

The Dynamics of Islamic Political Parties in Indonesia During the Reform Era: A Study of the Role, Strategy, and Behavior of Voters in Elections

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to comprehensively examine the dynamics of Islamic political parties in Indonesia during the Reform Era, focusing on the evolution of their roles, the transformation of their electoral strategies, the factors influencing fluctuations in voter support, as well as their challenges and relevance in the future. Using qualitative research methods with a literature review approach, this study analyzes how Islamic political parties have adapted to the changing political landscape after the New Order. The findings of this study indicate that the role of Islamic parties has expanded, not only as a channel for the aspirations of the people but also as active contributors to legislation, political education, and checks and balances mechanisms. Electoral support has experienced significant fluctuations influenced by the complex interaction of ideological factors (the solidity of Islamic narratives), sociological factors (traditional mass bases and young voters), and pragmatic factors (leadership, party performance, and logistics). Faced with these dynamics, Islamic parties have transformed their campaign strategies by adopting broader public issues, utilizing modern media, and forming political coalitions that tend to be pragmatic. Despite facing serious challenges such as maintaining voter loyalty, fragmentation, public perception, and leadership regeneration, Islamic political parties have maintained their relevance as an important component of Indonesian democracy, voicing the aspirations of significant segments of society and contributing to political plurality. This study contributes to the academic understanding of the adaptation and development of Islamic politics in the context of democratization in Indonesia.

Keywords: Islamic Political Parties, Elections, Reform Era, Political Strategies, Electoral Dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a nation-state that has been on the path to democracy since its proclamation of independence, has gone through various colorful and dynamic political

episodes . The transition to a more substantive democracy reached its peak during the Reform Era of 1998, which ended more than three decades of authoritarian New Order rule. This new era was greeted with euphoria over freedom, opening the floodgates of political participation and allowing democratic institutions, including political parties, to grow and develop more freely. Political parties, in the context of a modern democratic system, play a crucial role as the main pillar connecting the state with society. Vital functions such as the aggregation and articulation of interests, the recruitment of political leaders, the formulation of public policy, political education for citizens, and the means of participation in the electoral process all depend on the existence and performance of healthy and functional political parties. The multiparty system adopted by Indonesia after the Reformation reflects the plurality of its society, but at the same time presents its own challenges in terms of political fragmentation and the complexity of forming a stable and effective government.

Amidst the diverse ideological spectrum in Indonesia's political landscape, Islamic political parties occupy a historical and significant position. Long before independence, political awareness based on Islamic values had emerged through various movements and organizations, such as Sarekat Islam in the early 20th century. After independence on August 17, 1945, Islamic parties became important actors in the 1955 General Election, one of the most democratic elections in Indonesian history, where they participated in fundamental debates regarding the foundations of the state. However, their political journey has not always been smooth. During the Old Order era under the leadership of President Soekarno, ideological dynamics often placed them in a difficult position. Then, during the New Order era under the leadership of President Soeharto, the political space for Islam was drastically narrowed. Through a party merger policy in 1973, all Islamic parties were forced to join a single entity, the United Development Party (PPP), whose maneuverability was heavily controlled by the state. Efforts to depoliticize Islam and the rigid application of the single principle of Pancasila limited formal religious-based political expression, although on the other hand, Islamic activism and preaching outside the formal political sphere showed significant growth.

Reform began in 1998, marking the opening of a large democratic space in Indonesia. The collapse of the New Order regime was a fundamental turning point. The euphoria of reform triggered a "resurgence" of Islamic politics. One significant impact

was the increased role of Islamic political parties in the country's political democracy system. Islamic parties used the democratic space to strengthen their position in parliament and also in the public sphere. According to Mujani and Liddle (2007), the Reform provided an opportunity for Islamic groups to compete directly in general elections. This encouraged changes in the form and strategy of Islamic political parties in Indonesia.

Changes in the political system require Islamic parties to not only rely on ideology but also develop adaptive election strategies. We need to reach a broader segment of voters without losing our Islamic identity. Strategies such as forming practical coalitions, social media-based campaigns, and preparing a middle ground platform have become important. Nurdin (2013) shows that the success of Islamic parties depends on the balance between religious values and actual political requirements.

Therefore, political strategy is an important aspect of maintaining electoral relevance. Voter behavior towards Islamic political parties has also undergone significant changes. Voters now not only consider religious factors, but also assess performance, integrity, and current issues. In this case, political rationality plays a key role in voter choice. Understanding voter behavior is important for understanding the sustainability of support for Islamic parties amid socio-political changes in Indonesia.

This study has several specific objectives. These objectives are designed to provide a comprehensive and analytical understanding of various aspects related to the dynamics of Islamic political parties in Indonesia during the Reformation period. These objectives are as follows:

1. To analyze and explain in depth the evolution of the role played by Islamic political parties in the constellation of Indonesia's political system during the Reformation era. This analysis will cover their role as a channel for the aspirations of Muslim constituents, their contribution to the legislative process and the formulation of public policy, their function as agents of socialization and political education for the community, and their involvement in *the checks and balances* mechanism of government.

2. Identify, analyze, and critically interpret the main factors contributing to fluctuations in electoral support for Islamic political parties in various general elections during the Reformation era. The analysis will focus on the complex interaction between ideological factors (such as the solidity of the Islamic narrative and its relevance to the current context), sociological factors (including the dynamics of the traditional mass base, changes in voter demographics, including young voters, and the influence of Islamic organizational affiliations), and pragmatic factors (including the influence of central party figures, public perceptions of the performance of parties and their cadres, and the effectiveness of political machinery and resource mobilization).
3. Comprehensively examine and explain the transformation of electoral strategies undertaken by Islamic political parties in facing the General Election in the Reformation era. This study will focus on two main aspects: *first*, transformations in campaign strategies, which include a shift from an emphasis on ideological issues to broader public issues, the adoption and utilization of modern media and information technology, and efforts to professionalize campaign management. *Second*, transformations in political coalition-building strategies, including an analysis of the trend toward pragmatism in coalition-building and its implications for party identity and ideological agendas.
4. Analyzing the most significant contemporary challenges faced by Islamic political parties in their efforts to maintain their existence and increase their influence. In addition, this study also aims to discuss and assess the relevance of Islamic political parties in the context of Indonesia's future democratic dynamics, considering their potential contributions and the obstacles they may face in fighting for the aspirations of their constituents and participating in national development.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of the role of political parties explains the fundamental function of parties in a democratic system (Almond & Powell, 1966; Duverger, 1954). Parties have the role of gathering and voicing the aspirations of the people, providing political education and shaping public awareness, preparing cadres for public office, and playing a role in overseeing the government through checks and balances mechanisms.

The study also uses the Electoral Fluctuation theory as an analytical framework that explains the ups and downs of political party support in general elections due to the dynamic interaction between ideological, sociological, and pragmatic factors. This theory was developed by Ufen (2008) to understand electoral instability in new democracies such as Indonesia.

In addition, this study also uses Strategic Adaptation theory, which explains how political parties change their strategies, structures, and identities in response to changes in the political, social, and technological environment in order to maintain their electoral relevance and competitiveness (Harmel & Janda, 1994; Mietzner, 2013). Islamic parties in Indonesia apply this theory. Without adaptation, Islamic parties will slowly sink in Indonesia's increasingly fierce political competition.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was written using a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. This study aims to examine how Indonesian Islamic political parties operate in the Reformation era. The qualitative method emphasizes a deep understanding of a phenomenon through descriptive data such as narratives or more in-depth explanations. In this study, the researcher uses case studies as reference material to seek more in-depth information and explanations. (Sugiono, 2005) argues that qualitative methods are better suited for research that seeks to understand social phenomena with the aim of observing and examining the conditions of the research object. (Sukmadinata, 2009) explains that qualitative methods are research methods that aim to explain and examine events, social activities, roles, and the beliefs of individuals or groups. Qualitative research was chosen by the researcher to align with the main focus of the study in the hope of providing a clear and detailed explanation of the phenomenon of Islamic political parties in Indonesia. The data collection technique in this study was taken from journals and online articles obtained from digital media.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Since the reform era that began in 1998, the Indonesian government has begun to restore the presidential system that had been established since the country's founding. At that time, the presidential system that was implemented did not work well, as evidenced by the fact that the highest authority in the country, namely the president, was led by

only one person for more than 30 years. This had a significant impact and influence on the country's coalition and was also in line with the political party competition map. During the New Order era, as is well known, since the 1977 elections, various political parties in Indonesia were grouped together, leaving only three political parties competing in the New Order era elections, namely the Functional Groups (Golkar), the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), and the United Development Party (PPP). However, in the election results at that time, Golkar was used as a vehicle for the government, which made the party win every election during that era.

Interestingly, one Islamic party, the United Development Party (PPP), always came in second in every election during the New Order era, even though Golkar still dominated. This was due to several factors, one of which was that the Indonesian population was predominantly Muslim. However, the space given by the government at that time to parties other than Golkar was still limited by the government and those in power.

Entering the Reformation era, this study will examine in depth the dynamics of Islamic political parties in Indonesia, particularly during the Reformation era, which was marked by significant changes in the national political landscape (Misrawi, 2007). The main focus is on how these parties carry out their roles, formulate strategies, and interact with voter behavior in each election contest. Indonesia, with a majority of its population embracing Islam, is neither a religiously-based nor a secular state in terms of its religious-political and ideological orientation. Religions existing in Indonesia are given space to move freely, grow, and develop as long as they do not violate institutions and the boundaries of tolerance among religious communities (Tasman, 2019).

The Ringing of the Bells of Reform and the New Stage for Islamic Parties

The bells of reform that rang in 1998 opened a new chapter in Indonesian political history, ending a long decade of New Order hegemony and presenting a more open democratic stage. Amidst this euphoria of freedom, Islamic political parties, whose movements had often been restricted, found the momentum to rise and redefine their role, especially for the Indonesian people (Fearly, 2001). They were no longer mere shadows or complements, but transformed into significant actors who helped color and shape the direction of Indonesian democracy, which was still young in terms of age

(Hefner, 2000). Their role has become increasingly complex, going beyond their old image as fighters for the formalization of Islamic law, and extending to various aspects of national and state life.

One of the central roles they immediately assumed was that of Islamic political parties as a channel for the aspirations of Indonesian Muslims. As representatives of the majority of the population, these parties became a place for voices that may have previously been silenced or marginalized (Mujani, 2003). The aspirations they carry are diverse, not always related to religious rituals, but also connected to values of social justice, demands for morality in public life, and a spirit of eradicating corruption inspired by religious teachings. Various issues, ranging from the protection of religious symbols to the advocacy of policies such as the Zakat Law and Islamic Banking, are on their agenda. However, Muslims themselves are not a homogeneous entity; there is a broad spectrum of views and organizational affiliations, ranging from NU and Muhammadiyah to other groups (van Bruinessen, 2013). This internal diversity requires Islamic parties to be able to weave together various interests and views, while adapting to the reality of a pluralistic Indonesia by framing Islamic aspirations in the language of universal and national values.

As the doors of parliament opened, Islamic parties also took on an important role in the legislative process and the formulation of public policy. Through their factions in the DPR and DPRD, legislators from Islamic parties were actively involved in drafting, discussing, and passing various laws and regional regulations (Aspinall, 2010). Their contributions are not limited to issues directly related to religion, but also extend to the economic, educational, social, and legal sectors, where they seek to incorporate Islamic perspectives and values (Hamid, 2014). Of course, their influence in the legislative arena is highly fluctuating, depending on the number of seats they win, internal solidarity, negotiating skills, and the dynamics of coalitions formed with other political forces.

Furthermore, Islamic parties also function as agents of socialization and political education for the community, especially their constituent base. They strive to build awareness of democratic values, the importance of participation in elections, and the rights and obligations of citizens (Sjaf, 2015). Forums such as recitations, seminars,

public discussions, and the use of various other media are means of conveying the party's political and ideological messages. The regeneration process is also a major focus, aiming to produce militant cadres who understand the party's vision and are ready to take part in the political arena. Through these various efforts, they not only aim to gain electoral support, but also to form a loyal and politically literate mass base.

Equally important, in the dynamics of Indonesia's presidential system, Islamic parties play an important role as one of the elements in the checks and balances mechanism (King, 2011). Whether they are in or out of the circle of power, they seek to exercise oversight over the running of the government. As the opposition, criticism of government policies that are considered not to be in the interests of the people or that deviate from the norm can be voiced more loudly. Meanwhile, when they are part of the government coalition, they can act as a critical medium that provides input and corrections from within. Constitutional rights in parliament, such as the right of interpellation and the right of inquiry, become instruments to hold the government accountable, while also asserting their position as guardians of the nation's morals who voice public concerns about issues such as corruption and issues that cause instability.

However, in carrying out all these roles, Islamic parties constantly face an unavoidable political reality, namely the pull- t between ideological idealism and the demands of electoral pragmatism (Choi, 2004). The need to win votes in a competitive arena often encourages them to be more flexible, accommodating, and even transactional (Burhanuddin, 2012). This is the dynamic that continues to shape and change the face of Islamic political parties and makes them a subject of study that is never outdated in understanding the journey of democracy in Indonesia.

The Ebb and Flow of the People's Votes: Analyzing the Electoral Fluctuations of Islamic Parties

The journey of Islamic political parties in navigating the electoral ocean of Indonesia in the Reformation era has not been a straight upward line. Instead, it resembles a heart rate graph full of ups and downs in support from one election to the next (Ufen, 2008). This dynamic indicates that the votes obtained by Islamic parties cannot be viewed as a given, but rather as the result of a complex battle between various factors that are intertwined. Understanding these fluctuations requires us to delve deeper

into three main factors, namely the influence of ideology, sociology, and political pragmatism.

In terms of ideological influence, the banner of Islam as a political identity certainly has its own appeal. However, its effectiveness in gaining votes is not static. The power of the Islamic narrative that is carried depends heavily on its ability to feel relevant and embrace various layers of Muslim society (Ansori, 2017). This is where the challenge arises, because within Islamic politics itself there is a diverse spectrum of thought, ranging from those who emphasize a more literal and exclusive interpretation to those who promote a moderate, cultural, and inclusive face of Islam (Bush, 2009). These differences in approach often divide the potential votes of Muslims, causing them to be spread across various parties. Furthermore, when Islamic issues come to the fore in political discourse, support for Islamic parties can surge (Mujani & Liddle, 2004). However, if these issues are managed in a way that is considered too rigid or exclusive, they have the potential to backfire and alienate moderate or non-Muslim voters who are sympathetic to the cause (Buehler, 2016).

Then, in terms of sociological influence, it was found that the traditional roots of Islamic parties in large religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah still carry significant weight (Machmudi, 2006). These historical and cultural ties are often translated into electoral loyalty. However, over time, especially with increased access to information and voter rationality, this blind loyalty has begun to erode or be marginalized (Jamhari & Jahroni, 2011). Younger generations of voters, such as millennials and Gen Z, have different political preferences. They grew up in the digital age, exposed to information from various media outlets, and tend to be more critical and less attached to the choices of previous generations or traditional religious figures (Al-Hamdi, 2019). Islamic parties are faced with the challenge of rejuvenating their strategies in order to attract this increasingly dynamic segment of voters. Not only that, support also varies across social class and geographical boundaries. Some parties are more rooted in urban areas with an educated Muslim middle class, while others remain strong in religious rural areas (Aspinall, 2010).

Equally crucial, and often even more decisive, is the influence of political pragmatism. In an era where image and popularity have become political commodities,

the charisma of a central figure, whether a legislative or executive candidate, can be a much stronger electoral magnet than the party's ideological platform alone (Liddle & Mujani, 2007). Figures who are perceived as clean, populist, competent, and having a good track record have appeal across ideologies. In addition, the performance of the party itself, especially for its cadres who hold public office, becomes a showcase that is directly assessed by the public. Achievements and integrity will garner sympathy, while poor performance or scandals such as corruption can drastically erode public trust (Wilson, 2015). Of course, in fierce political battles, the readiness of the political party itself, ranging from its machinery, campaign logistics, solid networks down to the grassroots level, and financial resources, are determining factors that cannot be ignored (Hadiz, 2004).

Ultimately, fluctuations in electoral support for Islamic political parties reflect the dynamic interaction between these three factors. No single factor is permanently dominant. The ability of Islamic parties to read the times, formulate the right strategies, present attractive figures, maintain internal solidarity, and respond adaptively to the aspirations of the people will continue to be the key to their success in winning the hearts and votes of voters in Indonesia's ever-changing and dynamic democratic arena.

Weaving Voices in a New Era: The Evolution of Islamic Party Campaign and Coalition Strategies

The rapid tide of reform has not only opened the gates of democracy, but also created a much more dynamic and competitive political arena. Amidst this ever-changing landscape, Islamic political parties realize that survival and growth require more than just relying on traditional loyalties. They are forced to transform, rework their campaign strategies, and navigate the complex political coalition map in order to maintain relevance and win public sympathy (Mietzner, 2013). This journey is a story of adaptation, innovation, and, not infrequently, ideological compromise.

In the arena of campaign strategy, we are witnessing a significant shift. Whereas in the past Islamic party campaigns were often dominated by strong religious rhetoric and symbols, now the narrative has broadened. These parties have begun to realize that in order to reach a more diverse segment of voters, especially among the urban and critical middle classes, they need to talk about broader public issues (Setiawan, 2016).

The campaign agenda has been enriched with offers of solutions to economic welfare problems, the eradication of corruption, which has become a scourge, improvements in the quality of education, and equitable access to health services. This is a conscious effort to show that Islamic values can be actualized in responding to the concrete challenges facing the nation.

Along with this, the wave of information technology has not been overlooked. Islamic parties are increasingly adept at utilizing modern media, especially social media, which is used as a showcase to promote ideas, interact directly with constituents, and reach young voters who are a crucial segment (Nugroho & Syarief, 2012). This form of digital campaigning goes hand in hand with the professionalization of campaign management. Many parties now do not hesitate to use the services of political consultants to conduct surveys to map voter preferences and design more measurable and systematic communication strategies, a practice that is common in modern campaigns globally (Norris, 2009). However, amid this rapid modernization, personal touches and community approaches remain the backbone. Traditions of social gatherings, religious lectures, and various social activities at the grassroots level continue to be carried out to maintain the traditional mass base and strengthen emotional ties with voters (Putra 2018).

Meanwhile, on the political coalition stage, Islamic parties also demonstrate remarkable flexibility. In a presidential multiparty system such as that implemented in Indonesia, building coalitions is no longer an option, but a strategic necessity in order to be able to nominate candidates in national elections such as the presidential election, or local elections such as regional head elections, as well as to increase influence in parliament (Sukma, 2011). This is where pragmatism often comes to the fore. It is not uncommon to see Islamic parties joining hands with parties with different ideologies, such as secular nationalists. This is a maneuver driven by electoral calculations and the desire to be part of power.

However, this pragmatic step is not without its dilemmas. Coalitions with different political entities, especially those with different ideological platforms, often place Islamic parties in difficult situations (Menchik, 2016). On the one hand, this opens the way to power and policy influence, but on the other hand, it risks blurring the party's

ideological identity in the eyes of its core constituents and raises questions about the consistency of its struggle. How to balance short-term practical interests with long-term idealism is a challenge in itself. The success or failure in forming and managing these coalitions ultimately determines the extent to which Islamic parties are able to convert their electoral potential into real and effective political power to influence the course of government (Ambardi, 2014).

Thus, the transformation of campaign strategies and the dynamics of political coalitions have become two sides of the same coin in the journey of Islamic parties in post-Reformation Indonesia. Both reflect ongoing efforts to adapt to the demands of the times, while continuing to negotiate with the identities and value bases they uphold.

Shaping the Future: Challenges and the Pulse of Relevance for Islamic Parties in Indonesia

The journey of Islamic political parties in Indonesia, despite their long history and impressive adaptability in the Reform era, is now and will continue to be fraught with obstacles. The political landscape continues to change, voters are becoming more critical, and competition is intensifying. Amidst this battle, Islamic parties are faced with a series of crucial challenges that will determine not only their electoral survival, but also the extent to which they remain relevant in the pulse of Indonesian democracy.

One of the toughest challenges is maintaining and expanding their loyal voter base. In the past, ideological ties and shared religious identity may have been enough to secure votes. However, today's voters are increasingly pragmatic and rational. They do not only look at party labels, but also consider track records, concrete program offerings, and the quality of the figures being promoted (Pepinsky, Liddle, & Mujani, 2012). Competition comes not only from fellow Islamic parties, but also from nationalist parties that are increasingly courting Muslim voters with populist and welfare issues. If Islamic parties fail to respond to the real needs of the people or get stuck in outdated rhetoric, erosion of support becomes a real threat.

In addition, the specter of fragmentation, both internal and external, continues to haunt them. Externally, the large number of Islamic parties competing often causes the Muslim vote to be divided, reducing their collective bargaining power in the national political arena (Hasan, 2005). Internally, potential conflicts between factions, leadership

struggles, or differences in strategic views can also weaken party solidarity and erode public trust. Maintaining unity and building a common platform is a difficult task to solve.

Another challenge is fighting stigma and building a positive public perception. Some people, especially minorities or those with secular views, still harbor concerns or even suspicions about the political agenda of Islam. Issues such as the formalization of Sharia law, intolerance, or exclusivism are often used as labels, whether fair or not. Islamic parties have the heavy task of continuously proving their commitment to Pancasila, diversity, and democratic principles, as well as promoting the image of Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, Islam that brings mercy to the entire universe and all its contents (Azra, 2006). Failure to manage this perception can narrow their room for maneuver and their support base.

Another equally important challenge is leadership regeneration. Islamic parties need young cadres who not only have a strong ideological understanding but are also equipped with managerial competence, a progressive vision, and the ability to communicate effectively with the new generation of voters (Ichwan, 2013). Dependence on senior figures or failure to produce quality future leaders can cause parties to lose momentum and appeal, especially in the eyes of critical and dynamic young voters.

Nevertheless, amid these challenges, Islamic political parties still have a strong relevance in Indonesia's political constellation. As representatives of a significant demographic segment, namely the Muslim majority, their voices and aspirations remain important to be heard and accommodated in the policy-making process. Their presence enriches political plurality and is an important pillar in maintaining democratic balance (Effendy, 2009).

Moreover, Islamic parties have the potential to make a unique contribution to public discourse, especially in voicing ethical, moral, and social justice values derived from religious teachings. On many issues, ranging from eradicating corruption, strengthening families, to protecting the environment, the Islamic perspective can offer constructive alternative solutions. They can also act as a bridge between the religious aspirations of the community and formal political mechanisms, preventing these aspirations from being channeled through less democratic means.

Ultimately, the future of Islamic political parties in Indonesia will depend heavily on their ability to respond to these challenges creatively and adaptively. The extent to which they are able to engage in introspection, innovate in their strategies, embrace internal diversity within the Muslim community, build effective communication with all elements of the nation, and most importantly, prove themselves to be a clean, competent political force that truly fights for the common good, will determine their relevance and sustainability on the Indonesian democratic stage.

CONCLUSION

This study, which aims to examine in depth the dynamics of Islamic political parties in Indonesia during the Reformation era with a focus on the evolution of their roles, the transformation of their electoral strategies, the factors that influence fluctuations in voter support, as well as their challenges and relevance in the future, has arrived at a series of important conclusions. Through a qualitative approach with a literature study, it was revealed that the journey of Islamic parties after the New Order was a complex narrative of adaptation, struggle, and search for identity in a pluralistic and competitive democratic landscape and also for a more democratic Indonesia.

First, regarding the role of Islamic political parties, this study found that there has been significant evolution and expansion. From their traditional role as conduits for formal religious aspirations, Islamic parties in the Reformation era have taken on a more multifaceted role. They are actively involved in the legislative process and the formulation of public policy, not only on issues directly related to Islam but also on broader national issues, with efforts to inject Islamic values into the policy discourse. They also function as agents of socialization and political education for their constituents, and perform the crucial function of *checks and balances* on executive power, both when they are in and out of the governing coalition. However, this role is often carried out with ambiguity and pragmatism, reflecting their efforts to balance ideological idealism with electoral political reality.

Second, regarding electoral support, this study confirms that the votes obtained by Islamic parties fluctuate quite sharply from one election to another. These fluctuations are not a singular phenomenon, but rather the result of the dynamic interaction of various factors. Ideological factors, such as the party's ability to formulate and

communicate a relevant and inclusive Islamic narrative, as well as manage issues of religious identity, play an important or crucial role. Sociological factors, including interest in traditional Islamic mass organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah, demographic shifts among voters with the emergence of younger generations such as Millennials and Gen Z who are more critical and independent, as well as variations in support based on social class and geography. These factors also make a significant contribution. Another factor that is no less important is the pragmatic factor, where the popularity and integrity of the party's central figure (leadership), public perception of the party's performance and its cadres (especially regarding issues such as corruption), as well as the effectiveness of the political machine and the availability of campaign logistics, often become the main determinants in gaining votes. The complexity of the interaction between these three main factors explains why Islamic parties do not automatically dominate the electoral stage even though the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim.

Third, in response to the dynamic political landscape and the ever-changing behavior of voters, Islamic political parties have undergone a fundamental transformation in their strategies. In their campaign strategies, there has been a shift from an emphasis on religious symbols and rhetoric alone to a focus on broader public issues such as the economy, education, health, and the eradication of corruption. The use of modern media, such as social media technology, has also become more widespread to reach younger and more diverse segments of voters. Professionalization of campaign management by involving public consultants and the use of survey data has become increasingly common, although personal and communal approaches through social gatherings and religious activities are still maintained to nurture the traditional base. In terms of coalition strategy, pragmatism is a prominent feature of the Islamic Party of Indonesia. Islamic parties often form alliances with secular nationalist parties for electoral purposes or to obtain positions in government. This is a step that often raises ideological dilemmas regarding the preservation of party identity and the expectations of core constituents.

Fourth, regarding future challenges and relevance, Islamic political parties face a series of tests and serious challenges. The main challenges include efforts to maintain voter loyalty amid fierce competition and increasing voter rationality, overcoming the

problem of fragmentation both among Islamic parties and internal conflicts, fighting stigma and building a positive public perception of the compatibility of Islam and democracy, and ensuring the regeneration of leadership that is both qualified and adaptive to the demands of the times. Nevertheless, this study concludes that Islamic political parties remain undeniably relevant in the Indonesian democratic arena. They represent the aspirations of a significant segment of society, contribute to political plurality, and have the potential to continue playing a constructive role in public policy formulation and as guardians of the nation's morals.

The findings of this study have two important implications, both theoretically and practically. The theoretical implications of this study enrich our understanding of how religious-based parties operate and adapt in the context of a democratic country with a Muslim majority but no formal religious basis. It provides an empirical perspective on theories of identity politics, voter behavior, party strategy, and coalition dynamics in a fragmented multiparty system. Furthermore, this study also highlights the interaction between structural factors (such as the electoral system and political landscape) and party agency (the ability of parties to formulate strategies and adapt) in determining the electoral fate of Islamic parties.

Furthermore, in terms of practical implications, for Islamic political parties themselves, these findings can be used as material for reflection to conduct internal evaluations and formulate more effective strategies for the future. Efforts to strengthen internal consolidation, develop a moderate, inclusive, and solution-oriented Islamic narrative to address national problems, improve the quality of cadre development and leadership, and build a more persuasive political communication to a wider audience are some of the important agendas. For policymakers, a better understanding of the dynamics of Islamic parties can assist in designing policies that support the strengthening of democratic institutions as a whole, including political parties as one of their pillars. For civil society and political observers, this research offers a framework for analyzing and critiquing the role of Islamic parties more objectively.

In conclusion, the dynamics of Islamic political parties in Indonesia are a reflection of the larger struggle between Islam, democracy, and modernity in the Indonesian context. Their journey shows that Islamic politics in Indonesia is not a static,

monolithic entity, but rather a living arena, full of contestation of ideas, and constantly searching for the form that is most relevant to the demands of the times. Their future success will be determined not only by their internal ability to reform and adapt, but also by the quality of Indonesia's democratic system as a whole in providing a fair, conducive, and inclusive space for all political forces to contribute positively to the nation's progress. Ongoing study of this phenomenon is crucial to ensure that discourse on Islamic politics in Indonesia is always based on a deep, objective, and constructive understanding.

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