

CAK NUR ON POLITICS: Indonesian Political Islam and the Role of Islamic Politics

Nurul Annisa Hamudy

Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Driyarkara, Indonesia
Jl. Cempaka Putih Indah 100A, Rawasari Jakarta 10520, Indonesia
email: nurulannisahamudy@gmail.com

Moh Ilham A Hamudy

Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kementerian Dalam Negeri Indonesia
Jl. Kramat Raya No 132 Jakarta Pusat 10450, Indonesia
email: ilhamhamudy80@gmail.com

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Abstract: The Indonesian political elites tend to use Muslims for their personal interests, instead of making Islam as their moral guide in the political arena, despite Nurcholish Madjid's (Cak Nur) secularization is needed. For this reason, this research discusses the political ideals of Cak Nur, especially the idea of secularization in the midst of the current political Islam in Indonesia. Using a descriptive method, literature study, and a qualitative approach, the results of the study showed that Islam essentially is not merely a formal structure or composition and collection of laws of the state and government. Islam is the embodiment of *tawhīd*. It is a spiritual force that can give birth to a soul that is *hanīf*, inclusive, democratic, and respects society's pluralism. Therefore, an understanding of more advanced Islamic teachings, such as Cak Nur's secularization concept which according to Cak Nur's does not lead to secularism; as well as the need for freedom of thought, an idea of progress, and openness to ideas are a necessity in Indonesia. As such Moslem should use a secular lens to view worldly matters that need rational and objective thinking, rather than using faith, Islamic law, *'aqīda* (creed), and *'ibāda* (worship) which are spiritual matters.

Keywords: Secularization, Political Islam, Islamic Politics, Democracy, Profanization

Abstrak: Alih-alih menjadikan Islam sebagai panduan moral saat berpolitik, para elit politik Indonesia masih cenderung memanfaatkan umat Islam untuk kepentingan individual. Padahal, dalam cita politik Islam Nurcholish Madjid, selanjutnya diringkaskan dengan Cak Nur, perlu adanya pemisahan antara urusan dunia dan agama (sekularisasi). Untuk itu, penelitian ini mendiskusikan cita politik Islam Cak Nur, khususnya gagasan sekularisasi di tengah arus Islam politik di Indonesia masa kini. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif dan kepustakaan, serta pendekatan kualitatif, hasil penelitian menunjukkan, Islam yang hakiki

bukan semata merupakan struktur atau susunan dan kumpulan hukum yang tegak berdiri di atas formalisme negara dan pemerintahan. Namun Islam sebagai pengejawantahan tauhid yang merupakan kekuatan spiritual mampu melahirkan jiwa yang *hanīf*, inklusif, demokratis, serta menghargai pluralisme masyarakat. Oleh karenanya, pemahaman terhadap ajaran agama Islam yang lebih maju, yakni dengan konsep sekularisasi yang menurut penjelasan Cak Nur bukan mengarah ke sekularisme; serta perlunya kebebasan berpikir, *idea of progress*, dan sikap terbuka adalah sebuah keniscayaan untuk diterapkan di Indonesia. Dengan begitu, umat perlu melakukan profanisasi masalah-masalah duniawi yang pendekatannya membutuhkan sikap objektif dan rasional dari masalah-masalah iman, hukum Islam, akidah dan ibadah yang bersifat spiritual.

Kata Kunci: Sekularisasi, Islam Politik, Politik Islam, Demokrasi, Profanisasi

Introduction

In the context of the modern nation-state, Islam is one of the many political ideologies that fight for its place and influence in the formation of the state and the structure of government. In other words, Islam in politics changed from being a sacred identity to a profane identity. The Islamic parties do not automatically get full support from the Muslims. The main concern in modern nation-state politics is the management of secular public space, not submission to God.¹

Whereas in the Indonesian context, the promotion of Islam in the public sphere, which has taken place since the reform era, has involved contestation between two Islamic orientations: Political Islam and Cultural Islam.² Approximately 80% of Indonesian Muslims choose to make Islam as part of their ethical, law, and cultural expression, while the rest (20%) would like Islam to become a political ideology. Even among those who are Islamists, there are not many who support the ideology of Political Islam.³

Although Islamic political parties failed to capitalize on the rise of Islam into the political arena, the Political Islam currently displayed by some Muslim groups (which have the same political agenda as these Islamic parties) gain a success. Through the 2017 Jakarta's Regional Election, Political Islam re-used the jargon of "fighting for Islam" and "same-faith" to win.⁴ This time the use of religion became a powerful weapon to win the support of Muslims. Of course, society must pay for this win. It costs them peace and harmony when the people are disturbed with religious content in Indonesia's political narratives lately.⁵ Religion is always a sensitive issue in Indonesia.

Even so, the journey of Political Islam in Indonesia was not easy. Votes obtained by Islamic parties in every election are always small. The nationalist parties always defeated the Islamic parties by a landslide. This

¹ Amin Mudzakkir, "Islam Dan Politik Di Era Kontemporer," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2016): 33.

² Azyumardi Azra, "Revisitasi Islam Politik dan Islam Kultural Di Indonesia," *Indo-Islamika* 1, no. 2 (2012): 233.

³ Sukron Kamil and dkk, *Islam Di Ruang Publik: Politik Identitas Dan Masa Depan Demokrasi Di*

Indonesia, ed. Noorhaidi Hasan and Irfan Abubakar (Jakarta: Center for the Study of Religion and Culture (CSRC), 2011), p. 1.

⁴ Hannah Beech and Muktitu Suhartono, "Faith Politics on the Rise as Indonesian Islam Takes a Hard-Line Path," accessed on January 24, 2020, *The New York Times*, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/15/world/asia/indonesia-election-islam.html>.

⁵ Assyari Abdullah, "Membaca Komunikasi Politik Gerakan Aksi Bela Islam 212: Antara Politik Identitas Dan Ijtihad Politik Alternatif," *An-Nida' Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 41, no. 2 (2017): 203.

was then seen as an indicator of the failure of Political Islam and reflects the end of Political Islam in Indonesia.⁶

Political Islam, referred to in this study, is a perfect marriage between politics and religion. The political motive behind it is to place Islam within the circle of power as a system that regulates all aspects of life, that gets its legitimacy in religious languages.⁷ In this context, Islam as religion loses its spiritual value in the hands of the actors of Political Islam and is transformed into mere jargon, packaging, and labeling, with the agenda of gaining the voice and support of the Muslim masses.

This is the culmination of Political Islam's failure in the history of Indonesian politics. However, Political Islam regained its momentum⁸ after the blasphemy issue of the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (BTP), who is Christian of Chinese descent. He was charged with Article 156-a of the Criminal Code (KUHP) in conjunction with Article 28 Paragraph 2 of Law No 11 Year 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions.

Although they succeeded in removing BTP in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Election, by politicizing cultural identity and religious sentiment which then ended with a judge's sentence of 2 years imprisonment because his actions were proven to meet the elements of Article 156a of the Criminal

Code, but the majority of moderate Muslims was against the use of religious symbols into the political sphere to mobilize the masses.⁹ These practices were once opposed by a Muslim intellectual who represented a moderate Islamic group, Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur), who use the idea of secularization with the slogan "Islam yes, Islamic party no." With this idea, Cak Nur wanted to separate Islam and the Islamic party. The struggle of Islam through Islamic parties is only one of the ways. There are other ways to do that. It is not an absolute way. This is what it means by secularization, as Cak Nur stated above, "separating what is truly sacred, what is profane".¹⁰

As such, a 'religion' politician who delivered a speech that his religion is better than other religions (something natural as a characteristic of a belief), as happened in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Election, has placed his religion as a tool to achieve other purposes. This religious doctrine- for example, that one religion is the best is claimed to be suitable for creating a just state. It is precisely at this point that the use of religion and Islamic law in political Islam takes place: religion serves as a means to achieve political ends.¹¹ Therefore, in Cak Nur thought on politic, secularization helps modern society to place religion in its sacred position, as a personal relationship between humans and the Divine. As such, religious people are not because religion strengthens one's social identity or political existence, but because of their faith in religion is a Divine relationship.

⁶ Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf, "Tiga Jalan Islam Politik Di Indonesia: Reformasi, Refolusi Dan Revolusi," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 1, no. 2 (2016): 128.

⁷ Noorhaidi Hasan, "Book Review: Islam Politik, Teori Gerakan Sosial, Dan Pencarian Model Pengkajian Islam Baru Lintas-Disiplin," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 44, no. 1 (2006): 242.

⁸ Sumanto al Qurtuby, "Manipulasi Agama Dalam Pilkada Jakarta," *dw.com*, 2017, accessed on January 24, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/id/manipulasi-agama-dalam-pilkada-jakarta/a-38379477>.

⁹ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "The Rise of Islamic Religious-Political Movement Indonesia: The Background, Present Situation and Future," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 2, no. 2 (2008): 368.

¹⁰ Budi Munawar-Rachman, "Pemikiran Islam Di Indonesia: Memperkenalkan Nurcholish Madjid," in *Para Pembaru: Pemikiran dan Gerakan Islam Asia Tenggara*, ed. Ahmad Suaedy and Raja Juli Antony (Jakarta: Southeast Asian Muslims (SEAMUS), 2009), p. 124.

¹¹ F. Budi Hardiman, *Demokrasi dan Sentimentalitas* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2018), p. 178.

Cak Nur's view was motivated by the context of his era. However, at present, a similar pattern continues to exist, albeit with another face. In Cak Nur's views, Islam is not just law and symbols, but it is something more substantial.¹² In the context of a party as a political instrument or a prospective leader who happen to be Muslim, it should not be used by highlighting the Islamic symbols and using the religious sentiment, but by presenting the Islamic values that they adopt. Cak Nur's secularization ideas are relevant again, since religion, that should be in the follower's private sphere often misused by certain groups, who consider themselves "more religious," as a stepping stone to attain power.¹³

By rejecting political parties as the main vehicle for the Islamic struggle, Cak Nur strongly opposed the unification of religion and politics. His idea focuses on efforts to keep religion and ethics (cultural Islam) up to date, and opening up to cooperation with community groups outside of the Muslim.¹⁴ Through his secularization idea, Cak Nur tried to find a way out of by pulling religion from the public sphere and placing it back into the private sphere.

There have been several studies that discussed Political Islam and Cak Nur's secularization idea separately, but none has specifically reviewed the urgency of Cak Nur's secularization in amid the current Political Islam in Indonesia. One of such study is a study by Adiwilaga.¹⁵ The focus of his study

was only to trace the Political Islam movement and the historical project of upholding Islamism in Indonesia. The study saw that since the Indonesian reform era, Islamism was transformed into a social movement as a representation of modern society.

A study by Fanani¹⁶ showed the survey result of several survey institutions that stated that the prospects of Islamic parties declined, as seen from the continuing decline of votes gained by Islamic parties. According to him, the declining performance and the loss of vote for the Islamic party was due to a variety of fundamental problems that need to be addressed immediately: the need to formulate a strategic vision of the nation; the need for Islamic parties to be actively involved in the shaping public policy; the importance of Islamic parties to build their bases at the local and grassroots level; the willingness of the Islamic parties to be in the supporting role; and how the Islamic party positions itself and responds to the challenges of the nation.

A study by Abdillah¹⁷ stated that the struggle of Indonesian Muslims in national politics is at a quite alarming point. The vote acquisition of the Islamic parties plunges quite sharply in every election. The study also stated that Islamic aspirations are no longer heard. The louder voices were those of secularists who want the separation of the state from religion or that Islamic law is an outdated agenda. Those two facts showed that Political Islam in Indonesia is in decline.

¹² Andi Faisal Bakti, "Islam and Modernity: Nurcholish Madjid's Interpretation of Civil Society, Pluralism, Secularization, and Democracy," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 33, no. 3 (2005): 486-505.

¹³ Yuddy Chrisnandi, *Dari Kyiv Menulis Indonesia* (Jakarta: Madani Institute, 2019), p. 247.

¹⁴ Bahtiar Effendy, *Islam dan Negara: Transformasi Pemikiran dan Praktik Politik Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998), p. 16.

¹⁵ Rendy Adiwilaga, "Gerakan Islam Politik Dan Proyek Historis Penegakan Islamisme Di

Indonesia," *Jurnal Wacana Politik* 2, no. 1 (2017): 1-9.

¹⁶ Ahmad Fuad Fanani, "Dilema Partai Politik Islam: Terpukur Dalam Kegagalan Atau Menjawab Tantangan?," *Maarif: Arus Pemikiran Islam Dan Sosial* 8, no. 2 (2013): 72-95.

¹⁷ Tri Subhi Abdillah, "Politik Islam Di Indonesia Antara Sakralisasi Dan Sekularisasi," *Dirasat: Jurnal Studi Islam & Peradaban* 13, no. 1 (2018): 91-105.

Latief,¹⁸ in his study, found that political secularization in the country had been going on for a long time and was carried out repressively by the government. According to the study, the top-down secularization will fail due to its elitist character.

Prayetno¹⁹ specifically reviewed Cak Nur's concept of secularization. He stated that Cak Nur's secularization was different from the basic concept of secularism. His secularization concept was a form of the liberation process. The liberation process was needed by Muslims since they were no longer able to distinguish between the transcendent and the temporals.

Based on the results of the above studies, it seems that Cak Nur thought on politic, especially related to secularization, the growing Political Islam has not been studied in depth by the researchers. This study seeks to fill the void of studies related to the political ideals of Cak Nur, especially the idea of secularization in the midst of the current political Islam in Indonesia. Therefore, this study focused on discussing the transformation of Indonesian Political Islam by using Cak Nur's secularization analysis, one of his key terms in Islamic politics, as a way to separate its worldly part from the spirituality part.

This study combines descriptive methods and document analysis. The descriptive method is intended to describe the transformation of Political Islam in Indonesia as an analysis unit based on facts as they are presented.²⁰ A literature study²¹ was intended to gather relevant information on Political Islam in Indonesia that was opposed by Cak

Nur with the idea of secularization to separate religion and state. The information was obtained from literature, extracting materials from books, journals, newspapers, magazines, or study reports related to the study theme adopted by the author and other sources.²² The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. This approach is suitable since political Islam and Islamic law are multidimensional, and it has interconnected variables whose exact nature of their connection is not known.²³ Meanwhile, the collection of facts and data was conducted by tracing the news in mainstream mass media to enrich the analysis. The study was conducted for more than six months from the start of July 2019 to the end of January 2020.

This research begins by reviewing the transformation of Political Islam in Indonesia. Furthermore, this research discusses the political ideals of Cak Nur, especially the idea of secularization in the midst of the current political Islam in Indonesia. Then this paper will conclude with a conclusion.

Transformation of Political Islam in Indonesia

Lately, Islam seems to be a visible power in Indonesian politics and Muslim society. It is shown by a larger interest in "Islamic piety" (praying, fasting, clothing, and going to *hajj*), combined with the emergence of new institutions, such as Islamic banks, *takaful*²⁴ insurance, and also "Islamic" school and hospital. Islamic countries such as Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan inspire a proliferation of religion-driven social and political movements, especially in Indonesia. The most visible manifes-

¹⁸ Mohamad Latief, "Islam dan Sekularisasi Politik di Indonesia," *Tsaqafah* 13, no. 1 (2017): 1-24.

¹⁹ Budi Prayetno, "Konsep Sekularisasi Dalam Pemikiran Nurcholish Madjid," *Sulesana: Jurnal Wawasan Keislaman* 11, no. 2 (2017): 1-14.

²⁰ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D*, ed. Sugiyono (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2014).

²¹ Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2004).

²² Iqbal Hasan, *Pokok-Pokok Materi Metodologi Penelitian Dan Aplikasinya* (Bogor: Ghalia Indonesia, 2002), p. 11.

²³ A. Chaedar Alwasilah, *Pokoknya Kualitatif: Dasar-Dasar Merancang Dan Melakukan Penelitian Kualitatif* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 2003), p. 103.

²⁴ Symbiosis

tation of the Islamic revival is the emergence of Islamism, or Islamic political activism (or widely known as "Political Islam") in modern political literature, Political Islam and Islamism have the same meaning. However, in this study, the author used this definition of Political Islam by Graham E. Fuller:

One who believes that Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion.²⁵

The study used this definition not only because it is neutral and non-derogatory, but also because it covers a diverse spectrum of Political Islam expressions: from radical to moderate, violence to peace, authoritarian to democrat, and traditionalist to modern. The term "Political Islam" was deliberately chosen because their main concerns were none other than worldly and political affairs. They used the Quran, hadith, Islamic law, and religious arguments to justify their political stance and actions. In other words, current Political Islam thinkers and activists used elements of the Islamic tradition that they choose to combine with ideas, techniques, institutions, and commodities of today. Thus, these political Islam groups do not reject modernity, but they reformulate it and arrange it using discursive terms from the Islamic heritage.²⁶

The debates on the issue of Political Islam in Indonesia are not as intense as those in Egypt, Pakistan, or Turkey. In Egypt, for example, this polemic continues in open debates, public discussions, and the publication of books and journals.²⁷ However, unlike the

debate in these countries, the Political Islam debate in Indonesia seems to be considered as final since the abolition of the seven words listed in the Jakarta Charter, "The Godhead of the Almighty with the obligation to carry out Islamic law for adherents". The abolition was the result of a compromise between the Islamic ideology and the national ideology that emerged during the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI) meeting.

Many observers have noted that, despite their religious piety (when measured by their ritual worship such as the five daily prayers, fasting, *zakat*,²⁸ *hajj* pilgrimage, and Islamic symbols that are often publicly displayed), their political choices tend to be secular.

That is why the vote for the Islamic party is stagnant. The votes of Islamic parties declined considerably after the reform era in the 1999 General Election. Out of the 17 Islamic parties, only the United Development Party (PPP) entered the top five with 10.72% (59 seats). Most of the other Islamic parties did not get the necessary vote to win even one seat in the House of Representatives (DPR). The Crescent Star Party (PBB), considered as the main heir of Masyumi, gain only 1.9% of the vote or 13 seats, while the Justice Party was only able to gain 1.4% of the votes (7 seats). Several other Islamic parties, such as the Nahdlatul Ummah Party (NU), the Unity Party (PP), the Syarikat Islam Indonesia Party (PSII), PPI Masyumi Party, and the Resurrection of the Ummah Party (PKU) only received one seat each. Some Islamic parties were even unable to win support to gain seats in the DPR. They were referred to as the "decimal parties" be-

²⁵ Graham E. Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. xi.

²⁶ Mun'im Sirry, *Tradisi Intelektual Islam: Rekonfigurasi Sumber Otoritas Agama* (Malang: Madani Media, 2015), p. 163.

²⁷ Pavinee Madaman, "Arab Spring and the Rise of Political Islam in Egypt," *RSU International Journal*

of College of Government (RSUIJCG) 2, no. 1 (2015): 67-72.

²⁸ Charity or Alms.

cause they get less than 1% of the votes.²⁹ The results of the 1999 elections that showed the defeat or failure of the Islamic parties were very interesting, considering that the majority of voters 90% were Muslims. Although there are calls from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and Islamic elites to vote for Islamic parties and not to vote for parties with a majority of non-Muslim candidates, it turns out that the Islamic masses, especially the Islamic masses from the grassroots, ignored those call because it is considered to be in conflict with the right to be elected and to vote in positive law as the fulfillment of human rights. This provision is regulated in Article 43 of Law No 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights (HAM) states that every citizen has the right to be elected and to vote in elections based on equality of rights through direct, general, free, secret, honest voting, and fair in accordance with statutory provisions.³⁰

Furthermore, in the 2004 elections, the total vote acquisition of the four Islamic parties [the United Development Party (PPP), the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), the Nahdlatul Ummah Party (PPNUI), and the Crescent Star Party (PBB)] was only 18.77% of the national vote. In the next two elections, the total vote acquisition of the four Islamic parties also declined to 15.15% in the 2009 elections and 14.78% in the 2014 elections.³¹ When compared to the 2014 elections, the vote acquisitions of Islamic political parties are as follows: the National

Awakening Party (PKB) had the most votes of 9.04%, followed by the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) 6.79%, the National Mandate Party (PAN) 7.59%, the United Development Party (PPP) 6.53%, and the Crescent Star Party (PBB) 1.46%.³² In the 2019 elections, the vote acquisition of all Islamic political parties was not more than 30%.³³ The increase of votes gained by PKB and PKS cannot be used as an indicator that Islamic parties made some changes prior to the 2019 Election. The increase in votes gained by the two parties was not followed by other Islamic parties, such as PAN, the NU, and PPP. The vote acquisition of the Islamic parties indicates that even though the population is predominantly Muslim, it does not correlate positively with the electability of the Islamic parties.³⁴

After the Indonesian Reformation (1998), the Islamic political parties experienced its ups and downs. The acquisition of the Islamic political parties in the general election was relatively small, below 10%, although the majority of voters, 88% of Indonesia's 240 million populations, are Muslim.³⁵ This phenomenon means that the voice of Islamic political parties does not reflect the power of majority voters. The main problem is that the political elites are unable to manage the civic culture (democratic political culture traditions) and political engagement (voters' feelings and interests towards Islamic political

²⁹ Lili Romli, "Partai Islam Dan Pemilih Islam Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Penelitian Politik* 1, no. 1 (2004): 40-41.

³⁰ Dudi Badruzaman, "Hak-Hak Politik Warga Negara Non Muslim Sebagai Pemimpin Dalam Pandangan Hukum Islam Dan Hukum Positif," *Supremasi: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Hukum* 9, no. 1 (2019): 28.

³¹ Husein Abdulsalam, "Politik Identitas Islam Menguat, Tapi Suara Partai Islam Stagnan," *tirto.id*, 2018, accessed on January 16, 2020, <https://tirto.id/politik-identitas-islam-menguat-tapi-suara-partai-islam-stagnan-cFj6>.

³² Aminuddin, "Masa Depan Partai Islam," *tempo.co*, 2019, accessed on January 16, 2020, <https://kolom.tempo.co/read/1200508/masa-depan-partai-islam/full&view=ok>.

³³ *bbc.com*, "Pemilu 2019: Politik Identitas Dinilai Tidak Dongkrak Perolehan Suara Partai-Partai Islam," *BBCIndonesia*, 2019, accessed on January 24, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-47989598>.

³⁴ Muhammad Zulifan, "Politik Islam Di Indonesia: Ideologi, Transformasi Dan Prospek Dalam Proses Politik Terkini," *Politik Indonesia: Indonesian Political Science Review* 1, no. 2 (2016): 191.

³⁵ Hermanu Joebagio, "Membaca Politik Islam Pasca Reformasi," *Jurnal Agastya* 6, no. 1 (2016): 6.

parties) in its support base. The lack of management over the two aspects above caused the low political interest of the Islamic political party support base.

As seen in the results of the legislative election after the fall of President Soeharto, the majority of Muslim voters gave their vote for parties committed to the secular state, not to the party that carries the agenda of the Islamic state or the Jakarta Charter. The vote acquisition of the Islamic parties was not good.³⁶ More than 70% of Indonesian voted for non-Islamic parties.

This is certainly very different from other Muslim countries that experienced an explosion of religious militancy. An analysis by Sirry stated that there are three moderation factors of Political Islam in Indonesia, which makes it very different from other Muslim countries. First, the power of the pro-Sharia group is not as strong as it appears on the surface, especially among the Traditionalists. For example, in the 1930s, the ulemas of Nahdatul Ulama (NU) ulama issued a famous fatwa accepting the legitimacy of the Dutch colonial government. In the 1950s, they joined in voicing the pro-sharia to avoid the Masyumi's greater influence. Other than that, only a handful of Masyumi leaders that have a truly Islamic ideology. Most of them were educated in the West, and they would like to establish a modern state and society. For this reason, they are willing to form coalitions with secular parties.³⁷ Their call for an Islamic state was nothing more than a tool to gain the attention of Muslim voters.

³⁶ Husein Abdulsalam, "Pemilu 1999: Parpol Islam Dan Nasionalis Berlagi Tanpa Komunis," *tirto.id*, 2018, accessed on January 2, 2020, <https://tirto.id/pemilu-1999-parpol-islam-dan-nasionalis-berlagi-tanpa-komunis-cMUE>.

³⁷ Sirry, *Tradisi Intelektual Islam: Rekonfigurasi Sumber Otoritas Agama*, p. 172.

In fact, if we use the typology that was popularized by Geertz (1976),³⁸ "abangan" and "santri", the dispute is not between *abangan* and *santri*, but between *abangan*, traditionalist *santri*, and liberal modernist *santri* on the one side, and the conservative modernist *santri* on the other. Most modernist *santris*, who are none other than Muhammadiyah figures, are more focused on the issue of internal reform: forming devout Muslim individuals and not to rule the country in the name of Islam.

Second, the moderation of Political Islam in Indonesia also occurred as a result of the political repression of the Sukarno and Suharto regimes. Soekarno disbanded Masyumi as a group that believes in an Islamic state, while Suharto did not give any room for the growth of the Islamic party by controlling all parties that could participate in elections and introducing the single principle of Pancasila. Thus, all religious parties and organizations must state that their foundation is Pancasila.³⁹ The PPP party even had to change its symbol from the *Ka'ba* (as the center of Muslim prayer) to a star.⁴⁰ With a political background as explained above, it can be understood why in the span of more than 30 years in power, the New Order only succeeded in issuing 2 laws that are directly related to Islamic law, namely Law No 1 of 1974 and Law No 7 of Year 1989.⁴¹

³⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, Anthropology: Comparative Religions (New York: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

³⁹ Sirry, *Tradisi Intelektual Islam: Rekonfigurasi Sumber Otoritas Agama*, p. 173.

⁴⁰ Abdulsalam, "Politik Identitas Islam Menguat, Tapi Suara Partai Islam Stagnan."

⁴¹ Agus Firman, "Politik Hukum Indonesia: Dari Depolitisasi Ke Formalisasi," *Mahkamahagung.go.id*, 2013, 6, accessed on February 16, 2020, <https://badilag.mahkamahagung.go.id/artikel/publikasi/artikel/politik-hukum-islam-indonesia-dari-depolitisasi-ke-formalisasi-oleh-agus-firman-1411>.

This effectively blocked the political aspirations of the Muslims. They then carry out "political *ijtihad*" by developing Islam as a cultural force, not a political force. During the 1970s and 1980s, a new pattern of thinking emerged among young Islamic intellectuals called the "reform movement," which later better known as "Cultural Islam." They reject the political agenda carried by Islamic parties and try to define the relationship between Islam and the state. The central figures in this movement were Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurahman Wahid (Gus Dur).

The Cultural Islam⁴² criticism toward Political Islam because they are seen as a failure in many ways: they failed to bring the Jakarta Charter into the constitution, to unite Muslims politically, to gain a significant vote in elections, and also unable to put Islam into the law. Therefore, they sought another way to achieve their aspirations, as formulated by Nurcholish Madjid in 1972 with his famous dictum: "Islam *yes*, Islamic Party *no*," that religious matters must be separated from political matters.⁴³

Also, the confrontation of Political Islam with the New Order was seen as creating suspicion and marginalization of the Muslim community. The coercive power of the New Order regime cannot be fought by the power of Islamic parties.⁴⁴ Therefore, according to the Cultural Islamic activists, the solution to these problems is the revitalization of reli-

gion through cultural, intellectual, and social ways, not through political channels. They think that deepening the understanding of Islam is far better than forming a pious Muslim community through state coercion. In other words, the Cultural Islam version of piety from the self is not only to neutralize the idea of an Islamic state but also to call for a liberalization agenda into the religious realms.

The Cultural Islam attitude towards the formal role of sharia in state matters is also very controversial. Many young intellectuals at that time did not recognize the concept of an Islamic state and also asserted that the Quran did not contain any guidance regarding the structure of the state, as stated by Ali Abd al-Raziq, Khalid M. Khalid, and Asyamaawi in Egypt.⁴⁵ Cak Nur and Gus Dur, for example, believed that an Islamic state was based on a wrong interpretation that was consecrated by generations of Muslim politicians. Islam does not determine a particular form of regime, so Islamization must be a cultural process in the civil society itself. They also expressly and openly support the statement that the ideology of Pancasila is not in conflict with Islamic principles⁴⁶ because Pancasila as the ideology of the nation and the source of all sources of state law is a middle ground between religious ideology and secular ideology.

The situation changed a little in the late 1980s when Suharto began to show the state's accommodative attitude towards the demands of the Muslim community. Some of the significant changes, for example, were the promulgation of the Basic Agrarian Law, the formation of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association, the opportunity of wearing hijab in public schools, the estab-

⁴² Cultural Islam is Islam which has an orientation to the development of socio-cultural aspects of Islamic life through non-political channels, such as the peaceful propagation of Islam or through the development of education, economy, health, environment and so on.

⁴³ M. Amin Abdullah, "Sumbangan Nurcholish Madjid Atas Perkembangan Pemikiran Islam Indonesia," nurcholishmadjid.net, 2018, accessed on January 3, 2020, http://nurcholishmadjid.net/asset/2018/04/Haul-CN_ke-9_Prof.Amin-Abdullah.pdf.

⁴⁴ Sirry, *Tradisi Intelektual Islam: Rekonfigurasi Sumber Otoritas Agama*, p. 173-74.

⁴⁵ Nur Lailatul Musyafa'ah, "Pemikiran Politik Khalid Muhammad Khalid," *Jurnal Review Politik* 05, no. 2 (2015): 293.

⁴⁶ Sirry, *Tradisi Intelektual Islam: Rekonfigurasi Sumber Otoritas Agama*, p. 174.

ishment of Muamalat Bank, and the cessation of the national lottery (SDSB). Even though the policies taken were politically motivated, they were welcomed by Muslims as an attempt to harmonize the relationship between Islam and the state.⁴⁷

Third, above all, this moderation tendency showed that the majority of Indonesian Muslim societies are increasingly politically 'literate' and are more intelligent in casting their vote. This is a result of the modernization process in Muslim societies.⁴⁸ Indonesian Muslims are increasingly aware that Indonesia's issues are more complex than the mere demands of an application of Islamic law or sharia.⁴⁹ At the same time, the concept offered by Political Islam groups is unclear. They have not been able to explain their big slogans, such as the Islamic State or the application of sharia. It is still unclear exactly how or what they want to apply. There was no historical precedent, and the concept of an Islamic State was also not viable. Therefore, when the Political Islam groups were tested by the public during the elections, they are unable to convince them.

The Roles of Islamic Politics

This tidal wave of Political Islam and Islamic formalism in Indonesia did not stop at the 1999 to 2019 Elections. They found their momentum in the 2017 DKI Jakarta regional elections. Proponents of Islamic formalism used the Jakarta elections to have a political consolidation by driving several waves of Islamic Defense Actions with a large number of participants. The Islamic Defense Action capitalized on the blasphemy issue of Gov-

ernor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (BTP) speech in the Thousand Islands. Empirically, the waves of the demonstration by the Islamic Defense Actions leading up to the DKI Jakarta Regional Election put the Political Islam back as a determinant factor in Indonesian politics.

Using religious sentiments and claiming that the actions conducted in the name of all Muslims were indeed a powerful weapon to accuse BTP of insulting Islam. In reality, they were using Political Islam to gain the support of the majority and were not based on the true normative teachings of Islam.⁵⁰ Here is the relevance of Cak Nur's ideas in the onslaught of Indonesian Political Islam. Through his jargon: "Islam Yes, Islamic Party No," he would like to change the way some Muslims think about Islam and politics while breaking the thinker's block of Indonesian Muslim, so that they can rise up and compete with other nations in the world.

What Cak Nur conveyed was not to put Islam and politics in opposition, but rather as a form of criticism to the Islamic parties at that time, which did not contribute to the progress of the Muslims. The Islamic party at that time was not representing the Indonesian Muslim's aspiration nor the beacon of hope for the citizens of the nation. The Islamic Party could not properly shape the religious language into one that the multicultural Indonesian society would understand. To break the block, Muslims need to adopt what Cak Nur calls secularization, a thought process that distinguishes religious affairs from political matters.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Made Supriatma, "Warisan Orde Baru Dalam Pemilu 2019: Politik Massa Mengambang," *tirto.id*, 2019, accessed on January 2, 2020, <https://tirto.id/warisan-orde-baru-dalam-pemilu-2019-politik-massa-mengambang-dgav>.

⁴⁸ Sirry, *Tradisi Intelektual Islam: Rekonfigurasi Sumber Otoritas Agama*, p. 175.

⁴⁹ Islamic Law

⁵⁰ Muh. Bahruddin, *Pilkada DKI, Politik Identitas, Dan Media Online* (Depok: Fisip Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Indonesia, 2018), p. 231-44.

⁵¹ Yudi Latif, "Haul Cak Nur Ke-13. 'Politisasi Agama: Membaca Kembali 'Islam, Yes; Partai Islam, No!'", *nurcholishmadjid.net*, 2018, accessed on January 3, 2020, <http://nurcholishmadjid.net/haul-cak-nur-ke-13-politisasi-agama-membaca-kembali-islam-yes-partai-islam-no/>.

This distinction is needed because he feels that Muslims cannot see and understand a problem proportionally. The parameters used to determine "Islamic" values are often associated with established traditions, as such, Islam is aligned with tradition, and being Islamic is equated with being a traditionalist. Therefore, defending Islam is the same as defending a tradition and Islamic law. It gives the impression that the strength of Islam is the strength of a reactionary tradition. Cak Nur's affirmed that secularization was not the same with secularism. His secularization was not to turn Muslims into secularists. What he meant is to put the worldly matters where it belongs, and releasing Muslims from the tendency of turning worldly matters to the afterlife matters.⁵² Through this definition of secularization, Muslims will be accustomed to always find the truth of one value by comparing it with the material, moral, and historical realities.

Further, Cak Nur explained that secularization is not secularism and is not even identical to secularism as a closed and a separate ideology that is free from religion. Secularism in such context is not a process, but a closed ideology that functions very much like religion.⁵³ Therefore, his idea of secularization is not secularism as it is known in the West, but it is a form of "liberalization" from the established views that is not accurate.⁵⁴

Secularization is not intended as an application of secularism, because secularism is the name for an ideology, a new closed world view which functions very

much like a new religion. In this case, secularization is a form of liberating development. The liberation process was needed by Muslims since they were no longer able to distinguish between the transcendentals and the temporals.⁵⁵

For him, the etymology of the word will help to explain the meaning. Regarding the etymology of secularization, Cak Nur explained: "The words" secular "and" secularization "come from Western languages (English, Dutch, and others). Whereas the origin of those words is from the Latin word "*saeculum*" which means this era. And *saeculum* is one of two Latin words that mean "the world". The other word is *mundus*. However, *saeculum* related to time, and *mundus* related to space. Here it is seen, in terms of the etymology, the word "secular" does not contain anything objectionable. In fact, it is not only true in terms, but also in reality. So, etymologically, from his point of view, there is no problem using the word secular for Islam, because humans are indeed secular beings.⁵⁶

Cak Nur also said that the distinction between secularization and secularism would be clearer if we compare with the difference between rationalization and rationalism. Every Muslim knows, and often prides themselves, that they must be rational. But presumably, every Muslim also knows that they must not be a rationalist, that is, a supporter of rationalism, because, rationalism is an understanding that is contrary to Islam. Rationalism denies the existence of revelation as a medium to know the truth and only recognizes logic. Thus rationalization has an open meaning because it is a process, but rationalism has a closed meaning because of an ideological understanding.⁵⁷ Rationalism is a belief, and rationalization is a process. Just

⁵² Nurcholish Madjid, *Karya Lengkap Nurcholish Madjid*, ed. Budhy Munawar-Rachman, Elza Peldi Taher, and M. Wahyuni Nafis (Jakarta: Nurcholish Madjid Society, 2019), p. 281.

⁵³ Nurcholish Majid, *Islam, Kemodernan, Dan Keindonesiaan* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2008), pp. 218-19.

⁵⁴ Budi Munawar-Rachman, "Pergulatan Memaknai Keindonesiaan Di Lingkungan Muslim," in *Filsafat [Di] Indonesia: Politik Dan Hukum* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2019), p. 63.

⁵⁵ Madjid, *Karya Lengkap Nurcholish Madjid*, p. 280.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 290-91.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

like the difference between secularism (a belief) and secularization (a process).

Secularization experiences changes and additions to the direction or the purpose of the process.⁵⁸ In this case, because secular understanding refers to worldly understanding, the meaning of secularization is often interpreted as a worldly process. As a worldly process, there was a threat of degradation of existing values, especially religious values. In secularization, this degradation is more on the erosion of religious values from the person. Thus, it is the person who set the religious affairs from the worldly affairs.⁵⁹ Religious affairs become personal matters that must be separated from the affairs of the state, political, social, economic, cultural, educational, and all kinds of worldly matters. Through this interpretation, the author would like to show that Cak Nur's idea is an important contribution to fostering mutual understanding between different religious groups in a pluralistic democracy like Indonesia as it has also been guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution, Article 29 Paragraphs 1 and 2.

Therefore, in the spirit *tawhīd*⁶⁰ and the influence of Robert N. Bellah, Cak Nur supports the concept of secularization as demythologization. Through secularization there is liberation, from improper purification and eradication of *bid'ā*,⁶¹ *khurafāt*,⁶² and other *shirk*⁶³ practices. He accepted the separation between politics and religion, and also between the issues of governing the prosperity in this world and the salvation of souls in the

afterlife. Once again, Cak Nur firmly accepted the sociological meaning of secularization but rejected secularism, which he considered ideological.⁶⁴

Previously, another figure who also paid attention to secularization was Peter L. Berger. According to him, secularization was the process of all sectors of community life and culture that was released from the dominance of religious institutions and symbols. As for Harvey Cox, secularization is a theology of social change that aims to break the deadlock of religion which is shackled by the idea of "preservation" and "establishment."⁶⁵

Cak Nur provides a broader view that Islam essentially is not merely a formal structure or composition and collection of laws of the state and government. Islam is the embodiment of *tawhīd*. It is a spiritual force that can give birth to a soul that is *hanīf*,⁶⁶ inclusive, democratic, and respects society's pluralism.⁶⁷ While in the hands of Political Islam, a religion, which is spiritual and personal, is taken over for the sake of achieving the interests of some groups who wanted a religious state in Indonesia. This is what Cak Nur opposes, as one of the Muslim intellectuals representing moderate Islamic groups trying to foster mutual understanding between different religious groups in a pluralistic democracy.

⁵⁸ Mirjam Künkler, "How Pluralist Democracy Became the Consensual Discourse Among Secular and Nonsecular Muslims in Indonesia," *Democracy and Islam in Indonesia* 3 (2010): 53–72.

⁵⁹ Budi Munawar-Rachman, *Islam Dan Liberalisme* (Jakarta: Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, 2011), p. 149.

⁶⁰ Monotheism

⁶¹ Heresy

⁶² Superstition

⁶³ Polytheism

⁶⁴ Budi Munawar-Rachman, "Ensiklopedi Nurcholish Madjid," nurcholishmadjid.org, 2006, accessed on January 3, 2020, http://nurcholishmadjid.org/arsip-karya/read/25-2010_ensiklopedi-cak-nur_entri-r.

⁶⁵ Fauzan, "Sekularisasi Dalam Pandangan Harvey Cox," *Kalam* 6, no. 2 (2017): 251.

⁶⁶ Meaning "revert" refers to one who, according to Islamic belief, maintained the pure monotheism of the patriarch Abraham

⁶⁷ Luthfi Assyaukanie, "Democracy and the Islamic State: Muslim Arguments for Political Change in Indonesia," *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 20 (2004): 32–46.

A mutual understanding cannot be achieved if religion and Islamic law, in this case, Islam in Indonesia, dominates politics by bringing its religious sentiments. To avoid this, Cak Nur hoped that Muslims could be liberated from the immaturity of the religion, such as claiming as the only truth, intellectual arrogance, religious authority, and institutions to guard the faith and *'aqīda*,⁶⁸ and religion that are completely formalistic-normative. He would like to offer an inclusive Islam that has the spirit of *al-hanafiyah al-samḥah*,⁶⁹ egalitarian, pluralistic, and democratic.⁷⁰

It can be said that the ideals of Indonesian politics and political ideals of Cak Nur are very closely related. Cak Nur's thoughts on Islamic politics encompass all Islamic teachings and human life, as well as various approaches, such as philosophical, historical, sociological, and others. For Cak Nur, Indonesian Political Islam must be based on the 'Medina Charter,' which is referred to as the "points of agreement between various groups to realize a shared political unity," which implies a nationalist pluralism.⁷¹

Pluralism is important considering that the Indonesian have various ethnic groups, different religions, and ethnicities, so pluralism, in this case, means a common political bond to create Indonesian political stability.⁷² However, Cak Nur found another fact that the Islam presented by these Islamism groups turned out to be not a substantive Islam as he voiced. Their Islam stops at mere symbols and attributes. Islam became a stage performance. They perform *'umra* and *ḥajj*

with special facilities benefiting to their social class, holding Quran recitals at home and offices, building luxury prayer rooms, and others, while in daily life as bureaucrats, conglomerates, or party activists many of them betrayed the ideals of Islam. The bureaucratic machinery and business operate with corruption and nepotism. So, according to Cak Nur, the political system that should be implemented in Indonesia is a system that is not only good for the Indonesian Muslims but also brings benefits to all Indonesian citizens. In essence, religion does not force or advocate an exclusive social-political system.

So, when we talk about Islam, not only our inner impulses as people committed to religion, but also our awareness of a greater portion of national responsibility is given the fact that Muslim citizens make up the largest group of republics. So to become a real Indonesia is impossible without the active participation and involvement of Muslims who emphasize the struggle for universal good (as a mercy for all of nature) as stated in the Pancasila and the Constitution. These political ideals have their function as a memorandum of agreement between various groups to realize shared political unity.⁷³

Conclusion

In the onslaught of various groups carrying Political Islam in Indonesia, Cak Nur's ideas are still very relevant to be studied and applied in the life of the people, the state, and the religion in the country. Cak Nur's ideas about democracy and opposition, openness, pluralism, Islam, yes-Islamic Party, no, and affirmation of Indonesia as a nation-state, are some that are very relevant today. Political Islam groups often use religious sentiments and Islamic law to attack political opponents and increase the electability of a party or a person. The Indonesian political elites tend

⁶⁸ Creed

⁶⁹ Islam is a Friendly, open to others, and forgiving religion

⁷⁰ Munawar-Rachman, *Islam Dan Liberalisme*, p. 153.

⁷¹ Fransisco Budi Hardiman, "Nurcholish Madjid: Islam and Pluralistic Democracy in Indonesia," *Verbum SVD* 56, no. 1-2 (2015): 180-94.

⁷² Gustav Brown and Amelia Fauzia, "Civil Islam Revisited," *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (2019): 371-74.

⁷³ Nurcholish Madjid, *Cita-Cita Politik Islam* (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1999).

to use Muslims for their personal interests instead of making Islam as their moral guide in the political arena. This symbolization is very dangerous because it has the potential to divide people into two opposing camps.

It will certainly hamper the progress of Indonesian Muslims. They are unable to think clearly, to see pass the intertwining of social-political-religious issues that are so complicated. That situation is what makes Cak Nur's secularization ideas still very relevant today. That social affair - in this case the state or politics - can be separated from religious matters that have spiritual and personal dimensions. According to Cak Nur, that is the foundation of his idea, that world affairs (*umūr al-dunyā*),⁷⁴ such as state matters, are different from religious matters (*umūr al-dīn*).⁷⁵

An understanding of Islamic teachings that are more advanced is needed to support Indonesia's progress by not being trapped in traditionalism, with the concept of secularization that does not lead to secularism, freedom of thought, ideas of progress, and openness. As such, Indonesian Muslims should use a secular lens to view worldly matters, such as political choice that need rational and objective thinking, rather than using faith, Islamic law, *'aqīda* (creed), and *'ibāda* (worship), which are spiritual matters.

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⁷⁴ Worldly things

⁷⁵ Things of religion

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