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Jurnal Dakwah dan Sosial

Future Prospects for Islamic Political Parties in Indonesia's Democratic Contestation after the 2024 General Elections

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Abstract	This research analyzes the prospects of Islamic political parties in Indonesia's democratic contestation after the 2024 elections. Islamic political parties have never been able to compete with nationalist parties in the last four elections. The dominance of nationalist parties is shown in parliamentary contestation and in the presidential and vice-presidential elections, making Islamic parties have no logical choice but to join the coalition of nationalist parties. The future of Islamic political parties has become a polemic because they see their position increasingly squeezed by the strengthening of nationalist parties. This research was conducted using a literature study approach by collecting primary and secondary data from the official government website and supported by secondary data from various media channels such as detik.com and cnbc.com. Data collection begins with field observations to find preliminary data to guide further data collection. The results show that Islamic political parties still have potential prospects if they can optimize several factors, including the demographics of Muslims in Indonesia, Islamic militancy, the close relationship between the ideology of mass organizations and political parties, and public expectations.
Keywords	Islamic political party; politics; election; prospect

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1. INTRODUCTION

The prospects of Islamic political parties in the contestation of democracy in Indonesia have become a significant issue after several periods of general elections have never been won (Nastain et al., 2023). Nationalist parties always appear dominant even though the winning party constantly alternates. The nationalist Democrat Party won in two election periods from 2004-2014, followed by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) for three periods from 2014-2024 (Qodir & Hefner, 2024). The dominance of nationalist parties was seen in the last election in 2024, with the top three vote-getters being PDIP (25 million votes), Golkar (23 million votes), and Gerindra (20 million votes) (Taufani, 2024). Islamic Political Parties slumped to the fourth position occupied by the National Awakening Party (PKB) and the sixth position by the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). Even the United Development Party (PPP), the oldest Islamic party in Indonesia that has existed since the New Order era, had to be thrown out of parliament because it did not meet the parliamentary threshold (Arifianto,

2023).

The position of Islamic political parties in Indonesia is still prospective if they can optimize several potentials in Indonesian society's political climate and culture. The victory and dominance of nationalist parties are allegedly due to the disappointment of Islamic political parties whose leaders were exposed to corruption cases (Henderson & Kuncoro, 2011). PPP is one clear example of how the party was abandoned by its voters after its two chairmen were caught in corruption cases in the era of Suryadharma Ali and Romahurmuziy (Aditya, 2023; Ferdinand, 2016). Islamic political parties still have public trust, as shown by the fact that three parties still qualify for parliament (Taufani, 2024). Indonesia's natural political conditions have the potential to support the existence of Islamic political parties because it has a majority Muslim population, the strength of religious sect-based militancy, and the emotional bond between political parties and the people (Fossati, 2019; Nastain et al., 2024).

This research was conducted to find out more about the future prospects of Islamic political parties in Indonesia's democratic contestation. In contrast to previous studies that mostly highlighted the downturn of Islamic parties in the previous elections or only analyzed ideological dynamics ahead of the 2024 elections (e.g. Nastain et al., 2023; Qodir & Hefner, 2024), this research presents a contribution and novelty with a post-2024 election focus and identifies the strategic potential of Islamic parties in the long term, which has not been explicitly examined in previous studies. This research was conducted to learn more about the prospects of Islamic political parties in Indonesia's democratic contestation. In contrast to previous studies that mainly highlighted the downturn of Islamic parties in the previous elections or only analyzed ideological dynamics ahead of the 2024 elections (e.g., Nastain et al., 2023; Qodir & Hefner, 2024), this research presents a contribution and novelty with a post-2024 election focus and identifies the strategic potential of Islamic parties in the long term, which has not been explicitly examined in previous studies.

The tendency of Islamic political parties to be under pressure with the strengthening dominance of nationalist parties has led to speculation that Islamic parties will be increasingly eroded and thrown out of parliament. This speculation is not just a political utopia. However, based on facts and data, the oldest Islamic party in Indonesia, PPP, was thrown out of parliament in the 2024 elections (Nastain et al., 2023). A similar condition is shown by PKS, which has stagnated its political position by not showing any signs of positive development (Miichi, 2023; Park, 2021; Sutjipto et al., 2023). A dynamic Islamic political party is only shown by PKB, with the dynamics of parliamentary positions that continue to shift and succeed in becoming the largest (Argenti et al., 2022; Qodir & Hefner, 2024).

The above approach raises a hypothesis that the development of Islamic political parties can still be improved by optimizing some of their potential. The tendency of constituents to leave Islamic parties is not due to crucial and permanent factors but rather incidental cases related to religious norms. Carrying religious values in politics, apart from being an electoral magnet, also carries a considerable risk, namely that every act of political misconduct (corruption and social norms) will be punished socially. The heaviest punishment in political instruments is to leave the party and vote for another party. The above assumptions suggest that if Islamic political parties can improve party management, professionalize the regeneration system, and adapt to public expectations, the future potential will be more prospective.

Based on Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 2 of 2011 Article 1 states that a Political Party is an organization that is national and formed by a group of Indonesian citizens voluntarily based on a common will and ideals to fight for and defend the political interests of members, society,

nation, and state and maintain the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Law Number 2, 2011). Political parties in a democratic system have a very crucial role in supplying state officials. Political parties become institutions for politicians to gain access to power.

Political parties have an articulate role in representing the political interests of the community to control government power. The role of fighting for and voicing the interests of society is reflected in a parliamentary identity that makes the legislature an extension of the interests of society. Elected politicians in parliament become a bridge to the people's voice and oversee the course of government as a control function. In addition, political parties were born as a space for political activists to harmonize the people's interests with the government's interests as a conducive state order (R Al-Hamdi, 2023).

In the contestation of Indonesian democracy, there are two major approaches in the typology of political parties according to researchers, namely Nationalist-Religious political parties represented by parties that tend to be nationalist but still tied to religious issues to gain public support. Parties that fall into the above typology are PDIP, Gerindra, Democrat, and Nasdem, which tend to have main issues in the nationalist movement but still have political agendas characterized by religion. The second typology is the religious-nationalist parties characterized by a special closeness to ideology, historical and cultural roots, and mass support from Muslims such as PKB, PAN, and PKS. However, the position of these parties can still be debated according to the approach taken by political experts. According to Andreas Ufen in his writing, PKB and PAN can be classified as Islamic parties when viewed from their historical span (Andreas Ufen, 2012). Meanwhile, Kikue Hamayotsu included three parties in Indonesia, namely PPP, PKS, and PKB, as Islamic parties because they have strong ties with the mass of Muslim supporters (Tomsa & Ufen, 2012).

Political parties have made many changes and political maneuvers in navigating the contestation of democracy in Indonesia. PKB is a political party that has made many progress changes in the performance of regeneration and out of the exclusivity of its political mass base. Seeing the position of a political party can use the benchmark of proximity to the mass base and majority support, as done by Andreas Ufen, who sees PKB's position as a representation of an Islamic party supported by its proximity to Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (A Ufen, 2008; Andreas Ufen, 2008). Meanwhile, Mietzner included PKB, PPP, and PAN as Islamic parties with the assumption that they have a cultural relationship with Muslims as the main base of support (Mietzner, 2009).

Political parties can be classified based on different standards, ideologies, political party goals, and the historical facts behind the birth of a party. Scholars have different views in categorizing political parties in Indonesia. Anies Baswedan categorizes political parties into four categories: nationalist-secular (PDIP), Islam-friendly (Golkar), Islam-inclusive (PKB and PAN), and Islamist, represented by the three parties PPP, PKS and PBB (Rasyid Baswedan, 2004). Mietzner, as one of the most dedicated scholars in Indonesian politics, more explicitly categorizes political parties into two binary spectrums: secular and Islamic. PDIP is included in the secular spectrum, while PPP and PKS are included in the Islamic spectrum. Between the two spectrums, there are two parties, namely PKB and PAN, which are referred to as the middle spectrum (Mietzner, 2013). Meanwhile, Ridho Al Hamdi is divided into three major groups: nationalist-secular, nationalist-Muslim, and nationalist-Islamist. In Al Hamdi's view, all Indonesian political parties fall into the nationalist category as the main characteristic. At the same time, the distinguishing element is the tendency of party identity that tends

to be secular, such as PDIP, or Muslim nationalists, such as PKB and PAN, and Islamist nationalists, such as PPP and PKS (Ridho Al-Hamdi, 2022).

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method through a literature study approach by searching for data spread across various media channels (Klarer, 2023). The search was conducted to find reinforcing data proving Islamic political parties' prospects in Indonesia. Data were collected from various primary sources from official Indonesian government portals such as kpu.go.id and corroborated with secondary data from various online media channels from detik.com, kompas.com, and cnbc.com. The selection of this approach aims to explore in-depth official documents, statistical data, scientific articles, and media reports to identify factors that shape the prospects of Islamic political parties. This approach is supported by an operational framework of initial post-2024 election observations, secondary data collection, data triangulation, and thematic analysis based on issues arising from party dynamics.

Data collection was conducted after an initial study on social realities related to the 2024 election results, combined with direct observation in the field. Operationally, this research involved several main stages: first, conducting initial observations in the field to obtain a contextual picture of the post-2024 elections as a guide to data collection; second, collecting primary and secondary data as described above; third, triangulating data by combining initial observation findings with literature data, so that the data obtained is cross-validated; and fourth, conducting descriptive-qualitative data analysis. This analysis stage includes the process of data reduction (removing irrelevant data), systematic presentation of data, and comparison of research findings with other research results to strengthen arguments and conclusions.

Data triangulation was carried out by combining the initial findings of observation compiled with literature data to obtain valid and accurate data. Data presentation was carried out with the initial process of data reduction, sorting irrelevant data, and finally conducting an analytical study with comparisons to other studies.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesian Islamic political parties face political challenges that test their existence. Since the era of open democracy marked by the 1998 reform movement, many Islamic political parties have been initiated to accommodate their respective ideologies and interests. Islamic political parties dominated democratic politics in the first post-reform elections by placing 6 (six) political parties in the top ten party votes. The votes of Islamic parties are still below the two nationalist parties, PDIP and Golkar, which have existed since the New Order era. The votes of the two nationalist parties are still very dominant, with 283 parliamentary seats compared to 167 parliamentary seats. The shift in the democratic system with the parliamentary threshold policy provides a threshold of votes as a requirement to get seats in Parliament. In the 2024 elections, Islamic political parties only left three contestants who qualified to enter parliament: PKB, PKS, and PAN. All three passed after passing the parliamentary threshold of at least 4% of the party's valid votes. The PPP, which had become a major party during the New Order era and was the third-largest party in the 1999 elections, had to be thrown out of the contest because it only received 3.87% of the votes.

Table 1. Vote Acquisition in the 1999 General Election

Election 1999			
No.	Party	Sound	Chair
1	PDIP	35.689.073	154
2	Golkar	23.741.749	120
3	PPP	11.329.905	59
4	ESC	13.336.982	51
5	PAN	7.528.956	35
6	UN	2.049.708	13
7	Justice Party	1.436.565	6
8	PKP	1.065.686	6
9	PNU	679.179	3
10	PDKB	550.846	3

(Source: kpu.go.id, 2024)

3.1 Muslim Population and Political Power

   a. Muslim Population in Indonesia

The future of Islamic political parties in the contestation of Indonesian democracy will remain prospective if seen from the demographic strength of Indonesia's majority Muslim population. Based on data released by data Indonesia.id, the total population of Indonesia until the end of 2022 was 277.75 million people, with a Muslim population of 241.7 million people or equivalent to 87% of the total population (Monavia Ayu Rizaty, 2023). The Muslim population is a very potential niche market if Islamic political parties can optimize it. However, the votes of Muslims are still scattered in all parties and even dominant in nationalist parties. Of course, it is a challenge for Islamic political parties to know and understand the desires and political behavior of the people so that they will anchor their votes.

Demographic and population issues are not always linear with political preferences, but this potential will likely be optimized by carrying out political strategies to shift political preferences. The preference for political choice does not only rely on population, but there are also factors of work programs, personalities, and ideological similarities, and the population provides a greater opportunity to be optimized. Judging from the number of Permanent Voters List (DPT) officially released by the KPU in its channel, the number of voters in the 2024 Election is 204.8 million (kpu.go.id, 2023). Using the same assumption as the population of Indonesian Muslims, the number of permanent voters in the 2024 election is 87% of the DPT, which is 178.1 million votes.

Figure 1: Total population of Indonesia by religion
Source: (dataindonesia.id, 2022)

DataIndonesia.id
Jumlah Penduduk Indonesia Menurut Agama
(2022)

Sumber: Kementerian Dalam Negeri

Votes from Java Island dominated the votes, with a portion of around 56%. If summed up with votes from Sumatra's permanent voters, it obtained around 158.4 million votes, equivalent to 77.3% of the votes from a majority Muslim population. This 158.4 million figure is obtained from the sum of the number of permanent voters in Java (±115.37 million) and in Sumatra (±43.03 million) (KPU, 2023). This figure includes all voters (not just Muslim voters) on both islands. However, since the majority of the population of Java and Sumatra are Muslim, this figure indirectly represents the most significant portion of Muslim voters in Indonesia. The uneven distribution of voters on each island and the existence of Islamic-majority mass pockets in Java and Sumatra are prospective reasons for Islamic political parties to be able to compete with nationalist parties if they can optimize this potential. For Islamic parties, the concentration of voters in Muslim-majority areas can be an advantage because it makes it easier to focus campaign strategies on these bases. Voters in Muslim-majority enclaves tend to have relatively strong ideological loyalties, and the presence of local ulama or influential religious figures can be optimized to mobilize support for Islamic parties. Voters in such areas often support parties aligning with their religious aspirations. Thus, if Islamic political parties can offer programs and figures that resonate with Islamic values, they can win significant votes in these Muslim majority pockets.

So far, no issue or interest can unite the Ummah by summarizing a common agenda. Islamic political parties are still trapped in partial interests in the name of ideology, the locus of the da'wah movement, and so on, which divide the unity of the Ummah and bring antipathy to some Muslims. Partial interests are reflected in the inability of Islamic political parties to mobilize unity to fight for shared values and interests in the name of religion over political and group interests

As a concrete example of fragmentation, after the 1998 reformation, the political voice of the Ummah was split into many new Islamic political parties. In the 1999 elections, at least five Islamic parties (PPP, PKB, PAN, PBB, and the Justice Party) emerged and shared the niche votes that had previously been relatively centered on the PPP in the New Order era. The emergence of the NU-affiliated PKB, for example, split the PPP's traditional base; modernist Islamists also divided their support between the PAN and other parties. There is no single dominant Islamic party that can represent the entire spectrum of the Ummah, so this kind of fragmentation weakens the bargaining position of Islamic parties as a whole.

Table 2. DPT votes for Java and Sumatra Islands

	Java Island			Sumatra Island	
No.	Province	Sound	No.	Province	Sound
1	West Java	35.714.901	1	North Sumatra	10.853.940
2	East Java	31.402.838	2	Lampung	6.539.138
3	Central Java	28.289.413	3	South Sumatra	6.326.348
4	Banten	8.842.646	4	Riau	4.732.174
5	DKI Jakarta	8.252.897	5	West Sumatra	4.088.606
6	DI Yogyakarta	2.870.974	6	Aceh	3.749.037
			7	Jambi	2.676.107
			8	Riau Islands	1.500.974
			9	Bengkulu	1.494.828
			10	Kep. Bangka Belitung	1.067.434
	Total	115.373.669		Total	43.028.586

Source: (kpu.go.id, 2024)

b. Muslim Support and Political Power

The mapping of public support for political parties is reflected in the 2024 election contestation. The overall vote share of Islamic political parties that passed the parliamentary threshold reached 26.7%. If the PPP vote is considered, the overall vote is 30.34%. This data shows that using religious attributes and political issues that intersect with upholding religious values is still very potential. The Prosperous Justice Party, which is often defined as a cadre party because it has a regeneration system based on "religious studies," proves that the approach to religious issues in politics can guarantee the support of the people, especially those with the same or close ideological basis.

It must be admitted that Islamic political parties' most extensive support is still dominated by ideological closeness and a political culture built on closeness to mass organizations or da'wah movements. The three Islamic political parties passing the parliamentary threshold can be identified with Indonesia's three most popular da'wah movements today. PKB gets support from the grassroots voice of NU by making Kyai and pesantren a political commodity and electoral machine. PAN has historical and emotional ties with Muhammadiyah, although these ties have changed in the last decade.

Meanwhile, PKS until now still relies on its political strength in a progressive da'wah movement that targets many campus activists and young people with the "halaqah" or "liquor" Islamic study system. This tarbiyah movement base has become PKS's ideological identity (Park, 2021; Miichi, 2023). Various surveys show that voters' attachment to these Islamic organizations impacts party preferences, although it is not entirely exclusive. Surveys by LSI and SMRC, for example, have found that while the majority of NU members tend to vote for PKB, a significant portion of the rest vote for different parties; conversely, only a small proportion of Muhammadiyah members vote for PAN, while the rest are spread across other parties. Such findings indicate that the influence of Islamic organizations on people's political choices is still

strong but not singular because voters still consider other factors besides the organization's affiliation (Romli, 2020).

Figure 2. 2024 Election Vote Acquisition
(source: detik.com)

The relationship between the da'wah movement and political parties is key to the existence of both, as explained in Islamic political theory. Roy (1994) argues that modern political Islam often makes political institutions an extension of the da'wah movement to accumulate power. Hefner (2000), in his study in Indonesia, explained that the reciprocal relationship between parties and da'wah networks serves as a moral mobilization and a means of institutionalizing Islamic political power. Thus, the sustainability of religion-based parties is highly dependent on the success of maintaining the da'wah ecosystem, which is a source of legitimacy and a base of public support.

. As long as the ongoing relationship can be maintained in a dialectical system foundation, not dichotomous and mutualism, the position of both will maintain each other. The political party will position itself as a channel for the interests of the da'wah movement as the spearhead of voicing its ideological interests. In contrast, the da'wah movement positions itself as a support system by ensuring public support in the five-year democratic event. This pattern of relationship has been proven to give birth to the existence of Islamic political parties within two decades since the reform era. This condition cannot be found in the United Development Party (PPP), whose votes are consistently eroded because it no longer has the main base of the da'wah movement. During the New Order era, PPP represented the NU and Masyumi da'wah movements and other Islamic da'wah movements that began to experience political turbulence since NU initiated the birth of the PKB. PPP's relationship with NU is no longer like the New Order era because many politicians, Kyai and Pesantren, have shifted their support to the PCB. Maimun Zubair was one of the significant figures who remained in the PPP and did not shift to the PKB in the early days of the New Order.
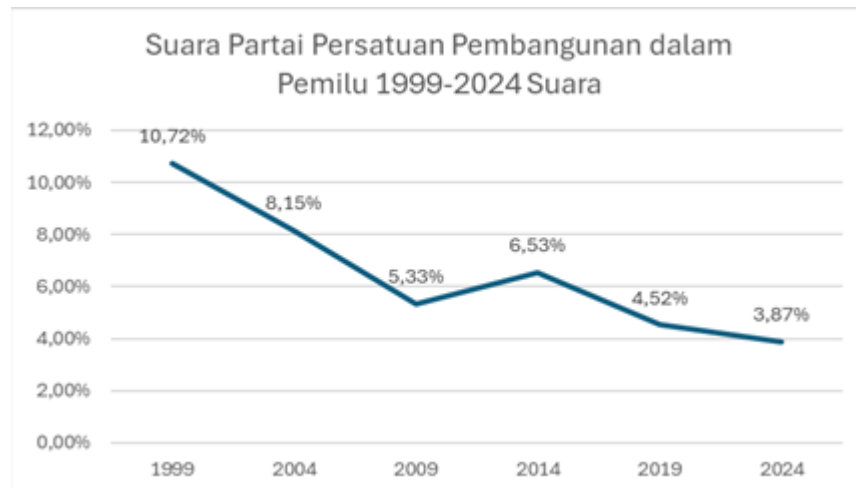
The votes of the United Development Party in the 1999-2024 elections

3.2 Professionalism of Islamic Political Party Management

a. Professionalism in Party Management

The professionalism of party management is the second factor that makes the future of Islamic political parties remain prospective in the Indonesian democratic scene. For example, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) has maintained electoral stability in the last four elections, although several other Islamic parties have experienced a sharp decline. The study by Haris et al. (2020) shows that PKS's success is supported by a structured organizational system, tiered regeneration, and relatively orderly internal conflict management. Meanwhile, PPP experienced a significant decline in electability due to leadership conflicts and weak strengthening of regeneration (Romli, 2020). This shows that party management's professionalism contributes significantly to Islamic parties' durability and adaptability amid democratic competition.

The professionalism of party management is reflected in the existence of clearly written and open Articles of Association and bylaws (AD/ART). It is supported by a party culture that obeys and complies with these rules. Professional management of political parties is also shown by the leadership rotation process that runs transparently, systemically, and in a safe democratic space. In a party structure such as PKS, leadership rotation is carried out through the Shura Assembly and Regional Deliberation, where elected members from the lower levels propose and select candidates in stages (representative system). In some cases, such as in the election of DPD or DPC Chairmen, cadres are directly elected by branch members in branch deliberations. This system strengthens internal legitimacy and promotes leadership transparency. The political processes are not only limited to the position of the party elite but are carried out in stages at the regional, branch, and even branch levels. The transparency of leadership rotation and the implementation of the bylaws are reflected in tiered work meetings at every management level.

Failure to manage the party professionally and openly will lead to a "trust issue" that can potentially bring the party into electoral freefall. Friction of interests between individuals and groups is the most dominant factor in the power struggle. One of the consistent Islamic parties that does not cause much political uproar in the leadership transition is PKS. The leadership shift can be carried out democratically and with minimal conflict in almost two decades. However, this does not mean there is no struggle for power because it is proven that the Gelora party has emerged, a group of

politicians excluded from PKS. Similarly, frictions that emerged in PKB, PAN, and PPP in the leadership transition threatened the party's electoral position. PKB's electoral graph experienced its worst phase in the 2009 elections after the split between the leadership of Gus Dur and Muhaimin Iskandar. Therefore, the professionalism of political party management is one of the keys to the party being able to continue to compete in the contestation of democracy.

Islamic Political Party Votes in General Elections from 1999-2024

The data above shows that PKS is the party with the most stable vote acquisition from time to time. PKS electoral stability is supported by stability in party management, as shown by the lack of conflict during the transition of power. Interestingly, the internal conflict between the Anis Matta and Fahri Hamzah camps versus the Shohibul Iman camp at PKS did not cause a drastic decrease in PKS electability. This differs from the PKB case when the conflict between Gus Dur and Muhaimin caused PKB votes to drop sharply in the 2009 elections. The study by Haris et al. (2020) shows that ideological consistency and strong cadre loyalty in PKS's tarbiyah network can reduce the impact of divisions. Meanwhile, the conflict in PKB caused constituent disorientation due to the more fluid and pragmatic NU mass base.

This is in contrast to other Islamic political parties that experience electoral dynamics due to the problem of power transition not going well, leaving room for conflict and constituent disappointment. PPP's votes have consistently decreased, even to the point of not passing the parliamentary threshold, because there has always been a conflict over the chairman in the last decade. In addition to the above factors, the professionalism of political party management is shown by the existence of performance evaluations that are carried out systematically, periodically, and continuously so that the achievements of political work can be continuously improved. These work processes have been contained in the party rules compiled in the AD/ART. The sharpest political dynamics are shown by PKB, which was dominant at the beginning of the reformation but experienced a downturn due to internal conflicts. It found its performance again in the last two Indonesian election periods.

b. Professionalism of Cadre

The prospects of Indonesian Islamic political parties will be maintained when they can carry out the regeneration process properly. Professionalism in the cadre system is a serious challenge. The cultural tendency of Islamic political parties based on the ideology of the da'wah movement and the historical closeness to mass organizations makes the regeneration process have many entrances. The ideal regeneration process will be carried out with a tiered system tailored to capacity and ability. Cadres with sufficient initial competence do not have to start from the lowest structural positions. However, they should not enter the top-level structure without a systemic process because they have an identity or financial strength. This system will damage the regeneration process in the long run.
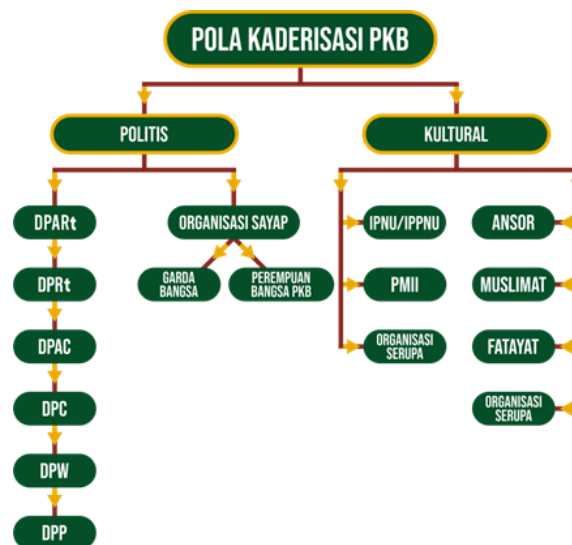

Figure 5: ESC Cadre Pattern

The professionalism of Islamic political party regeneration can be seen from the rules that apply in the AD / ART which systemically regulates the career path of cadres from the grassroots level to the national elite cadre or DPP. Based on the PKS Articles of Association Chapter IV Article 15 Paragraph (2), it is stated that "Every member has the same right to participate in regeneration activities and take the structural level of the organization in accordance with their capacity, contribution, and organizational provisions". This provision shows that political careers in the party are opened meritocratically and progressively.

Cadres with certain qualifications can compete for the position of Chairman of the DPC or DPC if they meet the requirements and are democratically elected in deliberations at the regional or branch level. The career acceleration system in Islamic political parties can also be seen from various cases of young cadres who climbed strategic positions after pursuing careers from affiliated organizations. For example, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar (PKB) departed from PMII and later became Chairman of the DPP PKB. A study by Mayrudin et al. (2021) notes that affiliation with Islamic student organizations such as PMII and HMI provides an effective informal political recruitment channel for party regeneration.

In practice, internal party deliberations are carried out through the stages of Branch Deliberations (Muscab), Regional Deliberations (Muswil), and National Deliberations (Munas). Candidates for chairman or administrator are usually proposed by branch administrators, verified

by a committee, and then elected by voting or acclamation in an official forum. This mechanism allows for democratic cadre participation, while maintaining ideological continuity.

Professionalism in cadre selection and positioning should be based on quality and competence. In a comprehensive care system-based regeneration system, the quality of cadres is measured in five main elements, namely competence, skill (capability), integrity, loyalty and transparency. These five elements will be directly related to the professionalism of the regeneration system, quality leadership and directly correlated with the process of political party development. Islamic political parties that use this system approach in their regeneration process have the potential to survive in the contestation of democracy. The current situation experienced by PPP is evidence that the regeneration system is not working well. The party is unable to reach the millennial generation as holders of the baton of political party struggle. The party only leaves old generation cadres whose numbers will shrink from time to time. Meanwhile, PAN has also experienced regeneration stagnation (in the range of 6.8%-7.2%) in the last three elections because it has used too many cadres who only rely on the popularity of artists.
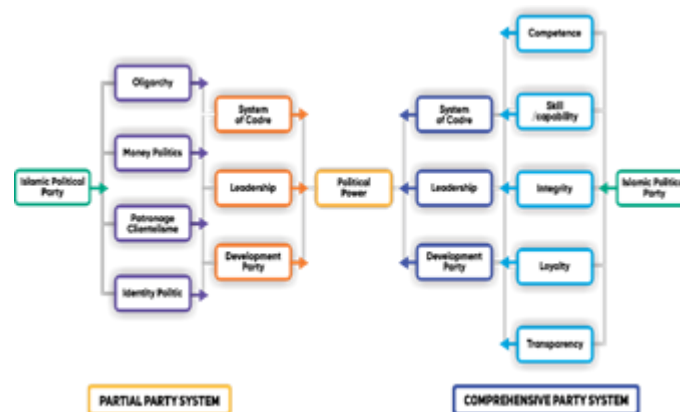

Figure 6. Political Party System

3.3 Ideological Militancy of Muslims and Political Da'wah Movements

The ideological militancy of Muslims and the political dakwah movement are the third factors that can maintain the future prospects of Islamic political parties in the contestation of Indonesian democracy. Islamic political parties still have a tough job to make themselves an icon of the struggle for the ummah. They have also failed to become the main reference as a political media in voicing the voices of Muslims. Data released by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) in August 2023 showed that NU citizens voted for the nationalist party PDIP with 21.9% of the vote, Gerindra with 13.6% of the vote and Golkar with 11.2% of the vote. Meanwhile, PKB, which has emotional and historic ties, only received 11.6% of the vote. This shows that the market niche of ideological-based constituents and the da'wah movement has not been optimized by Islamic political parties.
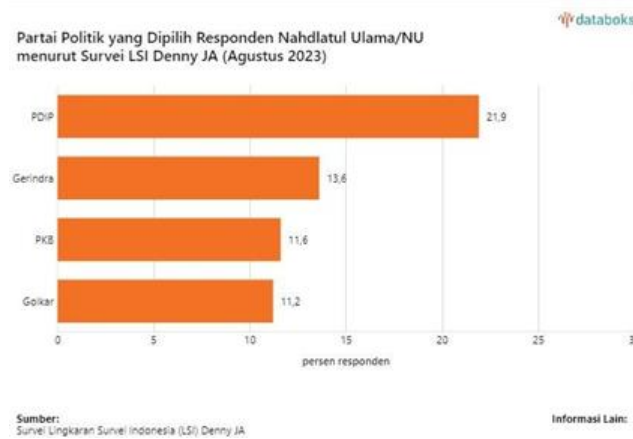
Figure 7. Political Preferences of the NU Faithful

Islamic political parties need to develop a long-term plan to co-opt the votes of the ummah in order to be released from the position of the middle party. So far, the position of Islamic political parties has not been able to enter the top party position with a considerable margin from nationalist parties. Long-term planning must be formulated holistically, involving all elements of political parties, mass organizations and organizations affiliated with political parties. Comprehensive and thorough political education is needed up to the grassroots level to foster *"political enthusiasm"* and the urgency of channeling votes to Islamic political parties. In addition, political parties must continue to make improvements in public services by increasing integrity to gain the trust of the people. Public services can be done by political parties by optimizing the work at the lowest structural level that directly faces the public. Administrators at the village and sub-district levels can be given a larger work budget to carry out public services.

Political preferences can be managed and directed with a variety of logical approaches. Muslims as political constituents have several reasons for choosing political parties. Based on a survey conducted by Litbang Kompas in February 2023, it shows that the reason for choosing a political party is dominated by the presence of influential figures at 35.9%. then the party's work program became the second preference with 14% of the votes, the party's vision and mission 12.2% and party ideology only contributed 9.9% (Ramadhan, 2023). If Islamic political parties only rely on votes from ideological closeness factors, they will never become the winning party in the contestation of democracy in Indonesia. The open political system with direct elections is an era of "people seeking power" so that the selection of political figures must be well managed and involve party work. This means that the figures carried by political parties must be prepared in a long-term, planned and polished manner so that they have strong personal branding in influencing public perception.
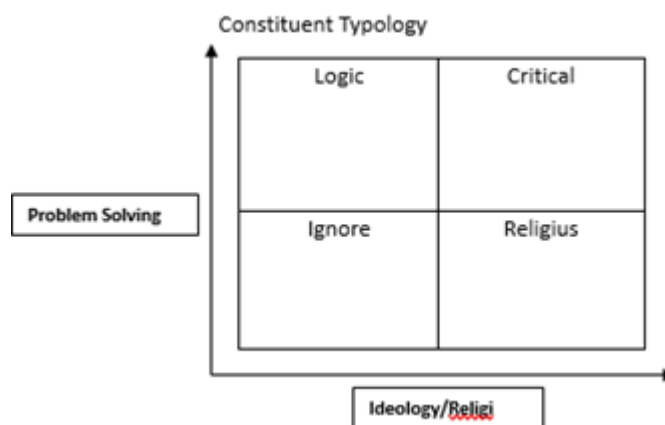
Figure 8. Voter Typology

The future of Islamic political parties will remain prospective and competitive in Indonesia's democratic climate if they are able to optimize the three factors above. At the macro level, it can be seen that the Indonesian Muslim population provides a huge opportunity to be explored into constituent votes. Parties need to re-evaluate why most Muslims do not vote but instead vote for nationalist parties. parties need to make evaluations and create a typology of voters so that they can be approached with appropriate issues. At the meso level, Islamic political parties need to reform party management with reference to organizational professionalism. Structuring is carried out thoroughly in all fields so that the party will become a capable and trusted institution. At the micro level, political parties need to foster and maintain the "ideological spirit" with cultural da'wah movements, ceremonial activities and attach party interests to religious activities.

In the theoretical framework, the sustainability approach of Islamic political parties can be explained through macro, meso, and micro typologies as developed in party studies by Sartori (1976) and enriched by Fealy & Bush (2014). At the macro level, Islamic parties are supported by the social structure and demographics of the Muslim majority. At the meso level, sustainability is determined by internal party management, regeneration, and institutional strengthening. Meanwhile, at the micro level, ideological affiliation and personal relations between cadres and constituents are important elements. This three-level approach helps explain why Islamic parties such as PKS are able to survive while other parties such as PBB and PPP are degraded.

4. DISCUSSION

The future prospects of Islamic political parties in the contestation of democracy in Indonesia still have great potential. This existence is supported by several factors, namely the population and political power of Muslims. Political parties affiliated with Islamic mass organizations have greater potential to compete if they are able to co-opt the votes of the ummah. This power is reflected in the size of the party's votes when accumulated. The second factor is the development of professionalism in the management of Islamic political parties in the last decade. They are able to break away from the traditional system and transform into modern ones. There are some special notes, for example the PPP party which failed to penetrate the parliament in the 2024 elections because it failed in the transformation process. The third factor is the militancy of the Muslim movement and the political da'wah movement. political issues are not just interpreted as a mere contestation for power but for Islamic political parties it is much more serious because it is related to political da'wah (siyasah da'wah). Islamic political parties will be able to make a major contribution and even have the

opportunity to gain power if they are able to optimize the three factors above. Although currently these three factors are actually the weak points that must be overcome by Islamic political parties. Islamic political parties in the two decades after the reformation are still struggling with internal conflicts that have the potential to cause public antipathy.

The contestation of Islamic political parties in Indonesian democracy is still a secondary player amid the hegemony of nationalist parties (Barton et al., 2021; Bourchier, 2019; Warburton, 2020). The shift in power from one nationalist party to another has not been able to provide space for the victory of Islamic political parties as obtained in the early reformation period by delivering Gus Dur to become President defeating Megawati (Rosyadi, 2020). After this victory, there was stagnation and even a decrease in the votes of Islamic political parties. This condition was greatly influenced by the shift in political paradigms and the existence of money politics or transactional politics which increasingly showed its strength. In other positions, Islamic political parties have shown a correction to their closeness to Islamic mass organizations that have already existed. PAN and PKB as a representation of the interests of Muhammadiyah and NU at the beginning of their establishment showed a position further away from the two mass organizations (Herdiansah et al., 2019; Mayrudin et al., 2021). The shift in political culture at the constituent level and the political expansion of nationalist parties that repressively manage Muslims have contributed to the decline in the votes of Islamic political parties. Nationalist parties have created many religious-based political wings to gain constituent votes. PDIP has the political wing Baitul Muslimin Indonesia (Bamusi) as a forum for Muslims.

Transactional politics that are rife in Indonesia's electoral democracy pose a serious challenge to Islamic parties. Studies on clientelism show that the practice of exchanging votes for short-term rewards (money, positions, projects) tends to be more effectively used by nationalist parties that are not burdened by moral ideology. According to Mietzner (2013), Islamic parties that are trapped in the practice of clientelism will face a dilemma between maintaining political morality and surviving in the competition for power. PPP's failure to reject money politics and elite conflicts is an example of the negative impact of clientelism on Islamic parties.

The future prospects of Islamic political parties in Indonesia are seriously challenged and many have even written that they have failed as political parties (S. Haris, 2021; Romli, 2020). Armed with data in every election contestation, Islamic political parties show different results. They have not been able to seize power by becoming winners because one of the factors is the similarity of platforms between one Islamic political party and another (Fernando et al., 2023; Hefner, 2019). Parties must be able to show differentiation beyond the position of affiliation to the religious organizations behind them. So far, the victory of nationalist parties is partly due to the shift of voters from Muslims who tend to see that their expectations of government and power can be implemented by nationalist parties. In this position, Islamic political parties must be able to convince the people that they are able to improve and become a forum that can meet the expectations of the people from various backgrounds of interests.

The stagnation experienced by Islamic political parties after the euphoria of reform indicates that there are obstacles in the structuring and management of the party. The shift in constituent votes cannot be interpreted simply as a shift in votes but must find logical reasons why constituents are disappointed and shift their votes. Party elites should evaluate the overall performance of the party from the transparency process, regeneration to practical policies when involved in government. The decline in PPP votes was allegedly due to the failure of regeneration in the younger generation and

not being able to provide attractive innovations for generation Z (Saputro et al., 2023). The stagnation of PKS votes in the last four elections is allegedly the result of exclusive political practices so that it is unable to build good communication with constituents outside PKS da'wah cadres (M. Haris et al., 2020). PKB is the party with the most dynamic Islamic culture in terms of vote acquisition and innovative in presenting programs to gen-Z (Lane, 2024).

The future prospects of Islamic political parties in Indonesia are determined by the ability of party elites to read opportunities and revolutionize party management. The reading of opportunities and challenges that become a reference in determining policies must be carried out. Optimizing every opportunity such as demographic advantages in the form of the majority of the Muslim population must be able to be integrated into the overall party policy. Closeness is not only built on the basis of emotional and cultural approaches based on da'wah ideology, but it is necessary to consider critical and educated constituents who place problem solving skills as a reference for making choices. The most crucial factor that must be done is to innovate in the regeneration system that is able to provide space for contestation for young cadres in preparation for the relay of the party's struggle.

5. CONCLUSION

Islamic political parties in Indonesia still have bright prospects in the contestation of democracy as long as they can optimize three main pillars: the large demographics of Muslims, the professionalism of party management, and the strength of da'wah-based ideological networks. All three must be managed synergistically using macro, meso, and micro approaches formulated in party theory by Sartori (1976) and developed by Fealy and Bush (2014) in the context of Islamic parties. At the macro level, Islamic parties need to formulate long-term strategies to consolidate the votes of Muslim voters who are currently scattered in various nationalist parties. This includes political education, strengthening religious identity values, and responding to public expectations. At the meso level, organizational professionalization is key to party sustainability: regeneration, open leadership systems, and structured performance evaluation are essential indicators of institutional durability. At the micro level, cadres' relationships with the constituent base and ideological militancy must be maintained because grassroots trust is an irreplaceable electoral capital.

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain. The widespread practice of transactional politics (clientelism) in modern electoral democracy can weaken the integrity of religious value-based parties, as noted by Mietzner (2013). Therefore, Islamic political parties must consistently reject money politics and build positive differentiation through cadre quality, character integrity, and program relevance. Realistically, Islamic parties may find it difficult to win elections singly due to internal fragmentation and competition on Islamic platforms. However, accumulatively, coalitions between Islamic parties still have an excellent opportunity to form an alternative axis in government. Thus, the future of Islamic political parties is highly dependent on their ability to improve internally, build public trust, and make strategic maneuvers in accordance with contemporary political dynamics.

This study has several limitations that need to be noted. First, the approach used in this study is a literature study and secondary data analysis, so it does not include direct empirical findings from interviews or field surveys of voters, party cadres, or religious figures. This limits the depth of understanding of Islamic parties' subjective motivations and internal dynamics in more detail. Second, this study focuses on Indonesia's national political context post-2024 elections, so it does not

accommodate variations in the dynamics of Islamic political parties at the local or regional level, which also influence the national political configuration. Third, the fragmentation of Islamic political parties and the relationship between religious organizations and political parties are discussed conceptually and historically but have not been studied through a quantitative framework or political network modeling.

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