The Role of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) to the Development of a *Madani* Society in the Democratic Landscape of Indonesia

Peran Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) terhadap Perkembangan Masyarakat Madani dalam Lanskap Demokrasi Indonesia

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Abstrak: *Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) dibentuk tahun 1975 dengan tujuan sebagai perangkat pendukung kebijakan negara dalam urusan keagamaan umat Islam. Dalam perjalanannya, fatwa MUI tidak lepas dari dinamika pro dan kontra. Lebih dari itu, kedudukan MUI juga sering kali dipersoalkan pihak-pihak tertentu yang menentang keberadaannya terkait relevansinya dengan demokrasi. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran dan kedudukan MUI sebagai unsur kokoh dari masyarakat madani dalam dinamika politik demokrasi di Indonesia. Rumusan penelitian yang disusun dalam kajian ini adalah bagaimana peran Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) terhadap perkembangan masyarakat madani dalam lanskap demokrasi Indonesia. Untuk menjawab rumusan tersebut, kajian ini menggunakan konsep masyarakat madani dan teori fungsionalisme struktural. Kajian ini dianalisis menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian eksplanatif. Teknik yang digunakan untuk menganalisis data dan dokumen yang dihimpun adalah studi kepustakaan (library research). Hasilnya, penelitian ini melihat bahwa eksistensi MUI sebagai pilar masyarakat madani dalam sistem demokrasi Pancasila cukup kuat. Selain itu, kehadiran MUI juga melengkapi fungsi struktur dan eksistensi lembaga dan perangkat negara lainnya, seperti Kementerian Agama, DPR RI, dan ormas-ormas Islam. Karena itu, dukungan politik dari Komisi VIII DPR RI sebagai mitra legislatif menjadi keharusan agar MUI tetap tegak sebagai instrumen masyarakat madani.*

Kata Kunci: *demokrasi; fungsionalisme struktural; Majelis Ulama Indonesia; masyarakat madani; MUI*

Abstract: The Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) was formed in 1975 to support state policy in Muslim religious affairs. In its journey, MUI's fatwa cannot be separated from the dynamics of pros and cons. Moreover, the position of MUI is

often questioned by certain parties who oppose its existence related to democracy. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the position and role of MUI as a solid element of *madani* society in the dynamics of Indonesian democracy. The research formulation in this study is how extensive the role of MUI is in the democratic landscape of Indonesia, contributing not only to the reinforcement of Pancasila's democracy but also to the development of a *madani* society. To answer the formulation, this study uses the concept of *madani* society and the structural functionalism theory. This study is analyzed using a qualitative method with an explanatory research type. The technique used to analyze the data and documents collected is library research. As a result, this study sees that the existence of MUI as a pillar of *madani* society in the democracy of the Pancasila system is quite strong. In addition, the presence of MUI also complements the function of structure and existence of other institutions and devices, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the House of Representatives, and Islamic organizations. Therefore, political support from Commission VIII of the Indonesian House of Representatives as a legislative partner is a must for MUI to remain upright as an instrument of *madani* society.

Keywords: democracy; Indonesian Ulama Council; *madani* society; MUI; structural functionalism

Introduction

Within the intricate landscape of Indonesia, the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI-Indonesian Ulama Council) operates as a pivotal institution, consistently navigating through the challenges of criticism and public scrutiny, both from governmental entities and within the Muslim community itself. This religious council is no stranger to robust disagreements and critiques regarding its views and fatwas. Operating within a dual role, MUI is a supportive apparatus for the government, aiming to contribute to social stability by formulating policies. Simultaneously, it bears the weighty responsibility of being the foremost Islamic fatwa body, convening representatives from diverse Islamic organizations.

MUI's multifaceted duties encompass preserving the integrity of Islamic laws, safeguarding the interests of the *ummah* (Muslim community), and bridging the gap between the aspirations of the Muslim populace and government agendas. In this intricate balance, MUI offers opinions and fatwas that address the nuanced and evolving modernization developments impacting Muslims in Indonesia (Fauzi, 2017).

A part of the Muslim community sometimes views MUI's fatwas as controversial matters, even to the point of voicing the dissolution of the Islamic organization. For this group, MUI is seen as incompatible with the values of pluralism, tolerance, and democracy of Pancasila. Controversies have persisted since MUI's inception, notably seen in the fatwa prohibiting the use of "Merry Christmas" during Buya Hamka's leadership in 1975. This fatwa triggered widespread debate among the public, compelling the New Order government to pressure MUI for its revocation. Despite the government's pressure, Buya Hamka staunchly refused to rescind the fatwa, opting to resign as MUI's chairman (Fauzi, 2017).

Consequently, MUI has been accused of disregarding Indonesia's principles of freedom and pluralism (Arifin, 2014). Until today, the MUI has not revoked the fatwa prohibiting Christmas greetings. The views of Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU are also in line with the views of the MUI. Although the law mentions the Merry Christmas Greeting in the Islamic world, there are differences among

ulama, such as the difference in views of Egypt's Darul Ifta in Egypt with the Ulama Council of Saudi Arabia.

Besides the contentious Christmas fatwa, several other MUI pronouncements have sparked considerable public debate. These include fatwas addressing infotainment, the Social Security Organizing Agency (BPJS), Basuki Tjahaja Purnama's remarks on Surat al-Maidah verse 51, smoking bans, electoral neutrality (golput), SMS competitions, yoga gymnastics, the use of religious symbols, and even the determination of the qibla (Mukhtar, 2019). Among these, MUI's pivotal fatwa concerning blasphemy tied to Basuki Tjahaja Purnama's discourse on Surat al-Maidah verse 51 notably influenced the socio-political fabric of national life. Criticism was directed at this fatwa for what some perceived as an excessive entanglement in political affairs, raising concerns about its crossing into the realm of politics.

Meanwhile, Muslim groups that had backed MUI's actions concerning the fatwa formed the MUI National Fatwa Guard Movement (GNPF). This movement successfully mobilized millions of Muslims across various regions to pressure the government for law enforcement against the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. The apex of this movement, known as the 212 movement or Aksi Bela Islam, took place on December 12, 2016 (Burhani, 2016), when millions of Muslims congregated at Silang Monas Jakarta (Fazeri, 2017). Consequently, these events led to accusations of MUI's involvement in politics due to the fatwa on blasphemy, which had significantly polarized society.

The dynamics that occur in MUI continue. In 2021, one of the MUI members, who is also an administrator of the MUI Fatwa Commission, Ahmad Zain an-Najah, was arrested by Detachment 88 of the National Police in a case of alleged involvement in terrorism networks. The arrest certainly slapped the good image of the MUI as a forum for gathering scholars from various Islamic organizations in society. Moreover, the MUI has issued fatwas about haram and the dangers of terrorism. Opposing groups used this situation to voice the dissolution of the MUI (Fadhila, 2021).

However, individuals and groups who defend the MUI quantitatively are also large. This group sees that MUI is an integrative representation of Muslims, as well as the presence of the Indonesian Church Association (PGI) for Christians, Indonesian Buddhist Representatives (WALUBI), Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), or the Indonesian Khonghucu Religious Council (MATAKIN). Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs (Menko Polhukam) Mahfud MD believes MUI needs to be stronger to disband. According to Mahfud, the robustness of MUI is evident from its existence in the prevailing system of laws and regulations in Indonesia. So, the government cannot simply accommodate the thoughts of a few people who want to dissolve the MUI (Permana, 2021). Likewise, Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs Zainut Tauhid Sa'adi also emphasized that the demands of a group of people who want to dissolve the MUI are excessive. The involvement of one MUI administrator in activities prohibited by the government encourages awareness that terrorism can enter anywhere, not limited to the MUI. Moreover, the accusation is also very tendentious because the MUI had previously stipulated Fatwa No. 3/2004 about Terrorism. In the fatwa, MUI states that terrorism is an act of crime against humanity and civilization that poses a serious threat to state sovereignty, and the law is haram (Permana, 2021).

From the above background, the research question in this study is how extensive is the role of MUI in the democratic landscape of Indonesia, contributing not only to the reinforcement of Pancasila's democracy but also to the development of a *madani* society? This study employs a qualitative approach with an explanatory research

design to address this inquiry. Researchers, serving as primary instruments, will gather, analyze, and interpret information and data sourced from documents (Creswell, 2009). To strengthen this study, researchers conducted methodological library data collection steps using Harzing's Publish or Perish program in data searching on the program. The researchers gave priority to literature that has been published in at least the last two decades by inputting the range 1999–2022 and explained several topics related to the main research focus, including the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) (Asad, 2022; Ichwan, 2013; Mahendra & Junaidi, 2023; Suhartono, 2018), *madani* society (Aceng, 2013; Rahardjo, 1999; Samsinas, 2006; Ubaidillah et al., 2000), and Indonesian Islamic politics (Effendy, 2011; Hasan, 2015). Researchers sort all data obtained from Publish or Perish based on research needs, and sorting is conducted based on a random review of titles and abstracts in the Mendeley Reference Manager program.

Generally, various studies on the MUI have been more related to the controversy over MUI's fatwas in specific issues and associated with its position in the democratic in Indonesia. So, often, the discourse about MUI boils down to big questions about the relevance of its existence in the democratic system. One of them is a journal entitled 'The Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) and Religious Freedom' written by Syafiq (Hasyim, 2011) and published by the Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC). Hasyim analyzes the relational comparison between MUI and the context of religious freedom in Indonesia before and after the reform in the article. According to Hasyim (2011), the level of religious freedom and pluralism in Indonesia has decreased in the reform era compared to the New Order era. Although MUI's fatwas related to religious freedom, as in the case of Ahmadiyya, have been issued since the 1980s. The establishment of MUI is not something special in the Indonesian context. Hasyim did not deny that the presence of MUI was related to the interests of the state at that time. Hasyim emphasized the change in orientation of the MUI that occurred after Soeharto's ouster from the New Order seat of power in 1998. As the highest fatwa institution in Indonesia, fatwas issued by MUI in the reform era are often considered not in line with the objectives of social order in a plural society.

Another article entitled "Bureaucratizing Fatwa in Indonesia: The Council of Indonesian Ulama and Its Quasi-Legislative Power," written by Alfitri, focuses on the existence of the Fatwa Commission as the sole authoritative institution within the MUI. This article emphasizes the influence of MUI's fatwas in the economic field on the institutionalization of Islamic economic law (Alfitri, 2020). Although MUI's fatwas do not monopolize the authority of fatwas in Indonesia, the fact that MUI's fatwas affect the legal system in Indonesia more than fatwas from other Islamic institutions such as Bahtsul Masail NU and Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

While this study does not emphasize specific MUI's fatwas, it emphasizes efforts to strengthen the institutions in the dynamics of democracy in Indonesia without denying the dialectic of controversy inherent in it. This study sees MUI as an essential instrument of *madani* society in Indonesia. The emphasis on the gap issue is the novelty of this study. The analysis uses the concept of *madani* society, while the approach uses the structural functionalism theory.

The second theory associates structures in society with biological organisms: Doyle Paul Johnson (1994), Kamanto Sunarto (1993), Soerjono Soekanto (2013), and Yesmil Anwar (2013). This theory asserts that the main foundation in the environment of society is mutualism. From this theoretical approach, the existence of MUI plays the function of strengthening society and complementing other state institutions as instruments of *madani* society in the democratic system (Rofii, 2019).

One of the pivotal reasons necessitating attention and fortification from the Indonesian House of Representatives is the frequent assaults on the existence of the MUI by groups invoking freedom and civil society, advocating for its dissolution. Hence, beyond bolstering the epistemological and ontological justifications for MUI's role in Indonesia's democracy, political endorsement from the Indonesian House of Representatives is imperative. Their support holds significant weight as the paramount legislative body representing societal and political power.

It is also important to note that many problems of Muslim life cannot be solved only through political mechanisms in the Indonesian House of Representatives but also require the involvement of ulama as parties who have cultural legitimacy ideologically. MUI fatwas, although not a legal hierarchy in Indonesia, are still needed by Muslims. However, there is a need to adjust the fatwa with the legal products that apply in Indonesia.

About MUI

The establishment of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) in 1975 received support from the New Order government, which aimed to be an organizational tool that supported policies related to the religious life of Muslims. Its origins trace back to President Soekarno's initiation of the Council of National Ulama in 1962 (Adam, 2004). President Soeharto furthered this trajectory by endorsing an Islamic conference from September 30 to October 4, 1970, led by Minister of Religious Affairs Mohammad Dahlan. This gathering culminated in vital recommendations for establishing a national ulama assembly (Hasyim, 2011). As an implementation of this recommendation, MUI was finally established on July 26, 1975 (Mudzhar, 1993). This institution was formed from the deliberations of ulama from various regions in the country. It represented central-level Islamic organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Syarikat Islam, PERTI, Al Washliyah, Mathla'ul Anwar, GUPPI, Indonesian Mosque Council, and Al Ittihadiyyah. MUI's membership included representatives from Islamic mass organizations, delegates from the Islamic Spiritual Service of the Army, Air Force, Navy, POLRI, and 13 distinguished Muslim scholars. The foundational agreement establishing the MUI is encapsulated within the "MUI Establishment Charter" (Mudzhar, 1993).

The process of MUI establishment must be distinct from the socio-political dynamics developed at that time. The unstable socio-political condition in Indonesia during the early New Order impacted Indonesia's rudimentary constitutional legislation. Therefore, concerning the MUI, the Constitution of 1945 and the MUI Establishment Charter became the only formal legal basis for the MUI establishment in 1975.

In the constitutional system in general, there are two forms of constitutional structure known in a country: infrastructure and superstructure. Constitutional infrastructure is a political structure that refers to spaces for community empowerment. In this sector, various community forces are usually categorized as civil society, such as political parties, interest groups, political figures, community organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The constitutional superstructure is a political structure of the government whose existence is formally regulated directly in the constitution. Government superstructure refers to state institutions that carry out state functions and inherently as part of state administration, such as the presidential institution, People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), The House of Representatives (DPR), Regional Representative Council (DPD), Supreme Court (MA), Constitutional Court (MK), Judicial Commission (KY), until to state institutions at the regional level (Mudzhar, 1993).

In this context, the position of MUI in Indonesia is more appropriate as a community organization. The government first issued laws and regulations governing community organizations in 1985, namely Act No. 8 of 1985 on Community Organizations. Then, the act was revised in 2013 to become Act No. 17 of 2013 and finally to Act No. 17 of 2017. The act binds the existence and position of MUI as a religious-based community organization, although the legal rules governing community organizations are issued several years after its establishment (Mahendra & Junaidi, 2023).

Madani Society

The term *madani* society is often interpreted with the same meaning as civil society in the Western paradigm. In the Eastern world, especially from an Islamic perspective, the term *madani* society is taken from the Madina community's historical events, which were marked with the Madina Charter (Rahardjo, 1999; Samsinas, 2006). In the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), the word '*madani*' means 'related to civil rights,' relating to 'cities'; 'upholding values, norms, laws supported by mastery of civilizational faith, science, and technology' (KBBI, 2022).

The word '*madani*' is an adjective form of 'Madina,' where the absorption of the word with its meaning refers to the context of the city of Madina, which Prophet Muhammad built replacing the previous name Yathrib. In Arabic, Madina means 'city.' 'Madina' denotes the more advanced condition of society as the antithesis of Yathrib. ' Yathrib' means 'sin and guilt' (Aceng, 2013; Era Muslim, 2018). Yathrib, before Madina, was a village far from high social values and uncivilized. The norms prevailing in Yathrib society are very backward (Umari, 1999). Prophet Muhammad later reformed this backwardness into advances pervaded with better norms and values, called Madina (Aceng, 2013; Era Muslim, 2018). Muslim scholar from Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, calls it the concept of the Divine City, the City of Civilization, or the people of a city that advanced civilizations have touched. Anwar defines *madani* society as a fertile social system based on moral principles that balance individual freedom and community stability (Samsinas, 2006). From this, there is a similarity in the philosophical meaning between *madani*, taken from the context of Islamic history, and civil in English, which is the root of civilization.

However, not all Muslim scholars agree on the similarity of the epistemology of civil society with *madani* society. Muslim scholar Nurcholis Madjid views *madani* society from an Islamic perspective rather than a translation of civil society. The difference lies in the language and character of the people referred to in both terms. The society built by Prophet Muhammad in Madina after the Hijra differs from the society built in Europe after the Renaissance (Kosasih, 2000, p. 2). This paper takes a meaning that combines these two views. It is necessary to give a reinterpretation or different perspective on *madani* society to be more contextual with the historical conditions of Muslim society. In other words, civil society can be interpreted as *madani* society but with an Islamic perspective approach. 'Civil society' can be understood as *madani* society, where the development of the community is covered by civilizational values that depart from religion. Therefore, secularism is unknown in *madani* society, let alone atheism.

The concept of *madani* society contains the meaning of democracy as an applicative system and morality or religion as the foundation of community development (Ubaidillah, 2000). Therefore, in Indonesia, the concept of *madani* society has relevance to the sketch of religious and plural society thinking and the desire to build

a society that can be created optimally (Herdiwanto et al., 2019; Samsinas, 2006). In addition, the concept of *madani* society has two currents of thought. First, the basis of government is the people's agreement and the sovereignty of the people in total. In this case, community independence is the main characteristic of *madani* society. Second, it has a spiritual dimension that *madani* society is a strong intuition and association in preventing tyrannical rule accompanied by high modularity of capital and intellectual qualities (Sulaiman, 2002).

The characteristics of *madani* society in a country are seen from how far elements are well manifested, including free public sphere, democratic, tolerant, pluralism, and social justice (Herdiwanto et al., 2019; Rahardiansah, 2014; Ubaidillah et al., 2000). In other parts, *madani* society and democracy are characterized by enforcing human rights, good and clean governance, and obeying the law. Lubis (2015) sees indicators used as a measure of achieving *madani* conditions, including (1) the preservation of the existence of religion or teachings in society; (2) the maintenance and enforcement of security, order, and safety; (3) the establishment of clear and healthy freedom of thought; (4) the establishment of a calm and serene family existence with full tolerance and tolerance; (5) the establishment of democratic, polite, and highly moral regional conditions; and (6) the establishment of high apparatus professionalism to realize good, clean, authoritative, and responsible governance that can support regional development.

With this conceptual approach, it will be seen how the presence of MUI is not only an organization that accommodates the aspirations of Muslims in carrying out their beliefs and religion but also reflects the strength of *madani* society in Indonesia.

MUI as *Madani* Society in Democracy

One thing needs to be underlined in the context of Indonesia: *madani* society existed long before the proclamation of independence in 1945. Muslims are the backbone of the nation and state. This fact can be seen from the cultural networks connecting regions in Indonesia with the same identity, namely Islam, as well as institutions that exist as symbols of this identity, such as Islamic boarding schools, mosques, ulama, to Islamic mass organizations in the 18th to the early 20th century. So, self-reliance was fostered long before Indonesia as a state was present. Even the strength of *madani* society became the main element in the struggle to form the nation. Various primordial, religious, political, and economic national movement organizations were born and moved to collaborate to realize Indonesia's independence. The phase mentioned in history as the phase of nationalism is a transition from the previous phase of the regional phase.

Several Islamic organizations such as Jam'iyatul Khair which was founded in 1905, followed by Sarekat Dagang Islam (SDI) and Sarekat Islam (SI) in the same year, Persatuan Umat Islam (1911), Muhammadiyah (1912), Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah (1914), Persatuan Islam (1923), and Nahdlatul Ulama (1926). There are also Budi Utomo (1908), Indonesian Association (1908), Indische Partij (1912), Indische Social Democratische Vereeniging/ ISDV (1914), and various national youth movements (Suryanegara, 2015). These organizations are essentially a form of embodiment of *madani* society's power in Indonesia pre-independence. The culmination of these movements was the Youth Pledge (Sumpah Pemuda) in 1928, which became the main milestone driving Indonesia's independence in 1945. Because in the same year, the name Indonesia was already known as a national identity.

If the existence of the movements before 1945 had the goal of nationalism to realize Indonesian independence, then the goal after it was to maintain the existence of Indonesia as the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). The Involvement of national and religious movements pre-independence shows the special context of *madani* society in Indonesian history (Suryanegara, 2015). The contribution of *madani* society in the nation's history is fundamental and strategic. Therefore, it is not strange if Indonesian independence is the result of the struggle of the Indonesian nation, not the gift of colonialism. So, it is likely that in the future, the government will dissolve the pillars of *madani* society in Indonesia.

From the above perspective, the position of MUI can essentially be said to be part of *madani* society as well as the same position as the Indonesian Church Union (PGI), Indonesian Buddhist Representatives (WALUBI), and Indonesian Khonghucu Religious Council (MATAKIN). The values of *madani* society in MUI are illustrated in its Article of Association (AD/ART), which mentions one of the roles of a fatwa giver to Muslims and the government (Suhartono, 2018). The same narrative is also affirmed in the Founding Charter of MUI, which states that the institutions formed by the government have a social structural function to foster Muslims to be more fearful of God Almighty, strengthen national resilience, oppose atheism, and succeed in national development (MUI, 1975). The charter also mentions the function of MUI's values as a continuation of the struggle of ulama since the colonial era until now to maintain the unity of the people for the development of unity (MUI, 1975).

This view reflects the structural functionalism of MUI in the complexity of the social system of society in Indonesia. The existence of MUI and other religious organizations strengthens the democratic constitutional system in Indonesia, which illustrates the relationship between religion and state (Hasan, 2015; Mahendra & Junaidi, 2023). President Soeharto's remarks on establishing the MUI emphasized that the position of ulama (MUI) in the democracy of Pancasila is so strategic. MUI became a translator of thoughts and national and regional development programs to the community (MUI, 1975). Government support for establishing MUI is shown through the budget allocation needed for the operationalization of the organization. Their existence also complements the structural functions of religious institutions in the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This is also a particular feature of implementing democracy based on the Almighty God in Indonesia. In other words, the presence of MUI in Indonesian Islamic society is a structural function that complements the pre-existing instruments of *madani* society.

MUI is also strategically positioned as the political stabilizer, especially regarding community issues. When there are problems between the government and the people, MUI is a mediator and maintains stability. MUI also tries to counteract radical understandings. MUI's sincerity in this regard is shown by issuing a fatwa on the dangers of radicalism and terrorism in 2006 (Ilyas, 2009; Rofii, 2019).

Often, MUI is positioned in a dilemma as the political stabilizer facing the dynamics of democracy in the country. On the one hand, following its role, MUI is responsible for protecting the people and developing an Islamic life as stated in the Articles of Association/Bylaws (AD/ART) of MUI. So, in this context, MUI is obliged to issue fatwas regarding issues that develop in society, especially Muslims. However, on the other hand, the presence of MUI in the nation's life also encourages MUI to pay attention to the value of diversity and plurality in Indonesian society. Nevertheless, in reality, often MUI fatwas are seen as contrary to these values. Managing pluralism and diversity becomes a challenge for MUI, and the issue of this position has become an

unfinished debate among Indonesian Muslims themselves. An example of this dilemma is the blasphemy case by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) in 2017.

The thing that distinguishes democratic practices in Indonesia from other countries lies in the source of values and norms used as a basis for organizing democracy, namely Pancasila. As the ideology and basis of the state, Pancasila clearly shows religion as a source of inspiration in the nation's life, both historically and materially. Therefore, the Indonesian society that is Pancasilais is essentially religious, not the other way around, as a secular society, let alone atheists. The expressions that show religiosity in the nation's life, whether carried out by individuals or organizations, are a form of implementing the understanding of democracy Pancasila itself.

MUI complemented the Ministry of Religious Affairs position during the New Order era, first formed in 1946 (Kemenag, 2021). Establishing both religious institutions in different periods shows a pattern of structural functionalism related to the relationship between the state and Islam in Indonesian democracy. The most prominent and influential role of the MUI in the nation's life is the function of MUI as a fatwa giver (*mufti*) (Arifin, 2014; Suhartono, 2018). The authority of MUI as a fatwa giver is contained in Article 4 of the MUI's Articles of Association and Bylaws (AD/ART) which states four functions, namely First, as a forum for deliberation of ulama, *zu'ama*, and Muslim scholars in protecting the *ummah* and developing an Islamic life; Second, as a forum for gathering Muslim scholars, *zu'ama* and ulema to develop and practice Islamic teachings and rally Islamic brotherhood; Third, as a forum that represents Muslims in inter-religious relations and consultations; and Fourth, as a fatwa giver to Muslims and the government, both requested and unsolicited (Arifin, 2014; Hasyim, 2011).

However, MUI fatwas are not part of the legal hierarchy in the constitution of Indonesia because it is not binding. The function of the fatwa also does not necessarily make the MUI's position anti-pluralist and monopolistic in dealing with the affairs of Muslims. The MUI is not the only Islamic organization with the authority to issue fatwas. There are Nahdlatul Ulama, which has a fatwa mechanism called Bahtsul Masail, and Muhammadiyah, which also has the institution Majelis Tarjih. Therefore, MUI fatwas are not binding. Muslims can choose a fatwa considered more appropriate for their respective life contexts. The diversity of people's attitudes towards fatwas can be seen from the differences in their responses to the beginning of Ramadan and Shawwal, for example, or attitudes towards the interest system in banking. So, in this case, MUI is just like other Islamic organizations as a pillar of *madani* society that provides strengthening of community independence in practicing their religion.

The strengthening of democracy carried out by MUI can also be seen from the productivity of fatwas, especially on nationality issues. 19 out of 104 MUI fatwas from 1983 to 2009 reflected modernity and Indonesianess (Yusuf, 2020). The modernity of these fatwas is implemented using the principles of *maqashid shariah*, the concept of *maslahat*, collective *ijtihad*, and the flexibility of *mazhab*. Meanwhile, the Indonesian fatwas are implemented in local wisdom, which includes considerations: Indonesian national stability, the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), public order, national culture, and laws and regulations regulated in Indonesia (Yusuf, 2020).

Politics *Ummah*

Indonesia is a divine country that realizes the importance of religious values in the nation's life. However, many policies of the Indonesian government reflect Islamic politics. The relationship between the state and Islam in the context of Indonesian democracy is unique. This distinctiveness is listed in Pancasila, which places the first precept,

namely the One and Only God (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*). Historically, the formulation of the first precepts occurred through a process of tortuous political dynamics until finally, some ulama agreed on the redaction of the first precepts as a manifestation of tawhid in Islam (Suryanegara, 2015). This event can be called the dynamics of Islamic politics before Indonesian independence in 1945.

Conceptually, the word 'Islam' in the term Islamic politics serves as a particularistic nature of the word 'politics,' which can be interpreted as politics following Islamic teachings or politics (Kholil, 2009). So, in the same formulation, the terms Islamic economics, Islamic culture, Islamic education, and so on. Effendy (2011), in his book entitled *Islam and the State: Transformation of Islamic political ideas and practices in Indonesia*, sees political Islam as the main subject that carries out political activities, namely Muslims who are political, both political in individual entities and organizational groups. According to him, conceptually, political Islam follows the dynamics of the term Muslims as an inevitable consequence of political dynamics.

The notion of politics or *siyasah* associated with Islam means that political Islam or Islamic politics is not just a policy and action to implement policies. Still, it is more than that, becoming a movement to gain power for Islam (Kholil, 2009). So, every Muslim who is politically active in both Islamic and nationalist political entities can be categorized as part of the dynamics of Islamic politics.

Suppose the meaning of political Islam is limited to Islamic political parties. How to explain the "Islam Yes, Islamic Party No" campaign once voiced by Nurcholish Madjid: the political significance of Muhammadiyah's commitment to maintaining its social, religious, and educational functions; the influence of Muslim politicians joining Golkar; and the growing belief among the Muslim community that Golkar can fight for Islamic political aspirations? (Effendy, 2011). Identifying political Islam with Islamic political parties will eventually lead to further theoretical difficulties (Effendy, 2011).

Anyone can do Islamic politics if it is based on two things, namely subject and object references. The subject of Islamic politics can be individual or organizational if it is part of an Islamic society. At the same time, the object refers to the purpose of political implementation based on Islamic values, norms, and ideology. Both references must relate to the policy or government context.

From the above perspectives, MUI can be called an expression of Islamic politics even though it is not a political party institution. The historical dimension of MUI shows that the New Order government accommodated the aspirations of Muslims in the context of national stability and development. However, the Islamic politics carried out by MUI is politics of *ummah*; of course, the context differs from procedural political practices, parliamentary politics, or party politics.

Although it is not binding, MUI's fatwas are related to state administration, such as the fatwa on the principles of Islamic teachings on interreligious relations within the Republic of Indonesia; the fatwa on the role of religion in the development of national morals; the fatwa on Islamic implementation of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* and *salihun li kulli zaman wal makan* in the life of society, nation, and state; the fatwa on the use of voting rights in general elections; the fatwa on human rights; and the fatwas of cults such as Inkar Sunnah and Ahmadiyah (Yusuf, 2020). All fatwas are issued to preserve the religion of Islam from deviation and abuse. In maintaining property (*hifz al-mal*), MUI issues fatwa on bribery (*risywah*), corruption (*ghulul*), and gratuities to officials (Yusuf, 2020). MUI's attitude towards the nation's problems, which was then followed up with a fatwa, is a form of expression of the politics *ummah* of MUI as a reflection of Islamic politics.

Fatwas issued by MUI became one of the inspirations in forming positive laws, especially those related to Muslims. In the constitutional system, the MUI's fatwas have no legal basis to follow. Nevertheless, fatwas are necessary for the legislature or government in formulating policies or laws related to the affairs of Muslims. Some examples of the political *ummah* carried out by the MUI where fatwas or views are used as positive legal inspiration can be seen in forming the Marriage Law, Zakat Law, Hajj Law, and Waqf Law. Muslims need the law to implement its teachings in social life.

The role of MUI in the dynamics of national politics is also undeniable because Muslims constitute the majority population of the Indonesian people. The participation of Muslims individually and in groups or organizations in political life greatly determines the direction of the nation and state. This was going on long before the independence. The strong influence of religion in people's lives is a factor that encourages Islamic organizations to actively participate in various contemporary Indonesian political contests (Alkawy, 2020). Even MUI encourages Muslims to be active in nation-building through involvement in politics while still carrying Islamic values and, starting from choosing leaders, being involved in political parties or community organizations, expressing opinions or aspirations in public, to becoming a candidate for people's representatives. Another example of the politics *ummah* of MUI is contained in a book entitled *MUI Fatwa Association Since* 1975, mentioned MUI's fatwas on the use of voting rights and general elections (Asad, 2022; Ihwan Syam, 2009; MUI, 2009; Yusuf, 2020), including (1) general elections in the Islam is viewed as our efforts to elect leaders or representatives who meet the ideal conditions for the realization of common ideals in accordance with the aspirations of the *ummah* and the interests of the nation; (2) choosing a leader in Islam is an obligation to establish the imamate and the emirate in common life; (3) the imamate and the emirate in Islam present conditions in accordance with the provisions in order to realize the benefit in society; (4) choosing leaders who are faithful and pious, honest (*siddiq*), trusted (*amanah*), active and aspirational (*tabligh*), have the ability (*fathanah*), and fight for the interests of Muslims is mandatory; and (5) electing leaders who do not meet the requirements as mentioned in point 4 (four) or do not vote at all even though there are candidates who meet the legal requirements is haram.

MUI also recommended that Muslims elect leaders and representatives carrying out the duties of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* and encouraged the government and election organizers to increase the socialization of elections. Thereby, public participation can increase, and people's rights are fulfilled.

During the New Order era, MUI gave much support to the government. Only in the elections of 1977 did the MUI take a neutral stance. This stance was taken in response to government pressure that limited MUI's political space. In the following years, from 1982 to 1997, the MUI supported the government. In its fatwa statement, the MUI mentioned Soeharto's name to continue his position as president of Indonesia. In 1987, although the MUI did not mention Soeharto by name, the MUI still stated the need for the continuity of the New Order government and the importance of Indonesian Muslim participation in elections (As'ad, 2010).

Meanwhile, in the reform era, the MUI's attitude in elections was more determined by the development of the political dynamics. The close relationship between MUI and the government is adjusted to the political context. The political stance of the MUI is such because the regime's influence on the MUI's independence is not as strong as during the New Order era (As'ad, 2010). This is the fundamental differentiator of MUI's functional existence from the New Order era to the era after it. The MUI provides

much support for Islamic political forces outside the government. The change in MUI's attitude was influenced by the political climate of reform, which gave greater space to the forces of *madani* society. The MUI stresses the necessity for Muslims to vote for Muslim candidates in elections. Some academics analyze this attitude as an indication of the return of mainstream politics that was suppressed during the New Order through the policy of simplifying political parties and the single principle of Pancasila (Hasyim, 2015; Ichwan, 2012).

In addition, the role of MUI in Islamic politics is not only displayed in several fatwas issued regarding issues of *ummah* and nationality but also in the activities of its administrators who are directly or indirectly involved in other Islamic organizations such as NU, Muhammadiyah, MIUMI, and Persis, or political parties (Alkawy, 2020). This can be seen from the composition of the first MUI board representing Islamic organizations at the central level. It is no secret that MUI administrators have organizational activities also in political parties, not just Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah. Likewise, the composition of MUI in several regions also serves the political parties. This shows the political expression of the MUI administrators. Within these parties, especially nationalist parties, there are also Islamic da'wah wings, such as Majelis Al Hidayah and Satkar Ulama in the Golkar Party or Baitul Muslimin in PDI Perjuangan.

Conclusion

For 47 years, MUI has been active as the highest ulama institution in Indonesia, which has a national and regional structure. Although historically, the birth of MUI cannot be separated from government intervention that has national interests, the existence of MUI must be seen as an instrument of *madani* society. The presence of Islamic organizations first in building society before Indonesia as a sovereign state was formed. So, it is very easy to understand if the existence of MUI is not only a pillar of the democracy of Pancasila but also an important instrument of *madani* society. These instruments are like fortresses that keep the people and nation standing so that Indonesia remains upright with the values of Pancasila.

From the structural functionalism approach, the role of MUI carries out a structural function in society as a balancer and mediator not only between diverse elements of Muslims but also between Muslims and the government. From the beginning, the country realized the importance of Muslims in national development. However, the presence must be well consolidated so that the potential of most Muslims is truly participatory and emancipatory. The role of MUI complements the function of other organizations, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs and other Islamic organizations, in regulating social relations between religious societies. Both MUI and other *madani* society instruments complement each other. These two things, MUI as a *madani* society and carrying out structural functions in society, are novelty issues taken in this study.

In addition, the presence of MUI also reflects the accommodating democracy of Pancasila. The democracy of Pancasila affirms that Indonesia is not a religious state but not a secular state that excludes religion in the life of the nation and state. The relationship between state and Islam in the life of the nation and state in Indonesia is a symbiotic relationship that complements each other. This is where the fundamental point is that the presence of MUI is driven by the socio-political climate based on the democratic system of Pancasila.

MUI is a partner of Commission VIII of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, which oversees social and religious matters. The structural function of MUI in building *madani* society in Indonesia will only be strong with political support from the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia. Therefore, as a legislative pillar that maintains the balance of administration by the executive, Commission VIII must continue to oversee the role of MUI following its charter declaration and maintain the harmony of structural-functional relations between MUI and other institutions or organizations.

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