

**THE ISLAMIC NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS RESPONDS TO THE  
NARRATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE: THE CASE STUDY OF ABIM IN  
MALAYSIA AND NU IN INDONESIA (1979-2005)**

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**Abstract**

In 1979, The Iranian Revolution succeeded in overthrowing the despotic-secular government of Shah Reza Pahlevi and since then Iran has become an Islamic state. This successful revolution re-enforced of the narrative of an Islamic state that occurred in Malaysia and Indonesia. This article to examine whether the response of Islamic Non-Governmental Organization (INGO), namely the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Indonesia, to this Islamic state narrative is then manifested into acceptance or otherwise. This article aims to examine how ABIM and NU conceptualize and interpret the narrative of an Islamic state and to what extent ABIM and NU in Malaysia and Indonesia receive the issue of an Islamic state. The research uses a historical method namely heuristic, verification, interpretation and historiography. Primary data were obtained from library research, both data in the form of official government documents, INGO documents and in-depth interviews from selected respondents in both countries. The results of this study can be concluded that the narrative of the Islamic state was responded to by ABIM in Malaysia and NU in Indonesia with the conceptions and interpretations regarding the Islamic state. In the initial phase, both organizations conceptualized the meaning of Islamic state with an idealistic and rigid understanding. Both ABIM and NU wanted the formal implementation of an Islamic state in the country's constitution. Therefore, the relationship between the two organizations and the government was often heated and they were considered oppositional. The second phase witnessed both organizations shifting the conception and meaning of the Islamic state to a more moderate and contextual one. They realized that the heterogeneous structure of society in both countries was an obstacle to the literal meaning of the Islamic state.

**Keywords:** Islamic State, NGO, NU, ABIM, Indonesia, Malaysia

**Introduction**

In 1979, the Iranian government led by Shah Reza Pahlevi was overthrown by the forces of a people's revolution led by the charismatic cleric Ayatullah Khomeini. From a government that was previously authoritarian-secular-duplicative of America, Iran then metamorphosed into an Islamic state. Along with Iran's success, the seeds of revolution then spread to the Islamic world with demands for the formation of an Islamic state. This phenomenon also affected Islamic activists in Malaysia and Indonesia who were affected by the euphoria of the revolution.<sup>1</sup> They believed that Islam is not only understood as a purely ritual religion, but Islam is also applicable as a system of government and state (*addin wa al-dawlah*).<sup>2</sup>

Many observers characterize the Iranian Revolution as the initial era of Islamic revival in Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> At the grassroots level, the era of Islamic revival was marked by increased religious awareness and piety such as the wearing of the hijab, the rise of religious recitations and discussions and congregational prayers.<sup>4</sup> At the state level, the emergence of the Islamic revival required the government to adopt and implement more Islamic laws and regulations in the social, cultural, legal and economic fields within the government system.<sup>5</sup> Politically, there were also demanded to establish a formal Islamic state by some Islamic groups who believe that the establishing an Islamic state could guarantee the implementation of Islamic law based on al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah.<sup>6</sup>

However, in the socio-political history of religion in Malaysia and Indonesia, the narrative about the Islamic state or the relationship between Islam and the state continues to be controversial. When a conflict occurs or a particular case arises that involves the interests of the relationship between Islam and the state, for example the 212 demonstration in Jakarta in 2016, the emergence of the ISIS group, the Lina Joy apostasy legal case in Malaysia in 1998, the cases of terrorism in the name of religion, cases of religious blasphemy, then the issue of an Islamic state rises to the surface and becomes a debate as to whether the system and state adopted so far is an Islamic state or a secular state. Polemics and debates do not only focus on the branding of an Islamic state or ideological factors, but the sources of dispute include several issues such as concepts, definitions, characteristics, interpretations or how to operationalize an Islamic state.

In essence, there are quite significant differences from a conceptual and operational perspective within Islamic circles regarding the Islamic state. In general, there are two schools in formulating the concept of an Islamic state in Malaysia and Indonesia. On the one hand, they argue that the demands for the establishment of an Islamic state need to be applied into a formal form by the comprehensive implementation of Islamic law in state administration and the constitution. On the other hand, it is not important to formally declare an Islamic state. For this group, the more important thing is to apply the essence of Islamic principles and values such as upholding justice, trust, commitment to fighting corruption, eradicating poverty and realizing people's prosperity. The application of Islamic principles and values is much more important than being busy calling a country an Islamic state but neglecting its obligations to become a developed and dignified country.<sup>7</sup>

This socio-religious phenomenon was then responded to by various elements of society, including the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Indonesia. As socio-religious and missionary organizations, ABIM and NU are involved in the issue of the Islamic state both in the context of narrative struggle by formulating the concept of the state based on a religious perspective and in the context of as forces that influence political battles. NU, for example, even though initially it was declared a social religious organization, from 1955 to 1971 it was directly involved in electoral politics by participating in elections. Meanwhile, ABIM, although never directly involved in practical politics, several of its figures became important government officials in the 1980s to the late 1990s. In fact, since 2022 Anwar Ibrahim, the second and most popular President of ABIM, has become the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia after struggling for decades to become the number one leader in Malaysia.

Comparative studies between the two organizations are quite difficult to trace or even non-existent. Typically, if researchers make a comparison with ABIM as a research object, then they will compare it with other non-governmental organizations in Indonesia that have the same characteristics with ABIM. Not with NU, which is seen from its different background, paradigm, membership and political orientation. These are several factors that make this article important enough to be researched and written as well as filling the empty space in literature and narrative regarding comparative studies of ABIM and NU.

Based on the background and context of the research above, this research outlines the formulation of the study, namely what is the concept of an Islamic state according to ABIM in Malaysia and NU in Indonesia and how these Islamic mass organizations respond to the narrative of an Islamic state. It is important to ask this question so that it becomes a hypothesis that can be tested with data obtained in the field. The testing process is carried out to obtain scientific and justified conclusions.

## **Methodology**

This research is based on qualitative research to obtain written and unwritten data related to the theme of this research. Written data (document) classified as primary sources and secondary sources was obtained through literature reviews in Malaysia and Indonesia. This article was written within the framework of the historical discipline where primary sources are documents, manuscripts, meeting minutes and official archives obtained from government institutions, Islamic non-governmental organization.<sup>8</sup> Secondary data such as books, articles in journals, papers, mass media reports such as newspapers and magazines, theses and proceedings are also quite important in mapping research designs and enriching the information and sources obtained from primary sources.<sup>9</sup>

The written data obtained was then complemented and supported by unwritten data obtained through a series of in-depth interviews with selected sources, including figures from Islamic non-governmental organization, academics, Islamic political party activists in both countries. The data obtained through this interview process also applies data triangulation. The data obtained is then verified, interpreted and then narrated descriptively-analytically-critically to obtain a complete and scientific historiography.

## **Literature Review**

The study of Islamic state discourse is actually not something new. In fact, since the early era of the birth of Islam itself, namely the era of the Prophet and along with the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the issue of an Islamic state became a problem for the Islamic ummah at that time.<sup>10</sup> To this day, the definition and formulation of an Islamic state and its application are still a matter of debate and there is no consensus either among the ulama or among scholars/academician. There are various interpretations and conceptions regarding the Islamic state both at the level of its system, its theological basis and especially when related to the level of its implementation in modern times like today.

In fact, studies and research on Islamic state continue to be relevant and need to be explored continuously. For example, by carrying out research based on case studies in certain countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. The study of Norshahril Saat for example, explaining the conceptual debate on an Islamic state among the ulama group within the UMNO party, the oldest Malay party and a nationalist ideology vis-a-vis the ulama in the PAS, an Islamist party as well as an opposition party. Interestingly, this study show a conceptual shift in the Islamic state between the two largest Malay parties in Malaysia. In the early 1980s, PAS was known as an Islamic fundamentalist party that wanted to establish an Islamic state by implementing hudud law as its main reference. However, since 2008, PAS has transformed the Islamic state into a welfare state. In contrast, the governing party UMNO which has a nationalist ideology tends to be more fundamentalist by increasingly intensified the implementation of Islamic law.<sup>11</sup> The article written by Norshahril Saat highlights the debate on the concept of an Islamic state according to UMNO and PAS with a political approach because both are political parties. While this article focuses on the study of an Islamic state based on the views of Islamic organizations.

The study of Aulia Madaniah and Siti Ngainnur Rohmah explain the relationship between Islam and the state from the perspective of the rule of law. By using the framework and thoughts of Mahfud MD, an expert on constitutional law in Indonesia, this work finds that religion does not completely regulate the state but implements what he calls a political configuration. In this theory, Muslims must be involved in the executive, legislative and judicial institutions so that Islamic law can become material law and integrated between custom law and Western law.<sup>12</sup>

The work of Junaedi, Diki Abdurrahman and Abdullah highlight the struggle for ideas about Pancasila as a state ideology between hardline Islamic groups and nationalist groups. This article concludes that the hardline group's rejection of Pancasila resulted in the decline of Muslims. On the other hand, acceptance of Pancasila will bring goodness and prosperity to the country because Pancasila is an incarnation of the noble values of Islam.<sup>13</sup>

The research of Amin Fadlillah and Mohammad Redzuan Othman analyse the history of the struggle of the Islamic party PAS in Malaysia and PKS in Indonesia in establishing an Islamic state. This article concludes that Islamic parties in Malaysia and Indonesia have never succeeded in establishing an Islamic state because they have never won in general elections. In fact, in the end, these parties revised the Islamic state jargon with terms or political jargon that were more acceptable to heterogeneous societies such as in Malaysia and Indonesia.<sup>14</sup>

From several articles presented above, broadly speaking, it examines the relationship between Islam and the state. The main object of the study comes from the thoughts of figures, debates between political parties based on Islamic constituency in determining the form of the state and the rejection or acceptance of Muslim entities towards the state ideology. No one has studied the conceptual views regarding the Islamic state by non-governmental Islamic organizations in Malaysia and Indonesia, especially by Islamic organizations that are very influential in these countries. Therefore, this article fills this large empty space by making a conceptual comparative study of the Islamic state between ABIM and NU.

## Results and Discussion

### The Polemics on the Definition and Concept of Islamic State

In Islamic law (*fiqh*) and the discourse of Islamic thought, the term Islamic state (*dawlah Islamiyyah*) was previously unknown. The term that was previously known was *Dar al-Islam* (Islamic territory). This term indicates the meaning of a region ruled and controlled by Muslims. The term *Dar al-Islam* means a safe and peaceful country. Another term that is opposite to *Dar al-Islam* is *Dar al-Harb* (war area) or *Dar al-kufr* (infidel territory), namely a country ruled and controlled by non-Muslims. Apart from *Dar al-kufr*, there is also another definition in categorizing non-Islamic countries, namely *Dar al-Muahadah*, which means countries that have agreements with Muslim countries.<sup>15</sup>

In the early phase of Islam, other terms that were quite synonymous with the definition of an Islamic state were the terms *khalifah* and *khilafah*. The term *khalifah* is used primarily to refer to the era of leadership of the *khulafa al-Rasyidin* after the death of the Prophet. *Khalifah* literally means representative, substitute or person given a mandate. While *khilafah* is a form of a noun which means representative or the object being represented. If contextualized in the state system, the *khilafah* is the government institution, while the *Khalifah* is the party who is given authority on behalf of the person. Functionally, Masdar Masudi divides the *khilafah* into two categories, namely *khilafah fardiyyah* (individual) and *khilafah ijtimaiyyah* (social and state system).<sup>16</sup> In the modern era, some Muslims are fighting for the terms *khalifah* and *khilafah* to be enforced and applied in Muslim countries that are already established with a nationalist system.

Another definition that is often interpreted as the same as an Islamic state is *imamah* and *ulil amri* (ruler or government). The Shiite group is a group that uses the term *imamah* which is applied in modern governments such as in Iran. Terminologically, the terms *imamah* and caliphate become the 'nomenclature' of the biggest group differences in Islam when referring to the issue of leadership, namely that the *khalifah* belongs to the Sunni while the *imamah* belongs to the Shia.<sup>17</sup> Ibn Khaldun labels the *khalifah* as '*imamah kubra*' (high priest). The labeling of *imamah kubro* aims to differentiate it from ordinary leaders or prayer imams.<sup>18</sup>

While the definition of *dawlah* is embedded in the post-Khulafa al-Rasyidin kingdom era, namely the Umayyad, Abbasid and Ottoman *dawlahs*. However, initially the definition of *dawlah* was not literally interpreted as a state. There are two meanings in interpreting *dawlah*, namely, the first is rotation and the second is circulation.<sup>19</sup> One of Indonesia's leading intellectuals, Nurcholis Madjid stated that the history of the use of the term *dawlah*, which means state, was used after the Aryan and Persian nations established Islamic kingdoms after previously these nations were controlled and ruled by non-Islamic kingdoms. The use of the term *dawlah* may be to differentiate it from the previous kingdom. The change or rotation of the government power of this kingdom is then meant as *dawlah*.<sup>20</sup>

The use of the term Islamic state itself only became known in the 20th century along with the independence of Islamic countries colonized by Western and the influx of nationalism brought by the colonialists. In 1935, a prominent reformist cleric, Rasyid Rida used the term Islamic state for the first time.<sup>21</sup> The term Islamic state emerged as a term that

differentiated it from Western countries after the colonial era, especially in the context of affirming a commitment to upholding *nizamul Islam* (Islamic system).<sup>22</sup> This spirit and motivation is to underlie the newly independent Muslim countries to introduce the term Islamic state. Pakistan was the first country to introduce the term Islamic state.<sup>23</sup>

The majority of Islamic scholars, especially in the classical era, argued that the form and term of an Islamic state refers to the establishment of one state (*dawlah Islamiyah*) which is based on the al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah as the main elements of the state's constitution and ideology. The boundaries of the territory of an Islamic state are not based on aspects of shared history, language, nation and geography which are known in Western political thought as the foundations of nationalism. On the other hand, the territory of an Islamic state is not limited by the spirit and principles of nationalism, but is rather based on the similarity of Islamic beliefs or in the Islamic thought it is known as a caliphate state.<sup>24</sup>

From a fiqh perspective, there are also several opinions regarding the term Islamic state and its characteristics. Abu Hanifah, for example, the founder of the Mazhab Hanafi, defined an Islamic state as a state that is safe and free from the threat of enemies as its main requirement. Muslims also feel the freedom to carry out all activities without any interference. According to him, even though the country does not apply Islamic law, if the majority of its citizens adhere to Islam and the head of state is Muslim, then the country is considered an Islamic state.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, in the Mazhab Shafi'i, there is an opinion that an Islamic state is a government, power and state defense controlled by Muslims. The country also does not practice usury, legalizes alcohol and gambling and its people do not eat pork.<sup>26</sup>

Ibn Qudamah, a Hanbali scholar, stated that a country inhabited by Muslims and in which there are infidels who obediently pay *jizyah* is called an Islamic country. This shows that Islam is powerful and its height is more visible. Meanwhile, according to the Maliki school, a country is called an Islamic country simply by hearing the sound of the call to prayer. The call to prayer is a sign of the existence of Islamic propagation and this distinguishes it from an infidel country.

### **The ABIM and NU's Concept of Islamic State**

Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) is an Islamic youth organization and was founded in 1971. ABIM members and activists are former student activists from the influential Islamic student organization, namely the Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam se-Malaysia (PKPIM). ABIM acts as a continuation forum for Islamic students who have graduated to continue Islamic activism, especially filling the gap in organizations that work in the field of preaching at all levels of society. The main base of ABIM members and supporters is urban society consisting of educated people, professionals and campus activists. According to Von der Mohden, ABIM is a reformist organization and revivalist movement that wants Islam to be the main values in the life of society and the state in a modern context.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, NU is the largest Islamic mass organization in Indonesia and is known as a guardian of religious practices that respect local traditions and wisdom. At the beginning of its founding, NU was known as a traditionalist mass organization and was quite conservative in upholding religious principles. This condition seen when NU participated in

fighting for the Jakarta Charter as the basis of the state when approaching Indonesian independence in the BPUPKI session until the Presidential Decree in 1959.<sup>28</sup> Efforts to make Islam as the basis of the state were also fought by NU through general election by participating as a political party in the 1955 and 1971 elections.

However, in subsequent developments, along with the harsh policies of the New Order regime towards political Islam, NU reformulated its view of the Islamic state by accepting Pancasila as the state ideology in 1984. Since then, NU has held the view that Pancasila is the final ideology for the Indonesian nation. There is no other state ideology, including Islam, other than Pancasila that needs to be fought for by Muslims. With this view, NU is known as an Islamic mass organization that is moderate and progressive in implementing Islamic teachings, especially in the context of the relationship between religion and state.<sup>29</sup>

Since its inception, ABIM has been known as an organization that have a dream of creating an Islamic state. ABIM's dream was influenced by global Islamic organizations such as the Ikhawanul Muslimin in Egypt and Jama'at Islami in Pakistan which are known as mass organizations fighting for an Islamic state.<sup>30</sup> In the first decade since its founding, the concept of ABIM regarding Islamic state was a nation-state with a constitution and judicial system based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. ABIM believes that with a constitution and judicial system based on Islamic law, social problems such as hedonism and moral decay, ethnic politics, and government problems such as corruption and abuse of power can be overcome.<sup>31</sup>

In the second decade of ABIM, ABIM's formulation of an Islamic state experienced a shift in its conceptual framework. This change occurred after the leadership of ABIM shifted from Anwar Ibrahim to Siddiq Fadzil, a person known as a ustadz and academic. For Siddiq, the good and ideal form of Islamic state is the caliphate system, even though he is aware that it tends to be utopian in terms of its implementation. It seems that his idea of a caliphate state was influenced by the global atmosphere in the 1980s, known as the era of Islamic revival. This era was characterized by the emergence of the idea of a *khalifah* state that was eced by Islamic groups in the Middle East.<sup>32</sup>

According to the fourth ABIM President, Siddiq Fadzil (1984-1991), the dream of reshaping the caliphate system was not merely a political strategy, but was a religious demand. The establishment of an Islamic state is also in line with demands for the unity of the *ummah* based on *wahdatul qiyadah* (single leadership) for Muslims (ABIM, 1989, p. 12).<sup>33</sup> Because only an Islamic state is the only way to resolve the issue of ethnic sentiment in Malaysia fairly and thoroughly.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, ABIM rejected the secular system (West) and narrow nationalism (*asabiyah*) as state ideology and opposes racist practices, misuse of power and acts that are considered to violate the principles of justice such as the Internal Security Act (ISA), the Universities and Colleges Act. and the Organization Act.<sup>35</sup>

Due to its goals and views, ABIM, especially in its early phase (1970-1981), was known as an Islamic movement with idealistic views and was very critical of the government, which was considered to be practicing a political system that was contrary to Islam. A period that was characterized as a confrontational era.<sup>36</sup> In fact, ABIM was seen as

a potential threat to UMNO's dominance as the party that ruled the government even though ABIM was a youth organization and not a political party that aimed to seize power.<sup>37</sup>

However, ABIM's conception of the existence of an Islamic state still experiences vague concepts and definitions.<sup>38</sup> The main figure and second President of ABIM, Anwar Ibrahim, did not agree with the term Islamic state because this term emphasizes symbols more than content. Anwar's view was followed by the fifth ABIM President, Muhammad Nur Manuty, who said that there was no reference (model or example) regarding the idea of an Islamic state. He preferred strengthening and unifying the *ummah* in translating Islam as the most important element in its relationship with the state.<sup>39</sup>

ABIM's vagueness towards the idea of an Islamic state is mainly related to the problems and structure of Malaysia's pluralistic society. By not ignoring ABIM's role as an Islamic movement that is deeply committed to the struggle for comprehensive's Islam (*syumuliyah*), ABIM is seen to be aware of the difficulties of implementing the Islamic state it dreams of in the context of a pluralistic society such as in Malaysia. One of the factors is the still shallow understanding of Islam among the Islamic community itself and especially among non-Muslims. In addition, according to ABIM, the secular lifestyle that is so pervasive in the social, economic and political systems of society is said to be a another factor in the difficult mission of realizing the formation of an Islamic state.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, in Siddiq Fadzil's view, whether calling Malaysia an Islamic state or otherwise, the more important thing is that this status must not weaken efforts to establish Islam as the main source in all areas of life in this country. He acknowledged that the state constitution provides a special space and position for the sovereignty of Islam, however, this situation was not fully utilized by the ruling party to realize it. On the other hand, there is a tendency for state leadership to be insufficiently committed and not have the courage to dominate Islam. Instead, institutions are used to limit its implementation. In a questioning tone, Fadzil said:

“...in this context, what is always at issue is the question to what extent the constitution is a driver or barrier to efforts to establish Islamic sovereignty? What are the actual obstacles to sovereignty? constitution that are not strong enough or rulers who are not committed enough? If there is determination, will and courage, with the existing provisions (Islam as the state religion or sharia as the main source of legislation) much can be done to make Islam sovereign. Unfortunately,

the constitution are used more to limit than to do as much as possible.”<sup>41</sup>

The above statement clearly indicates that implementing an Islamic state with the comprehensive application of Islamic law is not an impossible mission in Malaysia. The constitution has provided wide space for this to be implemented and it all depends on the government party whether or not they want to implement it. This means that the opportunity to make Malaysia an Islamic state with a conservative definition and conception is possible as long as it does not clash with the democratic system and the spirit of the existing constitution.

In Indonesia, NU basically wanted the foundation of the Indonesian state to be based on Islam, especially in the early stages of its founding until the time of Indonesian independence. This was reflected, for example, in 1945, the position of KH Wahid Hasyim as a representative of NU and Muslims when formulating the state ideology in preparation for independence. As a member of BPUPKI, Wahid Hasyim was in the Islamic bloc vis-a-vis the secular nationalist bloc in determining the foundation of the state.<sup>42</sup> Efforts to make Indonesia an Islamic state were also continuously fought by NU through elections in 1955 and 1971. After the New Order regime's party diffusion policy, NU then merged into the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) which has an Islamic ideology and the Kaaba as the party's logo.

However, after struggling for a long time in practical politics and being considered inconsistent with NU's basic function as a socio-religious organization, in the NU Congress held in Situbondo in December 1984, NU decided to accept the ideology of the Indonesian state based on Pancasila. NU's view on the concept of the relationship between Islam and the state is based on the argument that Pancasila as the state philosophy of the Republic of Indonesia is not a religion, not replace the function and the position of religion. According to NU, the first principle in Pancasila is *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* as the basis of the state according to article 29 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution which inspire other principle, reflecting monotheism according to the definition of faith in Islam.<sup>43</sup>

According to Ahmad Shiddiq, the principle of *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* is a form of strict monotheism and reflects the principle of *Tawhid* in Islam. In fact, the core meaning of first principle of Pancasila is very closely related to Islamic creed. Thus, the acceptance of Pancasila is the real implementation of Islamic law in accordance with Islamic ideals. From a historical perspective, when formulating the basis of the state in 1945, originally this principle only said 'Ketuhanan' (Belief). However, it was later added to ' *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* ' to emphasize the principle of monotheism in Islam. This is a form of 'victory' for the Islamic side because the interpretation of this principle does not provide justification for other religions, especially Christianity, which its divine principles believes in 'three Gods' (trinity).<sup>44</sup>

For NU, Islam is *aqidah* and sharia which includes aspects of human relationships with Allah and relationships between human beings. Therefore, the acceptance of Pancasila is a manifestation of Indonesian Muslims to implement Islamic law. Moreover, NU views the state philosophy (Pancasila) and Islam as two things that are in line and mutually supportive. Both are not contradictory and should not be opposed. Both do not have to be chosen one by discarding the other at once.<sup>45</sup>

### **ABIM and NU Respons To Islamic State Narrative**

Overall, the ABIM and NU conceptions regarding the narrative of an Islamic state occurred in line with social and political developments in society. The socio-political dynamics in Malaysia and Indonesia in the 1970s witnessed a significant societal transformation in the history of the development of Islam. One of the dominant issues was the Islamic revivalism and demands for the establishment of an Islamic state.

In the case of ABIM, there are several important periods in assessing the views and progress throughout the scope of this study. The first period, the antagonistic period from 1979 to 1982. This period showed the idealistic, conservative, critical stand and uncompromising approach. This character was especially shown in responding to issues related to social issues (hedonistic and western lifestyles), the rich-poor gap), primordial politics (ethnicity), political issues (governance, issues of corruption and misuse of authority) and the state system and constitution. During the period led by Anwar Ibrahim, a charismatic figure and current Prime Minister, ABIM was positioned as a vocal opposition group to the government. ABIM is very critical, especially regarding the secular political system and wants the formation of an Islamic state.<sup>46</sup>

The second period, the mutualistic symbiosis period, was from 1982 to 1998. This period was marked by an important event, namely the entry of Anwar Ibrahim in 1982 into the ruling party at that time, UMNO, which was then followed by the transition of ABIM leadership to his successor, Siddiq Fadzil. Even though there are quite serious pros and cons within ABIM, Anwar Ibrahim's entry into the UMNO party, which was previously as political 'enemy', has changed the views and meaning of the Islamic state among ABIM leaders. Many Islamic pilot projects were held and controlled by Anwar Ibrahim, such as implementing Islamic values, the establishment of the Islamic Bank, the International Islamic University (UIA) and the decision of several laws that benefited Muslims.<sup>47</sup>

This period for ABIM was also known as a pragmatic period where ABIM abandoned the jargon of an Islamic state and many of its activists were involved and entered the government party. ABIM also began to redefine and reformulate the meaning of an Islamic state. An Islamic state is no longer formally interpreted by declaring Malaysia as an Islamic state. But, an Islamic state is more understood in terms of how it is filled with Islamic teachings and the formation of a society that is inspired by Islam.

The third period, returning to the original path, namely from 1998 to 2005. The event of the dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim in 1998 as Deputy Prime Minister and his subsequent imprisonment on charges of sodomy, which were later proven to be untrue, sparked the reform movement. ABIM activists worked together with other civil society groups from across sects and religions such as Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM) and opposition parties such as PAS and DAP, opposing the dismissal and directly confronting the government by mobilizing the masses in legendary street demonstrations. ABIM returned to being the opposition and enemy of the government. As a result, many of its leaders were arrested and imprisoned. In 2005, ABIM leadership was chaired by Yusri Muhammad. ABIM's approach and involvement that was too far in the political realm was withdrawn again. ABIM was returned as a neutral Islamic organization and focused on the field of da'wah again. Under Yusri's leadership, ABIM returned to its original position as an organization with the slogan of 3P, namely as a Defender, Concerned and Educator of the people.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike the first phase of the Malay-Islamic revival (before independence) which stood out for its strong Malay struggle, the second phase of the Malay-Islamic revival in the 1970s stood out for its Islamic spirit. There was an awareness that one of the factors in the decline of the Malays was the lack of understanding of Islamic principles which previously tended to be ignored. Therefore, one of the main agendas of the second phase of the Malay-

Islamic revival is to Islamize the Malay people. According to Siddiq Fadzil: "Malays must be Muslim and must be converted to Islam. But Islam should not be Malayized."<sup>49</sup>

As the main force of this country, according to Siddiq, Malays need to have a stable and strong understanding of Islam. Because if the Malay people do not have a strong Islamic sense and identity, then they will have no meaning. The nation and state will lose everything because only Islam can provide pride in its identity as the original power of the people of this country. Therefore, Islamic movements such as ABIM are very aware of the need to develop the thoughts and behavior of the Malay to continue firmly to their Islamic commitments. Siddiq Fadzil emphasized that:

"If Malays are not Islamic, then this (country) will be destroyed, there is no point. This is realistic. Malay as a core power. That's why we use the approach that Malays must be Muslim. If Malays are not committed to Islam, then they will lose everything. As stated by Sayyidina Umar who said that we will return to the same humiliation as before (the era of ignorance) if we do not uphold Islam. Only Islam restores *izzah* and humanity glorius. What gives Malay identity is Islam".<sup>50</sup>

The Iranian revolution in 1979, which succeeded in overthrowing the secular government and then forming an Islamic state, is widely acknowledged to have had a wide influence in the Islamic world, including in the Southeast Asia. However, it was interesting to note that the Iranian Revolution had quite different impacts and influences in Malaysia and Indonesia. In Malaysia, the triumph of the Iranian Revolution in establishing an Islamic state inspired Islamic activists to implement it in their country. Many were amazed and praised the success. Even several leaders of religious organizations including ABIM and Malaysian student organizations abroad, both from North America, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, went to Iran to meet Khomeini and congratulate him on this success. All of them used Iran as an example and source of inspiration to bring their country under Islamic leadership.<sup>51</sup>

They also demanded that the state system and constitution who derived from the British colonial legacy to be replaced with an Islamic system and laws. However, ABIM's admiration for the success of the Iranian revolution does not mean that they agree with the revolutionary methods used. As a professional and educated organization, ABIM realized that this method was not appropriate to be applied in Malaysia because of the diverse social and religious structures and culture that were different from the situation in Iran.<sup>52</sup>

However, along with the development of the times and political dynamic, the conservative conception of the Islamic state in ABIM has experienced quite significant changes.<sup>53</sup> In the 1980s, ABIM, which since its founding in 1971 had dedicated itself to being an Islamic youth and preaching organization, changed to become a 'partner building' for political power in the 1980s to 1990s as ABIM's main figure, Anwar Ibrahim, became Deputy Prime Minister (deputy PM) in the Malaysian government. Although ABIM was never officially involved in electoral politics as NU was, ABIM's position and role at that time was clearly a supporter of the ruling Malaysian government. The concept of an Islamic state in ABIM's view has also begun to shift to a progressive and substantial view.

In the early 2000s, ABIM prioritized shaping the content of a country by educating Muslims about the essence of Islam. According to ABIM, the labeling of an Islamic state is no longer important because at the time when the Prophet Muhammad formed the state of Medina, the emphasis was more on aspects of content and programs without declaring it an Islamic state. ABIM prioritizes the formation of a society based on Islamic principles which are based on the reality of a pluralistic society.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the impact and influence of the Iranian revolution was not as big as what happened in Malaysia. In fact, there was a researcher who confidently stated that Indonesia was not affected at all by the Iranian Revolution and would never become an Islamic state.<sup>55</sup> Even if there is an impact, it only occurs in groups that are indicated as radical, such as Jamaah Imran, which has long wanted to establish an Islamic state, and groups affiliated with Shia, such as the Indonesian Islamic Revolution Council. The Iranian revolution, to a different extent, also affected Islamic fundamentalists based in urban areas and on campuses.<sup>56</sup>

Those small explosions that want an Islamic state, quantitatively very small compared to the number of Muslims in Indonesia. This is because one of the reasons is that mainstream Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah reject radical methods in fighting for their goals. In fact, what is interesting is that since 1979, NU has begun to consolidate its internal strength to accept Pancasila as the state ideology. Instead of being influenced by the Iranian Revolution by voicing the call for an Islamic state, NU pioneered Pancasila as the sole principle, the culmination of which was decided in the highest forum of the NU Congress in Situbondo in 1984.<sup>57</sup>

After struggling for a long time in practical politics and being considered inconsistent with NU's basic function as a socio-religious organization, in the NU Congress held in Situbondo in December 1984, NU decided to accept the form of the Indonesian state based on Pancasila. NU is no longer directly involved in practical politics and is neutral. This decision is also known as the decision to 'return to the NU 1926 khittah'. For NU, as stated by Achmad Siddiq, Rais 'Am NU 1984-1991, the state ideology is based on Pancasila, which is a form of final decision. This NU statement was a form of affirmation that cannot be challenged and protects against efforts to fight for an ideology or basic form of state other than Pancasila, including among Muslims.<sup>58</sup>

However, the decision to accept Pancasila was not as easy as many observers imagined because NU was the first Islamic organization to accept Pancasila as the sole basis of the organization. There were accusations that NU accepted Pancasila because of its attitude which was too accommodating to the interests of the rulers. In 1985, the pro-modernist-conservative Islamic mass media based in London judged the NU's decision with tendentious editorials and touched on issues of faith. This media accused NU's decision to accept Pancasila as deviating from Islamic beliefs because Pancasila was considered a polytheistic ideology.<sup>59</sup>

Ahmad Siddiq, a NU's cleric who had little experience in the bureaucracy and was given the responsibility of formulating NU's attitude towards Pancasila, received a lot of pressure and opposition from conservative ulama within NU. This opposition came mainly from ulama with a background in Islamic boarding school education and had not received

formal education. At that time, the ulama faction were the dominant voice in NU. An Arabic-language pamphlet was circulated to the delegates of the Congress which stated their strong rejection and said that accepting Pancasila was a sign of weakness. As many as 34 out of 36 ulama rejected the Pancasila plan as a single principle.<sup>60</sup>

However, after Ahmad Siddiq assured the ulama that he would be responsible for this decision in this world and the hereafter, the ulama representatives finally accepted the proposal. One of the important factors in the acceptance of conservative ulama towards the proposal of Pancasila as the basis of the state was influenced by the figure of Ahmad Siddiq, who was an authoritative ulama because of the depth of his religious knowledge, the breadth of his scientific insight and his lineage of respected ulama within NU.<sup>61</sup>

NU no longer aspires to formally establish an Islamic state. For NU, the implementation of sharia or Islamic law should not be implemented formally in state legislation. Apart from the fact that NU idealizes the creation of an Islamic society that implements Islamic law with appreciation and self-awareness being more important, the formal implementation of Islamic law will have implications for the disunity of a nation consisting of various ethnicities and religions, such as in Indonesia. In addition, the establishment of an Islamic state is formally considered to be conflict with the 1945 Constitution which guarantees freedom of religion. According to Slamet Effendi Yusuf:

"Since the beginning, NU has realized that Islam is an important part of Indonesian society. Inherent in the daily life of society. Uniting with thought and practice. This is none other than the strategy of Wali Songo who internalized Islamic values in the minds and bodies of Muslims when they were converted to Islam. Why should Islam be formally announced in a country? They are already united and familiar with Islam".<sup>62</sup>

Since NU initiated and accepted Pancasila as the sole state ideology, which was then followed by other Islamic mass organizations, the relationship between NU and the government has become quite good. NU is no longer a non-governmental organization that is suspected and positioned as an opposition and dangerous group by the government as was the case in the 1970s. At that time, the ruling government carried out what was known as the policy of marginalization and de-NU-ization.

NU's willingness to strengthen the Pancasila ideology and at the same time eliminate the dreams and idealism of an Islamic state helps the government convince Muslims that Indonesia is very Islamic even though it has a Pancasila ideology. Moreover, in practical politics, NU also declared its neutrality from its main political alliance in the PPP previously. NU's return to the 1926 khittah restored the organization's basic function as an authoritative civil society entity as NU was first founded and at the same time became the spokesperson for the Islamic community in Indonesia.<sup>63</sup>

The impact of the famous NU declaration of Pancasila as the final ideology was later met with a positive response from the government. From 1984 to 1997, there were at least two areas that experienced the most significant positive changes, namely in the fields of preaching and education. In the field of preaching, Islamic preaching activities were no longer restricted and suspected by the regime. To hold an religious event that invites certain

speakers, permission is not required or permission is very easy. This was different from before, where to hold an event, the committee had to ask for permission from the local authorities and even had to apply for a permit in Jakarta. The number of places of worship increased. Material assistance for preachers and their organizations was provided. The apparatus and security forces provided security guarantees and protection for religious activities.<sup>64</sup>

In the field of education, NU schools which in the previous era had been 'lying down' and hiding their NU identity, have begun to openly declare their affiliation. Madrasahs were no longer afraid to write on their school name boards with the mention of NU such as MINU. All of these schools were managed under the autonomous body of NU, LP Maarif. Assistance for operational costs of education also flows again to NU educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, which are the heart of education that is identical to NU. Likewise, with the provision of scholarships to NU students to study abroad, where previously many scholarships were provided to other organizations (Faishal Aminuddin, 2012).<sup>65</sup>

Since NU accepted Pancasila as the state ideology in Indonesia and Anwar Ibrahim joined UMNO in Malaysia, the relationship between the two mass organizations and the government has improved. Therefore, the intensive Islamization policies that began in the 1980s and were implemented by both countries are considered to be the result of factors of redefinition and reformulation of the meaning of an Islamic state.

In the context of ABIM, although it is organizationally neutral, the actors implementing the Islamization policy were controlled by Anwar Ibrahim and several of his colleagues in ABIM who were members of the government party. In fact, there were those who believe that ABIM-ization occurred when Anwar was in government. In several government sectors and ministries, important positions were controlled by ABIM people or ABIM sympathizers. Not to mention, several legislative policies and legal products received touches and views from ABIM supporters.<sup>66</sup>

In Indonesia, NU was once again considered an important mass organization after being marginalized from national and state development for some time. When the New Order regime carried out a series of Islamization policies in various fields, NU welcomed the agenda quite well. The most prominent field of NU's role was the policy of creating the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI). In the process of its formulation, NU played a major role and contribution in the preparation of legal products that became the basis for judges in the religious court environment. It was not surprising considering that NU is known as a warehouse of highly competent scholars and fiqh experts. Although there was controversy over Gus Dur's critical attitude regarding Islamization policies such as the establishment of Bank Muamalat or the establishment of ICMI, organizationally NU still quite well accepted the government's efforts to make Islam the main value in government.<sup>67</sup>

The redefinition and meaning of the Islamic state conceptualized by ABIM and NU, makes these two mass organizations play an important role and contribution in the socio-political dynamics in their respective countries. Both are able to act contextually and balance the government's efforts in formulating an ideal relationship between Islam and the political system in the midst of countries with heterogeneous population compositions such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

It is therefore not surprising that ABIM and NU could accept the efforts and sincerity of the government to make Islam a primary element in development, legislation and socio-cultural development in both countries without sacrificing the political system and the state constitution that has been agreed upon by all elements of the nation. Both ABIM and NU are known as progressive and moderate Islamic mass organizations. Both are known as organizations that oppose violence and Islamic radicalism that once overshadowed the condition of the country when there was a critical struggle by other components of Islamic society in an effort to fight for an Islamic state.

## **Conclusion**

There are ups and downs of chronology and dynamics in examining ABIM and NU's responses and receptions on the Islamic state issue. Conceptually, there was a shift in views both within ABIM and NU in the early stages of their establishment as organizations. Initially, the concept of an Islamic state needed to be fought for because the majority of the population was Muslim and therefore it had to be implemented in the form of a legal-formal Islamic state. Islamic laws and sharia must be implemented in the positive law of the state. However, along with the uncondusive political environment, the reality of a heterogeneous society and the political dynamics surrounding it, the views and reception of the Islamic state have slowly shifted into a more substantial form. The branding of an Islamic country is no longer being fought for and it is not important to declare it. More importantly, Islamic values have internalized the country's system and laws. In terms of periodization, there were at least two important periods in assessing ABIM and NU's views on the idea of an Islamic state. The first period was in the early stages of its establishment as an organization which showed a conservative attitude. The second period occurred at an increasingly mature organizational stage with progressive and moderate religious and national views.

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<sup>1</sup> In Malaysia context, see Mohammad Abu Bakar, "External Influence on Contemporary Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, No. 2, September 1991. In Indonesia context see Amien Rais, International Islamic Movement and their Influence upon the Islamic Movement in Indonesia, *Prisma*, No. 35, November 1984.

<sup>2</sup> John L. Esposito, (ed), *Voices of Resurgence Islam*, New York dan Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, (ed.), *The Politics of Islamic Reassertion*, London: Croom Helm, 1981. Robert W. Hefner dan Patricia Horvath (ed.), *Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997. However, there were researchers who see that the Islamic revival that occurred in the Southeast Asia region, especially in Malaysia or Indonesia, was not much influenced by the Iranian revolution. The Islamic revival that occurred in the Southeast Asia region is an independent phenomenon and is not related to external influences. This was because Islam in Southeast Asia has a special history of Islamic movements and has a different religious character from the Middle East region. Further discussion, see Michael R.J. Vatikiotis, *Political Change in Southeast Asia, Trimming the Banyan Tree*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 51. Compare to the work of Sidney R. Jones, "It Can't Happen Here: A Post-Khomeini Look at Indonesia Islam", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XX, No.3, March 1980.

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<sup>6</sup> See William Liddle, "The Islamic Turn in Indonesia: A Political Explanation", *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, No. 3 (1996). Hussin Mutalib, *Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State*, Singapura: National University of Singapore, 1993.

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<sup>9</sup> Louis Gottschalk, *Mengerti Sejarah*, terj. Nugroho Notosusanto, Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Abdul Aziz, *Chiefdom Madinah Salah Paham Negara Islam*, Tangerang: Alvabet, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Norshahril Saat, The Ulama, Thought-styles, and the Islamic State Debate in Contemporary Malaysia, *Studia Islamika*, Volume 21, Number 1, 2014.

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<sup>14</sup> Amin Fadlillah dan Mohammad Redzuan Othman, "Dinamika PAS dan PKS dalam Perjuangan Mewujudkan Negara Islam", *Jurnal Sejarah*, No.21, 2013 Jabatan Sejarah Universiti Malaya.

<sup>15</sup> Yusuf al-Qardawi, *Fiqh al-Jihad*, Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Masdar Faried Mas'udi, "Khilaf di Seputar Khilafah: Apa, Siapa dan Bagaimana?", dalam Komaruddin Hidayat (pnyt.), *Kontroversi Khilafah Islam, Negara dan Pancasila*, Jakarta: Mizan, 2014, hlm. 97-100.

<sup>17</sup> Further discussion about the political concept of Sunni and Shia, see Hamid Enayat, *Reaksi Politik Sunni dan Syiah*, Bandung: Penerbit Pustaka, 1988.

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, penerjemah Ahmadie Toha, Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> The term daulah means taking turns in the Qur'an, verse 140 of Surah Ali Imran. Meanwhile, the daulah means circulation is found in verse 7 of surah al Hasyr.

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<sup>21</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Criteria and Characteristics of an Islamic State", dalam IKIM, *Malaysia Sebagai Sebuah Negara Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: IKIM, 2005, hlm. 15.

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<sup>23</sup> Nurcholis Majid, "Islam Punya Konsep Kenegaraan.

<sup>24</sup> Yusuf al-Qardawi, *Min Fiqh al Daulah fi al Islami*, Kairo: Dar al Syuruq, 1997.

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- <sup>38</sup> Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia*, Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2003, hlm.91.
- <sup>39</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Islamist Realignment, hlm. 219.
- <sup>40</sup> Hussin Mutalib, *Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State*, Singapura: National University of Singapore, 1993, hlm.118.
- <sup>41</sup> Interview with Siddiq Fadzil, Kajang, 28 Mac 2012.
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- <sup>43</sup> Achmad Siddiq, *Khittah Nahdliyyah*, Surabaya: Penerbit Khalista, 2005, hlm. 25.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup> Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia*, Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2003, hlm. 83-85.
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### **Interview**

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