

SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL INTEGRITY AND COUNTERING POLITICAL DIVIDES: A LESSON LEARNED FROM MUHAMMADIYAH

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the perspectives of Muhammadiyah, a prominent Islamic organisation in Indonesia, on the preservation of national unity and the resolution of political fragmentation within the country. This research employs a qualitative methodology, using descriptive analysis, to examine, comprehend, and interpret the perspectives of Muhammadiyah, a religious organisation, about their efforts to uphold national unity and address political fragmentation inside Indonesia. The use of a qualitative method was based on the need to get a thorough knowledge of the organisation's opinions and experiences within a complete framework. The idea of Darul Ahdi Wa Syahadah, Muhammadiyah has shown the significant significance of religion-based organisations in fostering unity amidst intricate political dynamics using value-based methodologies, educational initiatives, interfaith dialogue, and community empowerment. The aforementioned results provide valuable insights for many stakeholders on the possible role of religion-based organisations in maintaining social stability and fostering intercommunity collaboration within a dynamic political environment.

Keywords: national integrity, polarisation, political divides

INTRODUCTION

The interplay of religion, identity, and politics has had a significant influence on the trajectory of Indonesia's development and the endurance of its governance within its intricate socio-political milieu. Indonesia, renowned for its cultural heterogeneity, serves as a compelling illustration of the multifaceted dynamics via which different constituents might converge, sometimes fostering cohesion and concord while at other times presenting a formidable obstacle to the preservation of national unity (Nur & Susanto, 2020).

Currently, the political landscape in Indonesia is undergoing continuous evolution as it responds to societal aspirations for transformation and the pursuit of political and administrative authority (Hugo, 2003). Throughout the annals of history, it is evident that political dynamics possess the inherent capacity to engender conflicts

and divisions that pose a formidable challenge to the cohesion and integrity of a country. Hence, the significance of religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and other similar entities is progressively growing since they play a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion and averting national fragmentation (Arifianto, 2021).

Indonesia's societal diversities encompass a diverse array of religious affiliations, ethnic origins, and cultural customs (Brigg, Wilson, de Jalong, & Sugiono, 2016). The presence of variety, while it might be advantageous, can also lead to division when political discussions become polarized (Januar Ali & Eriyanto, 2021). Religious organisations, drawing upon the teachings and ideals inherent in their individual religions, have the capacity to assume a pivotal position in fostering tolerance, understanding, and shared objectives, even among intricate political dynamics.

In the present environment, religion-based organisations are seen as significant participants in addressing the intricate challenge of maintaining national cohesion while effectively navigating the complexities of political processes. The inclusion of a religion-based institution with a well-established presence is necessary to provide a viewpoint that emphasises the preservation of Indonesia's national unity and the resolution of political fragmentation. These institutions, characterised by their unique religious principles, have a crucial role to play in promoting societal harmony and mitigating possible conflicts that may arise due to diverse political and governance contexts.

The ongoing convergence of Islam and politics in Indonesia has significant implications for the country's social dynamics (Abdillah, 2015). Consequently, there is a growing need for a comprehensive comprehension of the perspectives and behaviours shown by religion-based institutions. The capacity of these entities to serve as mechanisms of reconciliation in fostering a harmonious existence characterised by peaceful coexistence and mutual regard within a context of political instability positions them as vital actors in maintaining the unity and coherence of Indonesia as a country.

This essay aims to examine Muhammadiyah's perspectives on addressing the challenge of national disintegration, which often originates from contentious political dynamics and government policies. Indonesia, as a nation characterised by its many ethnicities, faiths, and traditions, faces unique obstacles in preserving national cohesion within a context of ever-changing political circumstances. The examination of Muhammadiyah's perspective and function as a pervasive Islamic institution across society is a compelling area of scholarly inquiry. Muhammadiyah, established by KH Ahmad Dahlan in 1912, has a rich historical background in its endeavours to foster the social and ethical progress of Indonesian society (Syamsuddin, 1991).

According to Muhammadiyah, a community that upholds Islamic principles has the capacity to foster harmonious coexistence among its members. Muhammadiyah tries to impart knowledge to the general populace on the significance of prioritising unity over political disparities while upholding the ideals of humanity, justice, and tolerance. Muhammadiyah tries to serve as a catalyst for societal transformation by using a multifaceted strategy that includes education, da'wah (Islamic outreach), and active participation in social initiatives (Ridha & Syam, 2022). The organisation aims to foster a society characterised by inclusivity and harmony (Tahir, 2010).

Muhammadiyah, in consideration of national identity, espouses the notion of interpreting Pancasila as a state ideology that fundamentally derives from Islamic principles. This aligns with Muhammadiyah's perspective on the Indonesian nation. Indonesia is a nation that was established through the consensus of diverse elements, or the national consensus known as *dār al-'ahdi*, with the shared objective of transforming the country into *dār al-salām*, a state characterised by peace and security. Muhammadiyah also stipulates Indonesia as a witness country, which is termed *dār al-syahādah* to show self-quality in developing and creating the welfare of the nation with the hope that God will approve it. This vision aims to foster the development of an advanced, sovereign, and dignified society (Kusumawati, 2019). This article will discuss the significance of Muhammadiyah's attitudes and perspectives in implementing progressive concepts to address different political and

governmental dynamics. It aims to offer well-organised recommendations for addressing patterns of threats to national disintegration that involve diverse communities.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative methodology (Gerring, 2017; Somantri, 2005), using descriptive analysis (Gerring, 2017), to examine, comprehend, and interpret the perspectives of Muhammadiyah, a religious organisation, on its efforts to uphold national unity and address political fragmentation inside Indonesia. The qualitative methodology was chosen because it is considered to be able to provide a thorough understanding of the dynamics and a complete experience of the organisation.

This research focuses on the organisation, namely Muhammadiyah, which is affiliated with religion, and examines its views on matters relating to the preservation of national unity and political fragmentation in the Indonesian context. The choice of this organisation is based on its prominent influence in the social and political landscape of Indonesia, supported by a well-defined historical foundation. The data used in this research was obtained using various methodologies, including the collection and analysis of online news, journal articles, books, and audiences. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals who are members or representatives of the organisation. The data collection process has demonstrated its usefulness in facilitating understanding of the perspectives, principles, and approaches used by organisations in overcoming socio-political barriers.

The identification of the received data involves the analysis of patterns, primary themes, and narratives that arise from the data. The findings of the investigation will provide a comprehensive depiction of the perspectives held by religion-based organisations about national integrity and political differences.

The generalizability of this research is limited due to its exclusive emphasis on a single organisation. Nevertheless, the comprehensive examination of organisations offers significant insights into their perspectives and tactics.

Through the use of a qualitative methodology and a descriptive analysis (Gerring, 2017; Somantri, 2005), our objective is to provide a complete portrayal of the perspectives held by religion-based organisations about matters pertaining to national integrity and political differences within the context of Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pancasila, as a concept that promotes unity in diversity, is considered important and necessary (Taher, 2021). In the outlooks of Muhammadiyah, the response to Pancasila and the form of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia have been decided in a congress forum (Romadlan, 2020). The State of Indonesia, in the insight of Muhammadiyah, is a Pancasila State with noble values that are appropriate and in harmony with Islamic teachings (Fajar, Affandi, Suryadi, & Kahmad, 2022). The Pancasila state is the result of a national consensus (*dar al-ahdi*) and a place of proof and testimony (*dār al-syahādah*) with the aim of creating a safe and peaceful country (*dar al-salām*) (Kusumawati, 2019).

Muhammadiyah emphasised its readiness to build Pancasila, especially the role of Muhammadiyah, which has very strategic power for the people and the nation (Zulfikar & Al-Barbasy, 2021). This commitment is Muhammadiyah's readiness to build a Pancasila State with a modern Islamic framework, or in terms of progress. Muhammadiyah, in looking at politics, makes this matter a worldly *muamalah* that must be taken care of and cared for in the framework of carrying out and realising Islamic teachings in the lives of the people and the nation. The basic principle of worldly *muamalah* in the understanding of Islam and Muhammadiyah is that it is permissible as long as there is no prohibition in the Shari'a, meaning that on the one hand, humans are given freedom in political matters, but this does not mean that their freedom is absolute without the basic values of Islamic teachings themselves (Nasikhin, Raaharjo, & Nasikhin, 2022). On the contrary, the values that are ordered and recommended in Islam must be carried out in politics, and things that are prohibited must be avoided or not carried out. Referring to what is permissible and what is not permissible, what is right and what is wrong, what is appropriate or inappropriate, these things have been regulated in Islamic teachings with clearly

regulated content of values or through a process of *ijtihad* because indeed the realm is a societal aspect.

The dissemination of the idea of *Darul Ahdi Wa Syahadah* is relevant to Muhammadiyah's direction in looking more deeply at the Indonesian political landscape, with an effort to understand how to maintain the integrity of the nation and overcome political divisions. A focus on the experiences and strategies of Muhammadiyah, a leading religion-based organization in Indonesia, yields valuable insights that have relevance beyond organizational boundaries (Bachtiar & Baidhawiy, 2022).

Muhammadiyah's commitment to social unity and harmony appears as a basic pillar in their efforts to maintain national integrity (Jung, 2014). This organisation places a high priority on cultivating shared values that transcend political affiliation, taking a moderate position in politics and supporting patriotism for the sake of the wider national interest (Nashir, Qodir, Nurmandi, Jubba, & Hidayati, 2019). The principles of unity, tolerance, and community involvement are the basis for Muhammadiyah's efforts to foster a sense of national unity.

Education, as a means of transformation, is prominent in Muhammadiyah's efforts to overcome political divisions. Muhammadiyah's network of educational institutions is filled with teachings that emphasise *Darul Ahdi Wa Syahadah* concept, national identity values, religious harmony, and civic responsibility (Junaedi, Muharram, & Yani, 2021; Sinta Utami, 2019; Supriyanto & Ismail, 2023). By instilling these values from an early age, Muhammadiyah contributes to shaping a generation that is strong against divisive political narratives.

Muhammadiyah's involvement in interfaith and cultural dialogue emerged as a significant strategy for building mutual understanding and harmony. These dialogues serve as a platform where individuals from diverse backgrounds can engage in meaningful conversations, dispel misconceptions, and reduce the potential for political polarisation fueled by misunderstandings.

Another important dimension of Muhammadiyah's approach is its focus on community empowerment (Khoirudin, 2020; Tampubolon, 2019). This organisation's initiative to empower marginalised communities through education,

health services, and socio-economic support has not only contributed to reducing disparities but also created a sense of shared responsibility that transcends political boundaries.

The narrative of Muhammadiyah unity remains unshakable. The organisation consistently emphasises the importance of overcoming ideological differences and focusing on shared aspirations that go beyond temporary political motivations (Nashir et al., 2019).

Active encouragement to become an informed and responsible citizen is Muhammadiyah's core strategy. By encouraging its members to actively participate in the democratic process, Muhammadiyah contributes to forming citizens who are politically aware and placing national unity above partisan interests.

Importantly, Muhammadiyah's strategy is not only limited to abstract ideals; it is reflected in initiatives at the grassroots level. By interacting with local communities and meeting their special needs, Muhammadiyah forges a sense of belonging and a common purpose that transcends political differences.

In essence, Muhammadiyah's journey is a ray of hope that shows the positive role of faith-based organisations in maintaining national integrity and overcoming political divisions in Indonesia. Through its principles, educational endeavours, interfaith dialogue, and community empowerment initiatives, Muhammadiyah demonstrates a holistic approach that contributes to unity, understanding, and collaboration in the complex field of politics. These lessons can be a source of inspiration for various sectors to work together towards a politically harmonious Indonesia.

Muhammadiyah's achievements in maintaining national unity and reducing political fragmentation can be attributed to the effective partnership between the organisation's leaders and dedicated members. This statement provides strong evidence that the implementation of values-based education, conversation, and community empowerment initiatives can effectively foster unity in the face of political diversity.

However, it is important to recognise that the dynamics of each political situation are different. Muhammadiyah's experience serves as a source of inspiration, but

direct implementation may not always be possible. When devising a strategy to maintain national integrity and overcome political conflict, it is important for each country to consider its own local circumstances, cultural dynamics, and historical context.

Lessons from Muhammadiyah show that faith-based institutions have a lot of potential to find effective ways to unite people and stop political divisions. The success shown in combining the ideas of unity, values-based education, interfaith dialogue, and community empowerment is an interesting illustration of an inclusive and constructive approach to overcoming political difficulties.

CONCLUSION

Muhammadiyah, as the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia besides Nahdlatul Ulama, has a very important role in maintaining the integrity of the nation and reducing political fragmentation in Indonesia. Through values, education, interfaith dialogue, and community empowerment approaches, as well as carrying out the concept of Darul Ahdi Wa Syadah, Muhammadiyah has proven that faith-based organisations can be a positive force in building unity amidst complex political dynamics. Muhammadiyah's success demonstrates the importance of an effective partnership between organisational leaders and dedicated members. The implementation of values-based initiatives, education, discussions, and community empowerment can effectively foster unity in the midst of political diversity.

However, it should be realised that the dynamics of each political situation have their own characteristics. The Muhammadiyah experience is inspiring, but direct implementation is not always possible. In formulating a strategy to maintain national integrity and overcome political conflicts, it is important for each country to consider its own local context, cultural dynamics, and historical context.

Religion-based organisations have great potential to provide an effective means of bringing people together and ending political divisions. The success of combining the ideas of unity, values-based education, interfaith dialogue, and community empowerment is a strong illustration of an inclusive and constructive approach to dealing with political downturns.

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