were impacts to the minority (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29, 2016; with Juwarno, July 28, 2016; with Munasichin, July 25, 2016). It is accurate that there are some weaknesses, contentious impacts and objections in the implementation of these regulations. However, at the grass root level these regulations are not really triggering controversy, let alone social unrest. In fact, the lack of objections, like those voiced by the minority groups in regards to *Perda Syariah,* show that the spirit of intolerance and extremism, as claimed by some groups, is not correct.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL COOPERATION WITH NON-ISLAMIC PARTIES

Pluralism within the context of politics means acknowledging the existence of other groups, followed by a willingness to cooperate with and to provide political access to them. Proof of pluralism in contemporary Indonesia can be seen during two significant events, the general election (presidential and the head of local government election), and the formation of government coalitions.

The Case of General Elections

In the 1999 Presidential Election (Pilpres), the Islamic parties, including PPP, PAN, and PKS formed a coalition known as the *Poros Tengah* (Middle Axis), which nominated Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) as the candidate for the president. On the D-Day of the presidential election held in the 1999 the Special Assembly of MPR, *Poros Tengah* managed to defeat a coalition led by the PDIP, who nominated Megawati Sukarnoputri. The victory of *Poros Tengah* became possible after they obtained support from Golkar, one of prominent secular parties[2]. The success of Wahid in the 1999 Presi-

dential Election indicated the phenomenon of the "grand coalition" between Islamic parties and secular parties for the first time in the Reform Era. The tendency to build a political coalition with the secular parties continues up until today.

In the 2004 Presidential Election, a direct presidential election was firstintroduced. The Islamic parties established a political coalition with a number of secular parties to nominate their presidential candidates. In the first round, the PKB and Golkar created a political coalition to support Wiranto, the former Commander in Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces, as their presidential candidate. Meanwhile, the PBB together with the Democrat Party (PD) and Indonesia Unity gave their support to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY). PAN, PKS and some small parties, supported Rais, a former leader of Muhammadiyah. The PPP became the only party that ran alone by supporting its own general chairperson Hamzah Haz.

In the second round, Megawati who paired with the General Chairperson of PBNU Hasyim Muzadi (Mega-Muzadi) and SBY-Jusuf Kalla (JK) both were supported by a coalition of Islamic and secular parties. The PPP decided to join PDIP in supporting Mega-Muzadi, while PKS joined PBB to support SBY-JK. PAN and PKB decided not to formally support any candidates, but the majority of their members and sympathizers tended to vote SBY-JK. The result of this election proved that SBY-JK was able to secure more voters than Mega-Muzadi. In the 2009 Presidential Election, all of the main Islamic parties joined PD to support SBY-Boediono. This coalition successfully won the presidential election.

However, in the 2014 Presidential Election, the Islamic Parties failed to reach consensus. The PKB decided to support Joko Widodo (Jokowi)-JK; meanwhile, the rest of the Islamic parties supported Prabowo-Hatta. However, over time, PAN and PPP changed their position by taking part in the Jokowi Government. Meanwhile PKS and PBB, together with Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra), a nationalist party led by Prabowo Subianto,

2   In the 1999 President Election, Gus Dur gained 373 votes derrived from *Fraksi Reformasi* (PAN and PK), *Fraksi PPP, Fraksi Daulat Umat* (consisted of PNU, PKU, PPP, PSII, Masyumi), *Fraksi Golkar*, several members of *Fraksi Utusan Golongan*, several members of *Fraksi TNI/Polri* and several members of *Fraksi PKB*. On the other hand, Megawati Sukarnoputri with the support from *Fraksi PDIP, Fraksi PDKB*, some members of *Fraksi Utusan*

Golongan, some members of *Fraksi TNI/Polri* and some members of *Fraksi PKB* gained 313.

decided to become the opposition to the Jokowi Government.

Since the Pilkada events, a coalition between the Islamic parties and their secular counterparts has become unavoidable. Both the Islamic and secular parties are focusing on winning the election. According to Masykuruddin Hafid, the characteristics of forming a coalition prior to Pilkada was "simply pragmatic (self-centered orientation) and dedicated only to pursue victory" (Angga 2015). For that reason, they were all willing to form an alliance with any parties to support a candidate that was predicted by most to win the election. The case of 2015 Local Election indicated that PAN tends to join PDIP, PKB with Partai Nasdem, while the rest of the Islamic parties also form coalitions with secular parties, creating so called "un-ideological coalitions" (Angga 2015). In the eastern part of Indonesia where Muslims are a minority, most Islamic parties have a commitment to hold rainbow coalitions and often support non-Muslim figures (Syatila 2013). These pragmatic choices become inevitable for them, particularly in the areas which are dominated by secular parties and non-Muslims, as it provides more political opportunities and benefits. This condition sometimes pushes Islamic parties to compromise their ideological commitment and come up with more "pragmatic solutions".

However, there were also times when the Islamic parties put forward the importance of capability and achievements as the main prerequisite to select a candidate instead of merely popularity. For such a case, the Islamic parties only agree to form a coalition with parties that shared similar judgments or understandings. Then they would work hard to ensure the victory of that candidate (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29, 2016; with Juwarno, July 28, 2016; with Munasichin, July 25, 2016). Ideological factors sometimes played a salient role in selecting and supporting candidates, which eventually determined the creation of a coalition. However, there have only been a few cases where the Islamic parties really placed the emphasis more on ideological factors during a local election. Pragmatic reasons, mainly the possibility of winning the election,

become more influential (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29, 2016; with Juwarno, July 28, 2016; with Munasichin, July 25, 2016).

This discussion clearly indicates that all Islamic parties do not restrict themselves from working with secular parties. They are not only willing to have political cooperation with secular groups, but are also committed to supporting many candidates with secular political orientations or even non-Muslim backgrounds. Such moderate attitudes would not be visible if the Islamic parties held a sense of antipathy towards other political groups.

The Case of National Government Coalition

Since there is no party that can secure the required majority in the parliament, the creation of a coalition government is unavoidable. For that reason, all governments in Indonesia during the Reform Era have been a coalition government, in which Islamic parties and secular parties work hand in hand to support a particular coalition. This indicates once again the eagerness of the Islamic parties to cooperate with other non-Islamic parties or groups. During the era of the Wahid administration (1999-2001), all the major and well known Indonesian parties were part of the coalition. This government gave some ministerial posts to all the major Islamic parties including PKB, PAN, PKS, PPP and PBB. Meanwhile, during the era of Megawati (2001-2004), PKB and PKS decided to be an outsider for a different reasons. PKB respected the position of Wahid who felt betrayed by Megawati, whereas PKS were unwilling to be led by a woman president. During the SBY-JK era (2004-2009), all major Islamic parties were part of the government along with secular parties. This pattern happened again during the era of SBY-Boediono (2009-2014). In the Jokowi Government today, PKS and PBB decided to stay out of the government, declaring themselves as loyal-opposition.

This attitude may lead many to question whether this willingness is purely driven by religious interests or perhaps by political interests to win the election or both. The decision to join a coalition is varied. Nevertheless

the promise of political compensations by and large becomes the premier reason. This reason is not exclusive to Islamic parties when making a political deal. Having said this, nevertheless, ideological consideration is not totally ignored. In some cases, the Islamic parties still struggle with ideological commitments when faced with political deals or decisions. The PKS' decision not to join the coalition of the Megawati Government in 2001 was based to some extent on the idea of avoiding working under the command of a woman, even though the PKS in parliament is still part of the faction that supported her government. Also the choice to be a loyal opposition towards the Jokowi Government was also motivated by differences of political orientation or vision between PKS and the Jokowi Government. (Interview with Al-Muzammil Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Arsul Sani, July 29, 2016)

Even though some might argue that only one of these interests, whether pragmatic or ideological, is the basis of their political preference, these interests are inseparable and mutually supportive of each other. (Interview with Yusuf, July 25, 2016; with Sani, July 29, 2016; with Juwarno, July 28, 2016; with Munasichin, July 25, 2016). On the one hand, the Islamic parties need to cooperate with other parties in order to be able to obtain and maintain a politically beneficial position. It is an undeniable fact that nowadays secular parties tend to be more attractive to the public; hence, the Islamic parties have no choice but to continue maintaining good relationships with them. On the other hand, ideological factors or thoughts have also determined political preferences at the practical level. In relation to the establishment of coalitions, the ideal to respect diversity and maintain political pluralism is followed by all Islamic parties and has unquestionably enabled them to build a more pluralistic patterns of cooperation.

CONCLUSION

Pluralism as referred to in this article is a positive attitude and belief that diversity or plurality does exist. It is not only about belief in the existence of political diversity but also about how to provide opportunity. In the political context, it means the willingness to build cooperation with other political groups and to provide mutual support and access to obtain political position. The above discussion shows that in general the Islamic parties in Indonesia have fulfilled almost all of the criteria as explained in the definition of pluralism. In their official documents, for instance, Indonesian Islamic parties describe their existence as part of national endeavors to advance the nation and people of Indonesia. They also recognize the plurality of the Indonesian people, and therefore they are able to accept the fact that Indonesia is a nation-state founded on the five principles or Pancasila.

The Islamic parties also indicate a positive attitude within a practical context. They show an open attitude and are willing to have mutual relationships with non-Muslims. As for the fringe group(s), admittedly there is dissimilarity in their views. The PKB and PAN are the two parties which are quite cordial with fringe groups, while other Islamic parties tend to be stricter in their response. It can be surmised that within the context of pluralism, the response to fringe groups, especially towards the Ahmadiyah, is generally feeble.

Policies that are of great interest to the Muslim community, such as the National Education System Law and SKB on the establishment of places of worship, reveal that the objectives of these policies are to protect the rights of all religions and to preserve social order. On the other hand, the existence of the *Perda Syariha* is not aimed at enforcing Islamic laws on a larger scale. The substances of *Perda Syariah* were agreed upon democratically and involve elements of the Central Government and secular elements of the community, including non-Islamic parties. They also relate to the identity of the local community and the prevention of undesirable behaviors. Furthermore, Islamic parties demonstrate a harmonious political relationship with the secular parties. This is clearly apparent during the Presidential Election, Local Elections and during the formation of government coalitions.

This study indicates that there is inconsistencies in regard to the Islamic parties' internal position and also amongst the Islamic parties. This appears to be related to the positions taken by the party elites and the political ideology they follow. Among the Islamic parties, PKB and PAN are the moderate ones and have a strong commitment towards pluralism. When it comes to PKS, PPP and PBB, they are quite adaptive with pluralism, and tend to put the interests of Islam first above all else. It could be said that ideological interests will always have an effect on Islamic parties' attitude towards pluralism. However, it cannot be denied that a desire to win the political competition has also encouraged the Islamic parties to maintain a positive attitude towards pluralism.

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Interviews

Interview with Al-Muzammil Yusuf, the Head of Political Department of PKS Central Committee Board, in Jakarta, July 25, 2016.

Interview with Arsul Sani, the General Secretary of PPP Central Committee Board, in Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

Interview with Teguh Juwarno, the Chairperson of PAN Central Committee Board in Jakarta, July 28, 2016.

Interview with Zainal Munasichin, the Vice General Secretary of PKB Central Committee Board, in Jakarta, July 25, 2016.