



The Intellectual Turn in Muhammadiyah: Organizational Dynamics during Indonesia's Political Transition, 1990–1998

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the dynamics within the management of Muhammadiyah from 1990 to 1998, focusing on the dominance of Muslim intellectual groups and the conflict between the modern or intellectual and traditional groups. This research traces the historical context chronologically and comprehensively regarding developments at the center of Muhammadiyah management and the social and political impact on Muhammadiyah organizations at the grassroots level. The research uses a historical method. This research reveals that the opportunities for Muslim intellectuals to be further involved in Muhammadiyah management had created tension between those who agreed with modernization and progressiveness and those who denied and tended to hold the old ways. The conflict had given rise to dualism in the central management of Muhammadiyah, the impact of which had occurred in several branch-level organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Islamic intellectual movement in Indonesia increasingly developed. Many academics and Islamic activists who graduated abroad were involved in national leadership. They brought various changes of perspective on Islam, such as Nurcholis Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, to Muhammadiyah management figures such as Azhar Basyir, Amien Rais, and Syafii Maarif. Those intellectuals contributed to changing the national political map in the 1990s. In the previous period, the New Order government was defensive, even drawing political demarcation lines with Islamic groups as reflected in several events, one of which was the Tanjung Priok tragedy in 1984. However, towards the end of the 1980s to the early 1990s, President Suharto became more cooperative and embraced Islamic groups. On 7 December 1990, the Association of Indonesian Muslim Scholars (ICMI) was established as an organization that oversaw Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, with B.J. Habibie as its first general chairman. Several transnational Islamic movements from the late 1980s to the early 1990s strengthened in Africa and the Middle East. Several transnational Islamic intellectual movements entered and developed in Indonesia through Islamic missionary institutions in various universities.

The modernization can also be seen in Islamic organizations that have long been established in Indonesia, such as Muhammadiyah. Before the 1990s, Muhammadiyah's national management tended to be conservative and was held by leaders who were clerics. Changes occurred when Muhammadiyah's management was organized by Muslim intellectuals who graduated from universities. Modernization and rationalism in Muhammadiyah emerged from criticism from intellectuals. Muhammadiyah's response to opening these criticisms made it easier to accept the influences of modernization. After the 1990 Congress, various criticisms and new ideas encouraged changes in leadership styles within Muhammadiyah. Those critics included Kuntowijoyo and Ismail Suny, Muhammadiyah administrators and figures with brilliant careers in the Islamic intellectual world. Their existence confirms that the movement of intellectualization in Muhammadiyah began in the 1990s (Surabaya Pos, [1993](#)).

At the 1990 Congress in Semarang, Azhar Basyir, an Islamic intellectual who graduated from abroad, was elected General Chair of the Muhammadiyah Leadership Center. This marked Muhammadiyah's transition to become more modern, as well as marking the end of clerical style leadership and the beginning of intellectual style leadership (Mulkhan, [2003](#)). The leadership transition and change were proper for Muhammadiyah as part of the *tajdid* organization. According to Azhar, future challenges will not only focus on classical religious texts. Therefore, he urged



to clarify the qualifications and functions of clerics for Muhammadiyah; thus, it can move more openly in modern national life, which contains many humanitarian problems, not all of which can be resolved in the Yellow Book (Afandi, [2022](#)).

Muhammadiyah has been discussed in various studies, and discourse about Muhammadiyah has emerged in multiple aspects. Suryana discusses the role of Muhammadiyah in the history of politics in Indonesia. Based on his research, Suryana identifies that Muhammadiyah's involvement in national politics was influenced by the encouragement of Islamic political thoughts, namely revivalism, modernism, and pluralism (Suryana, [2009](#)). Setyawan discusses the development and pattern of Muhammadiyah's efforts to gain mass influence in Rembang in a historical context. He reveals that Muhammadiyah's development in Rembang tended to be slow because the approach was not adaptive to the cultural characteristics of the target community. The existence of Muhammadiyah elites in regional government played an essential role in actualizing Muhammadiyah's approach and influence in society, primarily supported by its charitable business activities in education, health, and social (Setyawan, [2006](#)). Kosasih and Suwarno identify leadership patterns within the Muhammadiyah organization based on historical analysis. The study concludes that Muhammadiyah's leadership pattern was charismatic in early development because it was based more on personal authority as an intellectual cleric. In the 1990s, Muhammadiyah's leadership pattern began to change because it had a legal-rational leadership pattern, with its leaders coming from academic intellectual backgrounds and scholarly knowledge. Another difference from the old period was that the reign of the modern period was relatively shorter, namely only one or two periods (Kosasih & Suwarno, [2010](#)).

This study is focusing on uncovering the dynamics within Muhammadiyah from 1990 until 1998. During this time, Muhammadiyah transitioned from conservative to modern leadership. The emergence of Islamic intellectuals within Muhammadiyah management not only changed the leadership patterns but also influenced Muhammadiyah's actions in the future. Its increasingly massive movement throughout the 1990s encouraged Muhammadiyah to involve itself in more complex issues. Throughout this period, Muhammadiyah no longer focused solely on religious matters but also other topics, such as political and social issues. This shows that the goals formulated by Azhar Basyir and the modernization agenda popularized by Muhammadiyah intellectuals had encouraged the organization to act dynamically in viewing and responding to modern problems. Thus, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the history and dynamics within Muhammadiyah during the transition period from 1990 to 1998 and highlight the tensions between the two parties, namely the modern and conservative groups, influencing developments in various branch-level organizations in certain regions.

The theme of this study is political history. Politics is everything that concerns all activities related to the state and government. The attention of political science relates to the phenomena of society, including influence and power, interests and political parties, decisions and policies, conflict and consensus, political culture, political socialization, etc. Therefore, political history is interpreted as part of the historical theme, which focuses explicitly on past political events, patterns, and impacts. Political history uses a variety of approaches. This research uses the history of intellectual and mental approaches. According to Kuntowijoyo, the history of mentality results from the development of intellectual history. The basic assumption of intellectual history is that there is a spirit of the times and a view of history holding that thoughts influence behavior. As a result of the development of intellectual history, the history of mentality examines collective thinking compared to intellectual history, which examines individual thinking (Kuntowijoyo, [2003](#)).

The intellectual history approach would entail analyzing the journey of ideas conveyed and implemented through policies from three eras of chairpersons. In addition, the impact and reality that occurred at the grassroots level must be considered. Intellectual history or thought has been demonstrated to play a role in the ideology, ethos, spirit, ideas, or values of an individual or a group of people (Agung, [2013](#)). The history of thought that focuses on developing an individual's ideas can be called an intellectual biography (Rizal, [2024](#)). Concurrently, the history of mentality examines the attitudes of the general populace toward daily life. This approach resembles the contributions of the "Annales School," a group of scholars who meticulously studied the material factors that shape human life and investigated their psychological underpinnings. The first historians to develop guidelines for the history of mentality were Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, who were interested in collective belief systems (Hutton, [1981](#)).

According to the annals of intellectual history, a paradigm shift in leadership has been observed, transitioning from traditionalists to intellectuals. This transformation is concomitant with the modernization of Muhammadiyah and its emergence as a prominent actor in the Reformation in Indonesia. This assertion is substantiated by numerous

debates among leaders during central leadership meetings and *Tanwir* throughout the 1990-1998 period, as well as statements disseminated through mass media. It is evident that throughout the historical progression of the organization, leaders and members at the grassroots level have exhibited an unwavering commitment to maintaining the organization's non-political status (non-partisan) character. This commitment is manifested through various endeavors, including engagement in da'wah through a social movement approach, focusing on education and health. The financial sustenance of the organization is ensured through the establishment of charitable enterprises. At the same time, the leadership style is characterized by a collective-collegial character, thereby preventing the organization's domination by individuals or small groups.

METHOD

This research uses historical methods. According to Garraghan, the historical method is a systematic framework consisting of legal principles and designs that help search for historical sources more effectively, providing criticism, and assessing synthesis to achieve good historical writing (Sair & Irwanto, [2014](#)). The historical method consists of four stages: heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Herlina, [2020](#)). In this research, the primary sources are archives in the form of statistical data, meeting reports, and decision letters. Information was also obtained from contemporary newspapers such as *Suara Muhammadiyah*, *Kompas*, *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, and others. Meanwhile, the secondary sources include books, scientific articles, papers, and online portals.

We observed and explored the spirit of the era from these various sources. Newspapers such as *Kompas*, *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, and *Surabaya Pos* described the situation on the ground during several key moments, such as the *Muktamar* (National Congress) and the *Tanwir* (National Conference). Through these sources, we gained insight into the dynamics and dialectics (clash of ideas) within the central leadership, notably, the shift in leadership style from the pre-1990 era, which was more traditional and dependent on A.R. Fakhruddin as both a religious scholar and the organization's highest leader. Meanwhile, we sense from internal newspapers or magazines, such as SM (*Suara Muhammadiyah*), that despite being part of the organization's communication channels, they do not adopt political party newspapers' propagandistic or provocative styles.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Muhammadiyah under Azhar Basyir

During the management of Azhar Basyir, Indonesian Muslims faced the emergence of transnational Islamic movements from the Middle East considered exclusive, such as the *Tarbiyah* movement from Egypt and the *Jihadist* Islamic movement, which was connected to various international Islamic mujahid networks. Tarmizi Tahir, as Minister of Religious Affairs at that time, conveyed a special message to Muhammadiyah to prevent the influence of transnational-exclusive Islamic movements in Indonesia. The Muhammadiyah Leadership Center, chaired by Azhar Basyir, responded positively by making the development of cadres in educational institutions a top priority. For Azhar, unity between the Ummah and Islamic groups is more critical than exacerbating differences. Therefore, Islamic brotherhood became Muhammadiyah's effort to actualize hopes set by the government. It was also a manifestation of Azhar's attitude towards the situation as the leader of Muhammadiyah. This affected relations between Muhammadiyah and other Islamic organizations, including Nadhlatul Ulama (NU), which became increasingly solid, with the *khilafiyah* or *fiqih* differences no longer being questioned. As general chairman of Muhammadiyah Leadership Center, Azhar is committed to ensuring that the organization is not involved in practical political matters. In upholding this commitment, Azhar made other efforts, one of which was to increase the provision of compensation to the poor people in the community (Chasanah, [2017](#)). Besides, Azhar also initiated the use of profits *waqf* to empower marginalized groups to provide credit loans to economically weak non-Muslim groups (Fauzia, [2013](#)).

Apart from taking actions that impacted the external realm, Azhar also overcame problems within the organization, such as making the management structure more efficient and conducting Reformation and re-functionalization. This action aimed to emphasize and clarify the tasks, functions, and organizational adjustments within the central leadership. Under Azhar's leadership, Muhammadiyah also began to form executive secretariats in several leadership center offices, such as Jakarta and Yogyakarta (Afandi, [2022](#)). According to Watik Pratiknya, the executive secretariat was established to prepare policy materials for decision-making and work professionally. Still, they were not a direct part of the Muhammadiyah Leadership Center (Pusat Data dan Analisis Tempo, [2019](#)). According to Mulkhan, Azhar took other actions, namely forming a professional executive to manage office management, placing

the position of Muhammadiyah Leadership Center as a non-salary honorary position, and arranging organizational funding (Kompas, [2010](#)).

Using philosophy combined with Islamic knowledge and values, Azhar was careful in making decisions and wise in responding to ongoing conditions and situations. Azhar protected Muhammadiyah from political interests and ideology by focusing on knowledge and morals, which must be balanced, not just concentrating on one side. Then, Azhar developed Islamic interpretation through organizations or *tajdid*. According to Najib Burhani and Norshahril, Azhar's organizational interpretation efforts continued the efforts of previous Muhammadiyah clerics such as Hamka and A. R. Fachruddin. Hamka changed Muhammadiyah's rigid and puritanical approach to promoting the values of sincerity, honesty, moderation, and resolution. At the same time, Fachruddin combined theology, law, and cultural approaches to Islam with an understanding of *ikhtilaf fiqh*, which refers to problem-solving. Azhar used a profoundly philosophical approach to interpret Islam (Burhani & Norshahril, [2020](#)).

Muhammadiyah Tanwir Conference in Surabaya in 1993

The Muhammadiyah *Tanwir* Conference, which was held from 10 to 13 December 1993 in Surabaya, became an essential momentum for intellectual figures to get involved in the central management of Muhammadiyah. Amien Rais, who came from the intellectual group, conveyed the importance of Muhammadiyah in formulating the concept and conditions for a new national leadership. This idea was important considering the possibility that the New Order regime would fall in 1998.

Even though Amien's proposal was visionary, few parties rejected it. Azhar rejected it and suggested that Muhammadiyah could return to its goal of being a social movement not involved in practical politics. Several newspapers have also documented various rejections of Amien's proposal regarding leadership succession. Kompas wrote that the leadership succession failed to be ratified at the Muhammadiyah *Tanwir* Session because it was considered to precede the 1995 Congress, which would be held in Aceh (Kompas, [1993](#)). Meanwhile, Pelita reported that Amien's leadership succession plan was rejected by the trial participants, one of whom was Lukman Harun. Lukman suggested that Muhammadiyah should be more introspective and vigilant. He believed that it was too soon to discuss this issue, so it is feared that it will disrupt Muhammadiyah's missionary activities in the future. In the end, Azhar Basyir, as General Chair of Muhammadiyah, rejected Amien's proposal and did not include it in *Tanwir*'s decision. According to Azhar, this was very sensitive considering the repressiveness of the New Order. Muhammadiyah should also be able to learn from previous management, which succeeded in acting more dynamically with the political situation regarding the implementation of the single principle of Pancasila (Pelita, [1993](#)).

Rejection of Amien's concept at the *Tanwir* Conference triggered a response from another Muhammadiyah figure, Syafii Maarif, who formulated the idea and personally supported Amien's concept. He believed rejection of this conception would cause anger among young people. This argument was based on political conditions in the early 1990s, which escalated between community groups opposing the regime and the increasingly repressive New Order government.

According to Sulastomo, despite the annulment of the decision, political thoughts are still active among Islamic organizations; even if Muhammadiyah and NU still have their political thinking outside existing political parties, Indonesia's formal political mechanisms will not work correctly. Existing political institutions must accommodate the aspirations of the lower class, including those of Muhammadiyah (Pelita, [1993](#)).

Besides discussing the case of national leadership succession, the *Tanwir* Conference also discussed another case, namely the case of human rights violations committed by the authorities against a PT. CPS Sidoarjo worker named Marsinah. *Jawa Pos* reported that at the *Tanwir* Conference, Muhammadiyah awarded Marsinah the title of national worker hero. The *Tanwir* Conference raised Marsinah's case to resolve it legally and with full justice, and they agreed to a decision. Muhammadiyah also asked all employers and factory owners to treat their workers with a high sense of humanity, complete with dignity and civility (*Jawa Pos*, [1993](#)).

Various matters discussed in the 1993 *Tanwir* Conference indicated the demands of Muslim intellectuals to reform Muhammadiyah to contribute more and be relevant to the situation and conditions of the nation at that time. The idea conveyed by Amien Rais regarding the conception of new national leadership is fundamental, reformist, and radical. This refers to a radical approach, one of two ways of making institutional changes. According to Greenwood

and Hinings, radical change occurs when an institution moves from an old institutional model to another newer one, causing a clear break from the old one. The pattern is hasty and does not consider various existing aspects, so radical changes tend to be considered disruptive and prone to triggering resistance from multiple parties (Hwang, [2023](#)), so it is not surprising that the ideas expressed by Amien were immediately rejected because they had the potential to damage the harmony that had been built long ago. However, radical approaches tend to effectively respond to crises or ineffective practices (Hwang, [2023](#)). This approach to change became a way for Muslim intellectuals to contribute to Muhammadiyah's institutional transformation, which continued and became more serious in the 1995 43rd Congress until the reform period was entered.

43rd Congress in Banda Aceh 1995

Muhammadiyah held its 43rd Congress in Banda Aceh from 6 to 10 July 1995. This Congress became the birth of the Muhammadiyah Special Branch Leadership (PCI) abroad. *Harian Terbit* reported that in the 43rd Congress series, there was a Muhammadiyah Fellowship Forum. The forum was initiated two years earlier, in 1993, with various meetings in Singapore, Batam, and Kuala Lumpur. At the 43rd Congress, 150 delegates from abroad came and discussed efforts to increase cooperation consisting of participants and observers. The participants came from Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Southern Thailand, and Singapore, while the observers came from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kuwait. According to Rusydi Hamka, Secretary of Central Leadership (PP) Muhammadiyah, the ASEAN Muhammadiyah Fellowship Forum was a movement to penetrate the international world (*Harian Terbit*, [1995](#)).

One of the crucial agendas in the 43rd Congress is the National Conference (Munas) *Tarjih*. As a continuation of the 1993 *Tanwir* Conference, the *Tarjih* National Conference continued efforts and struggles related to human rights and the safety of workers. *Kedaulatan Rakyat* reported that it is essential that workers are given the freedom to organize and strive for their fate. Protected by the state constitution, the right to congregate and strive for interests for the common good is also part of religious teachings. This is one of the main points of the *Tarjih* National Conference, which Zafrullah Salim and his employment group proposed. The team also produced new recommendations regarding sending workers abroad. Through the new *ushul fiqh* study method by looking at its *illat*, provisions regarding the sending of female abroad workers (TKW) previously required to be accompanied by a *mahram*, then it became more flexible and quite involved *a muhrim* Shinai as a companion (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, [1995](#)). Meanwhile, children were not obliged to work. Recommendations of the National *Tarjih* Conference also criticized government policies in the field of employment, none of which at that time touched on religious nuances and norms but were merely normative and economic.

The 43rd Congress in 1995 coincided with a changing national political situation. Pressure and even resistance to the New Order government grew stronger. Activism movements from various circles, including Muslims, students, workers, and leftist groups, were increasingly mushrooming at the grassroots. The situation became increasingly heated when media privatization opened in Indonesia. This policy emerged in many new media, especially several television stations, causing information to become increasingly diverse and could be accessed easily by the public. The broad impact was that society's critical power was getting stronger, so movements became more massive.

The 43rd Congress provided several recommendations for the next management, including in religious matters: focus on harmony between religious communities, study the Al-Qur'an and *Sunnah*, strengthen Islamic brotherhood, encouraging Muslim intellectuals to formulate ideas and solve problems in society, criticizing the government's Hajj implementation system, and reminding Muslims not to act radically giving the impression of a violent, extreme and emotional Islam (*Keputusan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah No. 09/SK-PP/I.A/1.a/1995 Tentang Tanfidz Keputusan Mukhtar Muhammadiyah Ke-43*, [1995](#)).

In the field of education, the Congress recommended the government to increase the hours of Islamic religious subjects, urged the government to allow the wearing of Muslim women's clothing in schools and provided a sense of security for Muslim women, supported the government in promoting the passion of reading books, asked the government to subsidize book publishing businesses and assisted in providing libraries, asked the government to consider organizing elite-exclusive schools so as not to cause social jealousy, asked television stations to increase the portion of lessons containing religious messages, and expected the government integrating long holidays into the month of Ramadan (*Keputusan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah No. 09/SK-PP/I.A/1.a/1995 Tentang Tanfidz Keputusan Mukhtar Muhammadiyah Ke-43*, [1995](#)).

In the socio-cultural field, Muhammadiyah emphasizes that the success of national development depends on moral development. Tourism aspects must be promoted by maintaining and emphasizing morality to avoid elements of foreign cultures that do not follow Islam. Muhammadiyah also proposed the government control and even delete television programs showing scenes of violence, sexual exploitation, and free lifestyles, which are not by Islamic teachings and the Pancasila philosophy. Muhammadiyah Leadership Center also proposed the government monitor and prohibit foreign networks that could damage the nation's morals (*Keputusan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah No. 09/SK-PP/I.A/1.a/1995 Tentang Tanfidz Keputusan Muktamar Muhammadiyah Ke-43, 1995*).

Muhammadiyah Leadership Center's commitment was also demonstrated through its struggle to create prosperous families through the Planned Parenthood (KB) program. In the 43rd Congress, Muhammadiyah emphasized that KB is a program regulating birth spacing, not limiting the number of births. KB must be based on morals and *sakinah* principles. Therefore, Muhammadiyah forbade several types of birth control, such as vasectomy and tubectomy, menstrual regulation, and abortion (*Keputusan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah No. 09/SK-PP/I.A/1.a/1995 Tentang Tanfidz Keputusan Muktamar Muhammadiyah Ke-43, 1995*).

In the economic field, Muhammadiyah noticed a trend of demoralization in all aspects of society, including the growth of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) practices. Economic demoralization also caused economic exploitation, social inequality in society, and oppression of people with low incomes. Muhammadiyah then responded through its 43rd Congress by demanding the government to enforce public accountability and transparency immediately, asked entrepreneurs to support and implement the government's appeal regarding the distribution of shares to cooperatives of 2.5%, called on the government to pay more attention to the relationship between large, medium and small entrepreneurs, supported the government and the House of Representatives (DPR) to draft anti-monopoly and anti-oligopoly regulations, called Muslims to increase the utilization of *zakat*, held *infaq* and *sadaqah*, emphasized the control and ownership of land, including development projects, must be intended for the benefit of the people. PP Muhammadiyah further asked the government to resolve land cases in favor of the small people, appealed to the government to take concrete steps in solving microeconomic problems and social disparities, supported the efforts of the Minister of Manpower to increase the Regional Minimum Wage (UMR) and protection for workers, especially women, as well as reorganizing policies on worship, maternity, and childbirth leave. Then, Muhammadiyah asked the government to regulate the sending of migrant workers and provide protection, as well as urged the government to eradicate gambling and prohibit economic activities containing elements of gambling (*Keputusan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah No. 09/SK-PP/I.A/1.a/1995 Tentang Tanfidz Keputusan Muktamar Muhammadiyah Ke-43, 1995*).

In the legal and political fields, the 43rd Congress recommended reaffirmation of *khittah* Muhammadiyah as a social movement not affiliated with any organizational power or political party, contributed to the success of the 1997 General Election and the 1998 MPR-RI General Conference, declared Muhammadiyah citizens to channel their aspirations and cast their votes based on direct, public, free, secret, honest and fair, asked all elements of political power to prioritize national unity and integrity, built democratic life according to the context and conditions of the international world at that time, welcoming President Suharto's good faith in making the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) research election system and implementation. The Congress also urged PP Muhammadiyah to strengthen the performance of the Muhammadiyah Legal Justice Institute, asked the Ministry of Religious Affairs to pay attention to the Compilation of Islamic Law, and appealed to the entire community to be grateful for the 50 years of independence of the Republic of Indonesia (*Keputusan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah No. 09/SK-PP/I.A/1.a/1995 Tentang Tanfidz Keputusan Muktamar Muhammadiyah Ke-43, 1995*).

In the foreign sector, the Congress noticed the global geopolitical conditions and situation at that time, including the collapse of world communist countries, civil war in the Balkans, Israel's genocide against Palestine, internal conflict and civil war in Russia, and others. The forum also called on Muslims to step up Islamic brotherhood and *izzul Islam wal muslimin*, supported the independence of Northern Cyprus, increasing the resilience of the Islamic world, improved the ability to use science and technology, supported the government to be consistent not opening diplomatic relations with Israel (*Keputusan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah No. 09/SK-PP/I.A/1.a/1995 Tentang Tanfidz Keputusan Muktamar Muhammadiyah Ke-43, 1995*).

The Rise of Muhammadiyah Politics under Amien Rais

In 1995, Amien Rais was officially appointed as general chairman of Muhammadiyah from 1995 to 2000 after winning the most votes in the formation election held at the 43rd Congress in Banda Aceh. Amien's management marked a change in Muhammadiyah's leadership style from the transition of clerics to intellectuals and into total intellectuals. Amien, an academic concerned with national politics, organized Muhammadiyah by making thoughts the basis of the movement. Muhammadiyah focused on community development, Human Resources, education, and the economy or entrepreneurship by building more schools and strengthening cadres in educational institutions.

During Amien's leadership at Muhammadiyah, entrepreneurship was considered essential as he urged Muhammadiyah members to be entrepreneurs, and Muhammadiyah needed to develop an entrepreneurial spirit within the organization. Even though Muhammadiyah was known as an entrepreneurial enclave in the past, this idea also derived from concerns over micro-entrepreneurs collapse due to government policies aimed at opening to the global economy and its banking system. Amien firmly proposed that entrepreneurs pay zakat above 2.5% to revive micro-entrepreneurs experiencing bankruptcy. Meanwhile, in education and human resource development, Muhammadiyah organized development by prioritizing quality, competence, systematized collectively, collegial, input to output patterns, high value, and structural (Forum Keadilan, [1995b](#)).

As general chairman, Amien organized Muhammadiyah in a more political direction (Rais, [1995](#)). This tendency can be seen in Muhammadiyah's political maneuvers. Margianto said that Amien's various statements, both in the mass media and through formal organizational decisions, represented Muhammadiyah's political stance (Margianto, [2001](#)). These maneuvers criticized the New Order government, which was on the verge of collapse in the late 1990s. Muhammadiyah's outspoken response to the political situation made many Muhammadiyah figures criticize Amien's way of leading. Amien's leadership style was very different from that of his predecessors. In fact, he was slowly getting rid of traditional clerics and bringing Muhammadiyah into a dangerous situation.

Amien Rais' leadership pattern can be understood simply by Syubah Asa's statement. According to Asa, Amien organized Muhammadiyah as a reform organization on two fronts, namely religious purification, and modernization. Amien tended to prioritize egalitarian elements in Islam supported by modern intellectual abilities. Asa even called Amien a symbol of the New Muhammadiyah. Islam, in Amien's eyes, is the Islam of the people with ideology. Amien could also move dynamically in the international Islamic world by embracing parties who conflicted with each other regarding situations, conditions, and religious values and did not hesitate to criticize parties who have similarities with Muhammadiyah (Forum Keadilan, [1995](#)).

Even though he was considered subversive of the New Order regime, Amien objectively assessed the government's performance. In the Muhammadiyah plenary meeting in April 1997, Amien assessed that the New Order had succeeded in several things, including political stability, strengthening the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, increasing economic growth by 7% per year, food self-sufficiency, improving Indonesia's international image, and increasing the quality of human resources. Meanwhile, Amien's criticism was the proliferation of KKN practices and sharp socio-economic inequality in society (Suara Muhammadiyah, [1997](#)). The follow-up to this meeting was the *Tanwir* Conference in Semarang 1998, one of the results of which was to mandate Amien as chairman of PP Muhammadiyah to carry out political *ijtihad* for the benefit of the people and nation (Margianto, [2001](#)). *Tanwir* Semarang pioneered Amien Rais's political implementation and later asserted himself as a political activist by establishing the Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN). According to A.M. Fatwa, Muhammadiyah's relationship pattern with PAN is aspirational-historical and historical-emotional, even though they do not have an organizational relationship (Suwarno, [2019](#)). The idea of establishing PAN originated from the 1998 Muhammadiyah *Tanwir* Session results. Even though Muhammadiyah did not directly support PAN, a large part of the Muhammadiyah mainstream supported PAN mainly because of the moral solidarity factor with Amien Rais.

Muhammadiyah Reformation in the Local Scope

Trade-offs between Muhammadiyah and PAN

The election of Amien Rais as general chairman and the dynamics from 1995 to 1998 pushed Muhammadiyah even more strongly into the flow of practical politics. Even though, as an organization, Muhammadiyah stated that it is neutral towards political parties, it was even emphasized at the 1998 Semarang *Tanwir* Conference that the PW

Muhammadiyah leaders agreed to maintain Muhammadiyah as a social organization and did not want to turn into a political party. The *Tanwir* Conference also decided that Muhammadiyah, who intended to enter politics, was welcome to form new political parties or join other political parties (Suara Merdeka, [1998](#)).

Andi Setiawan said that Amien Rais' management showed in cohesion. Amien's political maneuvers were considered unilateral without consultation with other leaders. This caused tension between several sides within Muhammadiyah, namely the Yogyakarta group led by Amien Rais and the Jakarta group led by Lukman Harun. The Yogyakarta group wanted Muhammadiyah to play a socio-political critical function in overcoming national problems. Meanwhile, the Jakarta camp desired Muhammadiyah to remain a religious organization without involvement in socio-political affairs (Setiawan, [2013](#)). This tension was not so visible in the organization's center, but its impact was clear in the regions.

The transition to an era of Reformation at the national level, which had spread to the local sphere, can be dissected from two points of view. The first was political tendencies due to Amien Rais' rise to the national political scene and PAN's founding, which cannot be separated from Muhammadiyah. Second, Muhammadiyah's independence was neutral regarding politics and still maintained its *khittah*. Both points can be seen locally by taking examples from several regions or branches. The reality in Muhammadiyah at the local level, which was interrelated with PAN, was rooted in the spirit of political Reformation. This enthusiasm spread to the grassroots with the establishment of various Muhammadiyah universities, represented by the Primary and Middle Education Council (Dikdasmen) from various Muhammadiyah Regional Leaders (PDM) to Muhammadiyah Branch Leaders (PCM).

After the Reformation, several PDM and Muhammadiyah colleges were founded as a forum for collecting PAN votes in the partisan political arena. This phenomenon occurred in several PDM and PCM in Indonesia, including Muhammadiyah Pasar Kemis in Tangerang Regency. Muhammadiyah Pasar Kemis, which emerged in the late 1990s, officially formed PCM and Pasar Kemis College in 2000. PCM Pasar Kemis founded Muhammadiyah College with concrete forms, such as the Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) and Junior High School (SMP) Plus. The SDIT and SMP nomenclature was chosen because apart from trying to follow the national education system, the school also teaches an in-depth Islamic religious education curriculum with Muhammadiyah nuances and ideology. Islamic religious education at SDIT and SMP Plus Muhammadiyah Pasar Kemis was not just one subject like in public schools. It was divided into several subjects, namely *Iqro/Tahfidz*, *Sharia* Worship, *Aqidah-Akhlak*, Arabic, and Muhammadiyah.

PDM Tangerang Regency collaborated with PCM Pasar Kemis to establish Muhammadiyah University (PTM) of Pasar Kemis as part of the PDM Management Work Program from 1995 to 2000. PTM Pasar Kemis was established by renting land for social facilities in the Pondok Rejeki, Pasar Kemis District. Through the Decree of the Regent of Tangerang containing approval for the use of land with management rights for the Tangerang Regional Regency Level II, the Regent of Tangerang approved the use of social facilities land, which is the management right of the Tangerang Regency government by the Tangerang Regency PDM Dikdasmen Council, with the obligation to deposit Rp.35.394644 to the Regional Cash Flow of Tangerang Regency, - through the Tangerang Regency Regional Revenue Department (Surat Keputusan Bupati Tangerang No. 593/SK.207-PLK Tahun 1998). The land lease was paid off in 2001. According to PDM Tangerang Regency, PCM Pasar Kemis also received loan assistance from PCM Ciputat, amounting to Rp.20.000.000 and from UHAMKA (HAMKA University Jakarta) amounting to Rp.15.000.000 (Rizal, [2021](#)).

The large flow of urbanization and the development of the Pasar Kemis area as a busy area for settlers directly impacted the development of Muhammadiyah in Tangerang Regency. During the period 1995 to 2000, the establishment of new branches became a priority for PDM Tangerang Regency, resulting in around twelve PCM branches spread across several areas in Tangerang Regency, consisting of Ciputat, Pamulang, Serpong, Curug, Cikupa, Pondok Aren, Teluk Naga, Legok, Cisoka, Balaraja, Bumi Indah, and Pasar Kemis (PDM Kabupaten Tangerang, [2001](#)).

Aslama Nanda Rizal stated that there was a tendency for powerful relations between Muhammadiyah at the local level, including Muhammadiyah Pasar Kemis and PAN. Even though Muhammadiyah took a firm stance by maintaining its distance from any political party and urged its elected members as leaders of political parties to relinquish themselves from leadership positions in Muhammadiyah, this assertion only focused on important positions to prevent abuse of position to politicize Muhammadiyah for the interests of political parties or specific groups, without any prohibition on every member of Muhammadiyah who a member of PAN. This caused many Muhammadiyah members during the Reformation period to become PAN members, as happened at Muhammadiyah

Pasar Kemis (Rizal, 2021). In its development, most of the members and administrators of the universities and PCM Pasar Kemis were also members and administrators of PAN.



Figure 1. PCM Pasar Kemis administrators at the Muhammadiyah and PAN consolidation meeting

(Source: Personal documentation of Erizal, one of the founders of Muhammadiyah and PAN Pasar Kemis, Tangerang Regency, 2000)

Based on **Figure 1**, it shows that both Muhammadiyah and PAN cannot be separated as historical realities. At the grassroots level, there was no visible difference between the two institutions; even meetings and consolidations were carried out simultaneously by the same people. However, the phenomenon at Muhammadiyah Pasar Kemis cannot be used as justification to emphasize the mixing of organizations with political parties. However, it can be a real illustration that Muhammadiyah developed rapidly at that time, especially in new urban areas such as Tangerang, because of the political enthusiasm emerging during that period, one of which was through the election of Amien Rais as general chairperson of Muhammadiyah.

The strong relationship between Muhammadiyah and PAN created a pattern in which every individual attempts to build Muhammadiyah because they want to join PAN. On the other hand, many individuals raised PAN in the 1999 elections because of their responsibility as members of Muhammadiyah. Apart from Tangerang Regency, the strong relationship between Muhammadiyah in political currents and its relationship with PAN at the beginning of reform can also be seen in Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi. Ummy Azvitah Arif said that the period from 1998 to 2004 was a period of political consolidation for Muhammadiyah and PAN. Arif found several figures who were politicians or political party administrators who also experienced or were registered as still members of Muhammadiyah, such as Muhammad Ahmad, Abdul Rahman Gessa, and Abdul Latif Rahman. The involvement of Muhammadiyah cadres, including elites, in politics is because, since the beginning of the formation of PAN, figures in Muhammadiyah were the initiators (Arif, [2019](#)).

The Preaching of the Muhammadiyah Social Movement

Although the current of Muhammadiyah's politicization with PAN was powerful at the beginning of the Reformation, as reflected in the Pasar Kemis PCM, Muhammadiyah's official stance was to maintain its independence and its *khittah* as an organization operating in the socio-religious field. Locally, the Muhammadiyah movement without political elements was reflected in the practices of the Muhammadiyah organization in Sukoharjo and Sidoarjo.

Peni Hapsari reveals that Muhammadiyah in Sukoharjo tended to focus on aspects of the Islamic Reformation in their organization. Until the reformation period approached, Muhammadiyah Sukoharjo consistently brought the organization as a social movement. One of the efforts made by Muhammadiyah as a socio-religious movement was realized in establishing orphanages belonging to the General Misery Helpers (PKU) of Muhammadiyah spread across several areas in Sukoharjo Regency in 1996. The PKU not only functioned as a strategy to spread Islamic teachings but also played an essential role in community life. This aspect was crucial, considering that at that time, many people in Sukoharjo still believed in shamans more than undergoing medical treatment at hospitals, health centers, or health

clinics. Therefore, the method of spreading Islamic teachings through PKU aimed to make people more inclined to believe in and choose medical rather than mystical treatment (Hapsari, [2012](#)).

Accountability in the health sector was supervised by the PKU Council, which was more active in providing services to the community, for example, improving the quality and maintenance facilities of Maternity Homes to improve public health by establishing Hospitals. There were two medical centers located in Kartasura and Weru and two maternity homes in Kartasura, which were still operating until 1996 (Hapsari, [2012](#)).

The Sukoharjo community, as part of Solo Raya, has an evolutionary and dynamic socio-religious history. Even though it was the former Islamic-leaning Kasunanan area of Surakarta and Mataram, elements of local beliefs and traditions have grown stronger in the area. Apart from that, the strong influence of communist values and the increasing diversity of religious communities have meant that Islamic nuances and worship are not as strong there. After the 1965 tragedy, Muhammadiyah began to preach in Sukoharjo in a sustainable, evolutionary, and dynamic manner. In preaching, Muhammadiyah also embraced all levels of society down to the lowest levels, especially former sympathizers of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). They used a social approach rather than a political one not only to prevent trauma related to the 1965 tragedy but also to avoid offending people of other religions. The results of the Muhammadiyah social movement's missionary struggle could be felt when it entered the end of the New Order period. Based on data from the Sukoharjo Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the population that embraced Islam shows positive progress from 548.413 residents in 1977 to 638.327 in 1986. The peak reached 706,888 people in 1995 (Badan Pusat Statistik Sukoharjo, [1995](#)). Besides, many more parents enrolled their children in Muhammadiyah schools from 1995 to 1996 (Hapsari, [2012](#)).

Apart from Sukoharjo, the Muhammadiyah missionary movement in Sidoarjo also tended to operate in the social sector towards the end of the New Order until the beginning of the Reformation. Tanggulangin District in Sidoarjo was an area at the center of the traditional Islamic group with the *Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah* ideology, so the spread of Muhammadiyah in Sidoarjo was also full of challenges and a long journey and struggle. Like Sukoharjo, Muhammadiyah's preaching in Tanggulangin was organized in an evolutionary, dynamic, and adaptive manner. Hasanuddin Romadhon explained that Muhammadiyah entered Sidoarjo in the 1960s. After the 1965 tragedy, Muhammadiyah Tanggulangin became a place of refuge for former PKI sympathizers who then requested letters of recommendation as members of Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah Tanggulangin accepted its organization as a place of protection. Apart from avoiding bloodshed, it was also based on the belief that the ones justified as former PKI sympathizers are also Muslims, whose lives and rights must be protected.

The long journey of establishing Muhammadiyah in villages throughout Tanggulangin and Sidoarjo also slowly succeeded at the end of the New Order period. After facing a lot of rejection from traditional groups, people began to open their hearts to the existence of Muhammadiyah. This attitude has led to many bodies assisting Muhammadiyah in carrying out the organization's mandate and charitable efforts to date (Romadhon, Prasetyo, & Wibowo, [2024](#)). Besides, Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo's social concern was also demonstrated in higher education by establishing the Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University (UMSIDA) in 1984.

CONCLUSION

When discussing the history of Muhammadiyah, it is essential to avoid an exclusive focus on the organization's chronological progression from year to year. Instead, there is a necessity for critical reflection on the part of all involved parties. The historical account of an organization should not be confined to a mere public relations presentation, which often delineates the trajectory, accomplishments, or triumphs of the entity in question exclusively. Muhammadiyah has experienced various historical periods characterized by distinct societal conditions and levels of national political stability. It is imperative to consider the historical realities of its constituents and all hierarchical levels of the organization (not merely the leadership).

In the same way that social history shifts the perspective from a politician-centric view to a people-centric perspective, the history of an organization like Muhammadiyah should also be viewed from the grassroots perspective. While the initial sections of the article delineate the various eras of chairpersons and the roles of prominent figures, the concluding sections illustrate the contributions of several regional leaders and grassroots cadres. These examples serve to demonstrate the operational continuity of the organization during periods of leadership transition and national political turbulence.

The transition from the New Order to the Reformation era can also be considered a critical historical reflection. Muhammadiyah has consolidated its position as an organization characterized by a collective-collegial character, exhibiting notable autonomy from the influence of a singular figure or leader. As previously discussed, the national (central) leadership style of the organization transformed a more contemporary approach in the 1990s, shifting from a charismatic-traditional clerical model to modern intellectuals with educational backgrounds ranging from the Middle East to the West, exemplified by A.R. Fakhruddin, Azhar Basyir, Amien Rais, and Ahmad Syafii Maarif. The period 1990-1995 marked the birth of a new generation of Muhammadiyah. Previously, the long leadership period of A.R. Fakhruddin (22 years, 1968-1990) had triggered internal reform within the organization. The evolution in educational backgrounds of the central leadership, particularly the chairman, has profoundly impacted the organization's perspective on Indonesia's conditions, thereby facilitating a shift towards a more global perspective.

This era was characterized significant ideological and political tensions and profound conflicts, including dualism and division. This discord can be attributed to the ideological differences between prominent Indonesian Muslim intellectuals Amien Rais and Azhar Basyir. Amien Rais, a visionary figure, propounded the notion that the era of President Suharto's leadership would come to an end by 1998 and that Indonesia needed to transform its national leadership. In contrast, Azhar Basyir advocated for preserving internal unity within the Muslim community, emphasizing vigilance to prevent the involvement of the organization known as Muhammadiyah in the realm of practical politics. Both parties presented arguments of comparable strength. Conversely, the two chairmen maintained a unified stance on various issues concerning the international community, including the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the ongoing genocide of Palestinians by Israel. They also addressed the rise of jihadist groups and the democratization process worldwide, as well as conflicts in the Middle East, such as the Iraq-Kuwait war.

The military-dominated New Order era in Indonesia ultimately came to an end. This transition was not achieved through the procedural leadership transition envisioned by Amien Rais. Instead, it resulted from chaotic demonstrations culminating in the students' occupation of the Indonesian Parliament building. This event forced President Suharto to resign. Amien Rais, who had previously achieved notable status in the media, found himself unable to restrain his political ambitions. Consequently, on 23 August 1998, he established the PAN (National Mandate Party). This decision was predicated on the 1998 *Tanwir* Muhammadiyah resolution, which represented a compromise between the divergent political aspirations of the organization's grassroots members. Muhammadiyah, a prominent Islamic organization, has historically granted its members significant autonomy in practical politics. However, as an organization, Muhammadiyah did not transform into a political party. This moderate stance also precipitated Amien Rais's transition from the role of Chairman of Muhammadiyah to that of Chairman of PAN.

At that time, Amien Rais occupied a prominent position in the national political landscape, having been appointed as the Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR RI). He established his political party, which was subsequently endorsed and managed by most members of the Muhammadiyah. However, despite these developments, the organization, known as Muhammadiyah, maintained a steadfast commitment to its collective and collegial character. Notwithstanding the departure of its pivotal figure, the organization known as Muhammadiyah demonstrated resilience and persisted in its endeavors to construct the nation. This critical reflection is particularly salient in contemporary Indonesia, where there is an ongoing tendency to prioritize individual interests over collective values. From the perspective of Muhammadiyah, it is evident that human beings possess the capacity to undergo change, transformation, and, ultimately, death. Nevertheless, the struggle's foundational principles, values, and theoretical underpinnings remain constant.

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