



The Role of Muhammadiyah Politics in Advocating for Reform of The Legislative Electoral System (DPR/DPRD) in Post-New Order Indonesia (1999–2024)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the political role of Muhammadiyah as a civil society organization (CSO) in advocating for reform of the legislative electoral system (DPR/DPRD) in post-New Order Indonesia (1999–2024). Using the theory of the function of civil society from Wolfgang Merkel (1999) and the theory of public policy advocacy from Start and Hovland (2004), this study explores the reasons why Muhammadiyah persistently encourages changes in the open proportional system (OLPR), the internal actors involved, and the strategies used. The method in this study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design that relies on primary data sources of interview results supported by related secondary data. The findings show that Muhammadiyah carries out the function of supervision of the state and articulation of social interests, criticizing the OLPR for triggering money politics, polarization, and lack of meritocracy. Muhammadiyah proposed a closed proportional system (CLPR) or Moderate List Proportional Representation (MLPR) through a scientific study by the Institute of Wisdom and Public Policy (LHKP). Advocacy strategies include collaborative advising, lobbying, and public promotion, although hampered by political party resistance and internal dynamics. This research contributes to the study of civil society and elections in transitional democracies, highlighting the importance of reforming the electoral system that is fair and democratic.

Keywords:

Civil society, electoral system reform, Muhammadiyah

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INTRODUCTION

Elections are one of the main indicators in determining whether a country is democratic or not. In fact, in the perspective of Joseph Schumpeter (1942), democracy is really understood as a mere electoral process. However, this kind of minimalist democracy concept is often criticized because not a few countries routinely hold elections but actually maintain an authoritarian nature (Pamungkas, 2009). The Schumpeter model limits democracy to elite competition and electoral procedures, so it tends to ignore the existence of *civil society* (CS) or *civil society*. In fact, in developing countries, the role of CS in democratization is very significant. As stated by Larry Diamond (1994), *civil society* is an essential object of study in understanding the dynamics of democratic change in various parts of the world.

The role of CS in overseeing the reform of the general electoral system (elections) in a country that is undergoing democratization is very important. This is because the implementation of the electoral system in practice is vulnerable to various irregularities and fraud (Birch, 2007; Surbakti et al., 2014; Riwanto, 2015). The political autonomy that CS has when dealing with the ruler is believed to be able to make these elements carry out control functions independently. This is in line with the view that as an independent entity, *civil society*—within certain limits—is able to advance itself and limit state intervention, while taking a critical position in political life (Hikam, 1997; Hadi, 2010).

In Indonesia, the role of *civil society* in contemporary democratic changes has been increasingly visible since the fall of the authoritarian New Order regime in 1998. The tap of democratization that opened wide after Suharto's ouster provided political opportunities to many parties, including *civil society organizations* (CSOs) or *civil society organizations* (CSOs) (Perdana, 2015). One of the CSOs that is able to take advantage of this political opportunity is the Muhammadiyah Association

(Tanthowi, 2019). These Islamic organizations often provide input and views to the government and political elites in the policy-making process (Syahputra, 2014; Furqon, 2019). In realizing its agenda, Muhammadiyah also builds relationships with various political parties, including the National Mandate Party (PAN), which has historical and emotional ties with the organization (Nashir, 2000; Coryati, 2006; Ihsan, 2016; Premiere, 2017; Murod, 2017; Argenti, 2017). In addition to political channels, the role of Muhammadiyah and its cadres in strengthening democracy is also seen in various election advocacy activities. Some of its cadres are active in election monitoring organizations, such as the Voter Education Network for the People (JPPR) and the Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem), which routinely advocate for issues related to elections and democracy. This engagement reflects how *civil society* continues to play a role in overseeing and encouraging fairer and more transparent elections in Indonesia.

After more than two decades since the 1998 reform, Indonesia is still in the stage towards democratic consolidation (Aspinall et al., 2020; Mujani, 2020; Freedom House, 2024). As Diamond (1999) points out, one of the important aspects in achieving democratic consolidation is political institutionalization, which includes strengthening the bureaucracy, political parties, parliament, and electoral system. As a large Islamic organization that has attention to national issues, Muhammadiyah continues to strive to encourage the realization of the reform agenda. In this context, the organization is taking part in efforts to strengthen the electoral system in Indonesia, to ensure a more participatory and transparent democratic process.

If we look back, since the first general election in 1955, Indonesia has consistently used a list proportional representation system (list PR system) to elect legislative members in the House of Representatives. In this system, each political party submits a list of candidates for legislative members (candidates) for each constituency (dapil) that has more than one seat. There are two main variants of this electoral system, namely the open list proportional representation system (OLPR system) and the closed list proportional representation system (CLPR system). In simple terms, the first variant allows voters to directly choose legislative members (aleg) from the list of candidates submitted by political parties, while the second variant only allows voters to choose political parties (Sukmajati, 2019). In the open list/OLPR, the determination of the winning candidate is influenced by the most votes obtained by each candidate. Meanwhile, in the closed list/CLPR, the elected candidates are determined based on their serial number in the list.

Table 1. Comparison of DPR/DPRD Election Regulations in Indonesia Post-New Order

Regulation	Electoral System	Application in Election	Determination of Elected Legislative Candidates
UU No. 3 Tahun 1999	CPLR	1999	Based on the smallest candidate's serial number.
UU No. 12 Tahun 2003	Semi-open list PR	2004	Candidates whose votes reach 100 percent of the electoral divisor (BPP) are automatically elected. If no one reaches that number of votes, the winning candidate is determined based on the smallest serial number.
UU No. 10 Tahun 2008	Semi-open list PR initially, but this rule was revoked by the Constitutional Court and replaced with an OLPR.	2009	Candidates whose votes reach 30 percent of the electoral divisor (BPP) are automatically elected. If no one reaches that number of votes, the winning candidate is determined based on the serial number. However, this system was never implemented because it was canceled by the Constitutional Court, so that the determination of the winning candidate is based on the most votes.
UU No. 8 Tahun 2012	OLPR	2014	Based on the most votes.
UU No. 7 Tahun 2017	OLPR	2019, 2024	Based on the most votes.

(Source: Legislation, data processed by the author)

From the table above, it can be seen that the legislative electoral system in Indonesia has been "dismantled" since 1999. And every time there is a revision to the regulations, the discussion process is always colored by debates, both in parliament and in the public sphere. The sharpest debates usually involve two camps, namely those that support the *OLPR* and the groups that are pro-*CLPR*. Outside of the two camps, there are sometimes intermediary groups that offer a semi-open list proportional electoral system or other systems (Fahmi, 2010; Burhani, 2011; Malay, 2013; Pahlev, 2014; Riwanto, 2016; Romli, 2018).

In every process of forming or changing election policies, there is always a political discourse in it. In some countries, especially countries that adhere to democracy, the discourse also involves *civil society* as an important component that provides input and advocacy to influence these policies. This is also true in countries that are experiencing a democratization phase after the collapse of authoritarian regimes. This experience is reflected in the European Parliament report (2017) which reveals the involvement of *civil society* in advocating for electoral policies in Ukraine, Georgia, and post-Soviet Moldova. According to the study, *CSOs* are well-positioned to play a key role in electoral reform in the three countries. They can issue post-election recommendations, gather stakeholders to consider priority recommendations, and then continue to promote their recommendations to the public and policymakers during the inter-election period. Efforts by monitoring groups in the three countries, namely the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) in Georgia; Promo-LEX in Moldova; as well as OPORA and CVU in Ukraine, have proven effective in advocating for electoral reform. All of them are leading the election monitoring efforts together with their respective coalition partners. The oversight by the *CSOs* in turn resulted in comprehensive reporting as their evidence base to provide recommendations and advocacy on election issues.

In the context of post-New Order Indonesia, advocacy for election policies echoed by *civil society* always comes after the election or at the stage of evaluating the implementation of elections. The proposed changes are not only submitted directly to policymakers, in this case, the House of Representatives and the government, but also through a material test of existing laws to the Constitutional Court (Dewantara, 2020). Several previous studies have revealed the role and strategies of movements played by *civil society* in influencing election policies in Indonesia. However, studies that observe the role of Islamic *CSOs* that have a great influence in the country—such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)—in advocating for election policies are still very limited.

Muhammadiyah, although its work is better known in the fields of education, economics, and religion, also has an interest in political issues, including elections. In 2017, for example, the organization provided input to the government and the House of Representatives regarding the Election Bill (RUU) – which was later passed into Law Number 7 of 2017. In the letter signed by the Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Executive (PP) Haedar Nashir and the General Secretary Abdul Mu'ti, there were seven issues that Muhammadiyah fought for in the discussion of the Election Bill at that time. The seven issues are reform of the DPR/DPRD electoral system; determination of the number of seats in the House of Representatives; the abolition of the parliamentary threshold; the elimination of the presidential threshold; financing of election participants; the status of the regency/city KPU as a permanent institution; and the impetus to give birth to a long-lasting Election Law. Of the various inputs provided by Muhammadiyah, only two were granted by the House of Representatives in Law Number 7 of 2017, namely the status of the regency/city KPU as a permanent institution, not ad hoc, and the financing of witnesses for election participants is not charged to the State Budget.

After the implementation of the 2019 elections, Muhammadiyah again presented the results of its evaluation of the development of democracy in the country. The organization concluded that the electoral system that was too liberal was not in line with *Pancasila* and had caused transactional political practices to flourish. Therefore, the organization again emphasized the need to change the *OLPR* system to a *CLPR* model or a limited open list proportional representation. Muhammadiyah thinks that a downstream solution, that is an awareness of political values and morals, will bring significant changes if strengthened by reforming the electoral system as an upstream solution. At the 48th Congress of Muhammadiyah in Surakarta (Solo), Central Java, 2022, the official stance of the

organization was formulated as follows: "The open proportional system in legislative elections needs to be changed. The direct election of presidents, governors, regents, and mayors does not need to be changed. However, the election mechanism needs to be improved in a more efficient and effective direction, for example through closed or limited open elections and integrated executive elections to eliminate money politics, excesses of identity politics, and division of society or political polarization."

Throughout its history, it was the first time that Muhammadiyah organizationally, explicitly, and formally provided recommendations related to electoral system reform to policymakers through the highest deliberative forum, namely the congress. Before issuing this official stance, the organization, which was born in Yogyakarta more than a century ago, admitted that it had conducted an in-depth study since a long time ago. At least, there are 19 strategic issues that emerged from various pre-congress seminars held academically by experts in each field from various Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah universities. One of the issues discussed was the reform of the electoral system.

General Secretary of Muhammadiyah Central Committee, Abdul Mu'ti, said that the *OLPR* system in practice causes a pragmatic and unhealthy democratic climate. This is due to the increase in money politics, sabotage between candidates (even within the same party), and the use of identity politics with primordial sentiments related to *SARA* (ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-group) from each election participant. As a result, society has experienced polarization that has occurred over the past decade. In addition, candidates who are elected through this system are often based solely on popularity, not because of the principles of meritocracy, ability, and professionalism. This kind of political inequality clearly does not provide justice for the competing politicians. As a result, many people's interests were sacrificed. Similarly, the Chairman of Legal, Human Rights, and Wisdom of Muhammadiyah Central Committee, Dr. Busyro Muqaddas, assessed that the laws related to elections in Indonesia currently do not reflect the spirit of honesty and justice as written in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution. According to him, the law seems to be designed to be unfair. He also emphasized the importance of reforming the electoral system so that it truly reflects the commitments contained in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution.

Muhammadiyah's proposal to change the electoral system of the DPR/DPRD caused a polemic among political parties and the public in general. The majority of political parties in parliament rejected the offer. Of the nine political parties that fill the House of Representatives, eight of them firmly reject the *CLPR* system. They consider such a system as a setback in democracy. The Democratic Party called *CLPR* like "buying a cat in a sack." There is not a single Islamic party in the House of Representatives that supports the views of Muhammadiyah. In fact, PAN—which is often claimed to be "the political party of Muhammadiyah"—stated that it still wants the *OLPR* electoral system. The only political party that supports the idea of Muhammadiyah is PDIP, which considers that the *CLPR* electoral system will provide an opportunity for the party to improve the quality and leadership capacity of council members to carry out legislation, budgeting, and supervision functions in parliament.

In parallel, a number of parties outside Muhammadiyah submitted a material test of the Election Law Number 7 of 2017 to the Constitutional Court. In the application for judicial review Number 114/PUU-XX/2022, which was registered on November 1, 2022, the applicants urged that the *OLPR* system be replaced with the *CLPR* system. In line with Muhammadiyah, the petitioners considered that the *OLPR* system had caused individualism among politicians. This, in turn, leads to conflict and "cannibalism" within political parties. The petitioners also consider that the *OLPR* system can weaken the institutionalization of the party system. However, their application was rejected in its entirety by the Constitutional Court on Thursday, June 15, 2023, through Decision Number 114/PUU-XX/2022. The Constitutional Court stated that the *OLPR* is closer to the electoral system required by the country's constitution.

Outside parliament, the rejection of the discourse of changing the electoral system to a closed proportional system also came from *civil society* circles outside Muhammadiyah. For example, Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), which assesses that the system provides opportunities for nepotism within political parties. The NGO also considers that the implementation of *CLPR* will not remove the trend of money politics at all. In addition to ICW, the vote of rejection also came from Perludem, which incidentally was manned by a number of Muhammadiyah activists such as Titi Anggraini. They assessed that if the closed proportional system is considered constitutional by the

Constitutional Court, then the evaluation of improving the electoral system can no longer be carried out in the future. Perludem also thinks that the determination of the electoral system should only be the domain of law-making institutions, namely the House of Representatives and the president, not by the Constitutional Court.

In a democratic country, differences of opinion or views in political discourse should be considered commonplace. However, in practice, it is not uncommon for narratives to emerge that accuse supporters of the closed proportional electoral system of being "feudal supporters" or "oligarchs," even branding them as bearers of the decline of democracy. Such claims certainly require scientific proof, including statements that "open proportional systems are better than closed proportionality." Like Muhammadiyah's official stance regarding the reform of the electoral system, for example, it cannot necessarily be interpreted that the organization supports the decline of democracy just because it proposes a closed proportional system or other variants. Abdul Mu'ti argued that changing the *OLPR* electoral system to *CLPR* or limited open is not a setback in democracy. This is because the quality of democracy is determined by the implementation of elections that run well, with democratic values such as meritocracy and openness. The people must be able to express their voting rights independently and intelligently based on programs, not just based on money. Muhammadiyah, he said, assesses democracy from a substantial size, not just procedural.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Institute of Wisdom and Public Policy (LHKP) of the Muhammadiyah Central Executive, Ridho al-Hamdi, said that the main point of the proposed reform of the electoral system offered by Muhammadiyah at the 48th Congress in Surakarta was the need to modify the current *OPLR* system. According to him, Muhammadiyah is not fixated on one *CPLR* model as an offer in the proposal to reform its electoral system. Therefore, the Islamic organization offers an alternative in the form of a limited open proportional system. He said: "The decision (48th Congress) underlines especially that the system, which we often call the open list proportional system, does reap many problems. The main point is that it needs modification, it needs to be improved to a system that is considered to be liberal, the massification of money politics, and all kinds of election violations."

Ridho explained, Indonesia has used the *CLPR* system in the past. When this country re-implements the system, it means that this country is just repeating what it has done in the past. Meanwhile, the *OLPR* system that has been going on since the 2009 election actually nourishes the practice of money politics due to an election model that is too liberal. Therefore, as a middle ground, he is optimistic that alternative systems such as proportional limited open lists can be further developed. According to Ridho, if this discourse is fixated on only two poles, namely the "closed system" and the "open system," people will be trapped at an extreme point that both have disadvantages and advantages. If Indonesia returns to a closed proportional model, it means that full authority is again given to the party in determining all kinds of internal decisions of the smallest sequence number to be the determinant and the party that takes over. Meanwhile, with the situation of Indonesian political parties that are still not well institutionalized, Ridho assessed that a closed proportional system is not yet the right choice. This is because the prerequisites for the institutionalization of political parties are not yet established, so it is feared that political party oligarchs are getting stronger. But on the other hand, if the open proportional system is handed over to the free market, it is also not good. Because money politics is rampant, then the determination of the candidate is based on the "contents of the bag" not the capacity. On the basis of all these considerations, Muhammadiyah considers that there needs to be a moderate proportional system, which is obtained by means of modification and is not trapped by the poles of the party, nor is it trapped at the poles of the free market."

Technically, according to Ridho, there are at least two models of modification of the "moderate" PR system that are being developed by the LHKP PP Muhammadiyah. The first model is that voters can choose a candidate or party (by voting for only one of them) on the ballot paper. At the time of counting, if the candidate's votes exceed the party's votes, the seat automatically belongs to the candidate. If there is no candidate who is able to exceed the party's votes, then the determination of seat distribution is left to the party concerned. While the second model, voters can choose candidates only, parties only, or both (voting for the image of the candidate and the party at the same time). However, at the time of vote counting, voters who vote for both will be divided their votes in half for

the candidate and half for the party. This provision is in line with the universal election principle, namely one man one vote one value (one person one vote and one value).

From the above explanation, it can be seen that there are continuous efforts from Muhammadiyah to influence election policies in Indonesia. There is debate and dissatisfaction among the Islamist movement over the electoral system implemented after more than 20 years of reforms. Muhammadiyah is so persistent in trying to encourage the change of the *OLPR* system into the electoral system it aspires to, even though it has repeatedly met with failure. However, behind that, there are also academics and *CSO* (NGO) actors from Muhammadiyah who have different views from the official attitude of the organization regarding the choice of *OLPR* or *CLPR*. Therefore, this study will find out the reasons behind Muhammadiyah's persistent attitude, as well as identify the political role played by the organization as a *civil society* and its internal actors in advocating for election policies in Indonesia, in the context of the reform of the post-New Order DPR/DPRD electoral system (1999–2023). This study will delve into the extent to which the Islamic movement was able to achieve its goals and which parts they considered to have failed, as well as the factors that caused it to happen.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the political role of Muhammadiyah as a *civil society* in advocating for election policies after the fall of the authoritarian regime, in the context of this research, namely the reform of the legislative electoral system (DPR/DPRD) in post-New Order Indonesia (1999–2024)?
2. Why is Muhammadiyah so persistent in changing the *OLPR* system that has been implemented during four elections (2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024)? Who are the internal actors who play a role in this effort?
3. What is the approach and strategy of the movement taken by Muhammadiyah to achieve its goals?

This research aims to identify and explain the political role of Muhammadiyah as a *civil society* in advocating for policies to encourage reform of the DPR/DPRD electoral system after the New Order. This study will also reveal the causes of Muhammadiyah's persistent attitude in encouraging the reform of the electoral system, identifying its actors, as well as the approach and choice of movement strategy taken by the organization in achieving this goal.

The academic significance of the research is to contribute to Political Science, especially regarding the study of *civil society* and elections in countries that are experiencing a democratization phase after the collapse of authoritarian regimes. In particular, if viewed from its *novelty* or novelty, this study will provide an overview of the movement of an Islamic *CSO* in influencing election policy in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach through the application of case study methods. A qualitative approach is used to comprehensively explain the problem or issue that is the focus of the research. This includes presenting a variety of viewpoints, identifying a number of factors involved in a given situation, and in general, creating a more in-depth picture of the overall context that can be found (Creswell, 2014). Meanwhile, the use of the case study method is seen as in accordance with the problems studied in this research because it is able to dive into the problem in depth without requiring strict supervision from the researcher. This method allows researchers to maintain the integrity and significance of the characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003).

Data Collection Techniques

In this study, the data types consist of:

a) *Primary Data*

Primary data is information obtained through research by conducting interviews with informants. This interview is a method of collecting data by asking a number of questions verbally, which are then answered verbally. In simple terms, interviews can be described as a tool to collect data through dialogue between researchers seeking data and the data source in question.

In its implementation, the interview is conducted in-depth (*in-depth interview*), where the researcher interacts first with the informant, without ignoring the relevant questions that need to be answered. The goal is to achieve the objective of the interview without losing valuable information.

The researcher directed the question to be related to the data being sought, especially in the context of the political role of *Muhammadiyah* related to the reform of the electoral system.

To make the interview run smoothly, the researcher used interview guidelines as a guide to ensure that the conversation remained focused on the issue to be researched. In qualitative research, this interview guideline contains open-ended questions and in-depth questions, which allow the researcher to ask informants in depth and detail specific points according to the problem at hand.

b) *Secondary Data*

Secondary data is information obtained from writings, documents, or other sources. To collect secondary data, the researcher conducts a documentation study by referring to articles, news, information from print or internet media, as well as reading materials relevant to the purpose of the research.

Informants Selection Techniques

The recruitment of informants in this research is carried out with a purposive approach, which means that the individuals to be interviewed are carefully selected based on the specific criteria they have and according to the purpose of the research. The first criterion is that the informant has been intensively and long involved in an activity or environment that is the focus of the researcher's attention. Second, informants are still actively involved in activities that are the focus of the research. Meanwhile, the next criterion is that the informant has sufficient time available to be interviewed.

Table 2 List of Informants

No.	Informant Names and Acronyms	Informant Position	Data Collected	Data Collection Techniques
1.	Ma'mun Murod Al-Barbasy (initials: MMA)	Rector of the University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta (UMJ)/ Member of the Central Committee of Muhammadiyah	data related to Muhammadiyah's evaluation of the empirical conditions of the implementation of the Indonesian electoral system after reform.	Interviews and documentation
2.	Busyro Muqaddas (initial: BM)	Chairman of Law, Human Rights, and Wisdom of Muhammadiyah Central Committee	documents related to the Muhammadiyah political movement related to the reform of the electoral system.	
3.	Chusnul Mar'iyah (initial: CM)	Academic, member of the Expert Council of the Institute of Wisdom and Public Policy (LHKP) of Muhammadiyah Central Government	Information related to Muhammadiyah's academic study on electoral system reform in Indonesia.	interview
4.	Ridho al-Hamdi (initial: RH)	Academic, Chairman of the Institute of Wisdom and Public Policy (LHKP) of Muhammadiyah Central Committee		Interviews and documentation
5.	Saleh P Daulay (initial: SPD)	Chairman of the PAN Faction in the House of Representatives, Muhammadiyah cadres	Information related to the discourse on electoral system reform among Muhammadiyah politicians.	interview

6.	Nurlia Dian Paramitha (initial: NDP)	Muhammadiyah cadre, JPPR activist	Information related to the discourse on electoral system reform among Muhammadiyah cadres, who are engaged in other NGOs.	interview
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, it has been explained about the functions of *civil society* played by Muhammadiyah in an effort to strengthen the post-New Order electoral system. This is illustrated through the development of discourse that takes place within the organization. Furthermore, the author will focus on the advocacy model carried out by Muhammadiyah towards election policies in the reform era, especially from 2009 until this research took place, as well as explain the extent to which these efforts achieved their goals.

This study will be explored based on the framework of Start and Hovland (2004) which divides CS strategies in advocating for policies into four models, namely *advising*, *lobbying*, *advocacy*, and *activism*. It should be underlined that the outcome of CS advocacy for policy depends on the complexity of the issue, the political context, the CSO's resources, the capacity of the actors involved, as well as access to the policymakers themselves. Relying on one strategy alone (such as *advising* alone or *lobbying* alone) is often not enough to achieve the desired change. The various approaches available in advocacy are not mutually exclusive and are often used simultaneously for more effective results.

Identification of Actors' Preferences and Directions of Muhammadiyah Advocacy for Post-New Order Electoral System Reform

As a large socio-religious organization in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah plays a role in national politics through da'wah *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, while trying to maintain a non-partisan attitude. They have also maintained this attitude when pushing for electoral reform in recent years. However, the views of their actors on the discourse on electoral system reform are not uniform. Several figures have shown their support for the CLPR system. Meanwhile, at the same time, discussions are also developing in favor of OLPR or limited open proportionality as an alternative.

As explained in the initial part of this research, Muhammadiyah since 2022 has affirmed its official position regarding the discourse on legislative electoral system reform. This attitude was enshrined in the 48th Tanfidz Congress in Surakarta, where Muhammadiyah explicitly supported the replacement of the OLPR system with one of the two options they proposed, namely CLPR or limited open proportionality. At first glance, the idea proposed by Muhammadiyah seems "twofold", because it does not expressly refer to one option of the electoral system as a substitute for OLPR. However, the findings in this study reveal that the sound of the congress decision is actually a form of compromise from various actors within the organization who have various preferences related to the electoral system model that they consider ideal.

If traced back to the beginning of the 1998 reform, there are at least four groups of actors within Muhammadiyah who have certain preferences in the discourse of reform of the post-New Order electoral system. The first group wants the legislative elections to adopt a majority/plurality system. Some of its prominent figures are Afan Gaffar (died January 8, 2003) and Bahtiar Effendy (died November 21, 2019). Next there are CLPR supporters, represented by Abdul Mu'ti and Ma'mun Murod al-Barbasy, among others (Michella, 2023). The third group was filled with OLPR supporters, most of whom were represented by Muhammadiyah activists engaged in NGOs such as Titi Anggraini from Perludem (Febryan, 2023). While the last group is those who want moderation or a middle way from CLPR and OLPR. This group is represented by academics or scholars who are involved in the University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY), such as Ridho al-Hamdi, Tanto Lailam, and Sakir Ridho Wijaya (Al-Hamdi et al., 2025). When this research was conducted, most of these names had been/are sitting in the management structure at LHKP PP Muhammadiyah.

Despite having their own preferences, the Muhammadiyah actors were open to accepting ideas from their colleagues who had different views. Both during meetings and in dialogue sessions that take place informally, there is an exchange of ideas that takes place between them. With such a

democratic climate, organizational decisions can be made collectively collegially. In fact, the open attitude of its actors also allows Muhammadiyah to revise or develop the discourse on electoral system reform in accordance with the demands of change.

As mentioned in the previous chapter in this study, Muhammadiyah initially urged that the OLPR electoral system be replaced with CLPR. Muhammadiyah for the first time explicitly called for this view on May 15, 2014. The call was contained in an official statement signed by the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Committee at that time, Din Syamsuddin, and also Abdul Mu'ti as the secretary (not the general secretary). Here is an excerpt:

"For the 2019 Legislative Election, Muhammadiyah urges the implementation of a closed proportional electoral system with strict selection of the quality of legislative candidates by the party. For the presidential election, Muhammadiyah proposes that the presidential candidacy and the coalition of political parties be submitted before the legislative elections." (Muhammadiyah's, 2014)

This official stance was not only published by Muhammadiyah in the internal media owned by the organization, but also in a number of national media such as LKBN Antara (Sumatra, 2014). Interestingly, Din Syamsuddin personally actually supports the OLPR system. This was only revealed after he was no longer the general chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Committee. Din, who is also listed as the general chairman of the National Council of the Advanced Indonesia Movement (DN-PIM), assessed that the open proportional system is better than the closed proportional system. According to his interpretation, Indonesian democracy based on Pancasila and the Constitution of August 18, 1945 is more suitable for using the OLPR system. Because, with the electoral system, the sovereignty of the people as the owners of the vote can be upheld as mandated by the fourth precept of Pancasila (Satryo, 2023).

In 2017, Muhammadiyah again revealed the results of their evaluation of the OLPR system that has been implemented since 2009. This time, the position of the organization changed slightly where Muhammadiyah not only made CLPR the only option, but also offered a proportional system of limited open lists (Ansyari & Ambarita, 2017). There are several notes on the OLPR that they conveyed at that time, including that the system has caused the rise of transactional politics (*vote buying*) in the community. Next, the OLPR creates unfair competition among fellow candidates in one party, not competition with other parties. In addition, according to Muhammadiyah, the open list proportional system also produces unqualified legislative members. The people's representatives who win seats in parliament are often elected based solely on popularity, not because of the principles of capability, meritocracy, or professionalism. The following are seven points of input given by Muhammadiyah to the lawmakers at that time: (of Muhammadiyah, 2017)

1. In realizing the values of democracy and civility in elections, one of the things that must be a serious concern is how to reduce transactional politics in society (*vote buying* or *money politics*). Second, it puts political competition in its place, namely the competition for candidacy is not for candidates in one party, but for party candidates with candidates from other parties. Therefore, the electoral system that is seen as more democratic and civilized according to this thinking is a closed proportional system or a limited open proportional system.
2. The proposal to add more seats to the House of Representatives is not yet relevant. This means that the number of DPR seats should remain at 560. If there are areas that are experiencing expansion, then it does not mean that the seats from the parent region are fixed. Regional expansion does not mean increasing the number of seats for the region. In this case, what must be emphasized is the reallocation of DPR seats to the provinces so that there will be no more provinces that experience a shortage of seats or those that have excess seats.
3. *The parliamentary threshold* as an effort to simplify political parties is still not effective, and can even eliminate the people's vote. Improvements in the future can be made by implementing a zero percent parliamentary threshold. The application of high thresholds does not necessarily simplify political parties. What is needed is to set the threshold for the formation of factions in the DPR.
4. Constitutional Court Decree No. 14/PUU-XI/2003 which states that elections are held simultaneously results in the implementation of the threshold for presidential and vice presidential candidacy becoming irrelevant. For this reason, the implementation of a zero percent presidential candidacy threshold is the most appropriate choice. The 2019 election is a simultaneous election consisting of a legislative election and a presidential election, therefore, it

is no longer relevant if the threshold for presidential and vice presidential candidacy is applied. In addition, the 1945 Constitution also states that the requirements for nominating the president and vice president are submitted by political parties or a combination of political parties participating in the election. Thus, any political party that has undergone KPU verification to become a participant in the 2019 election can nominate a pair of presidential and vice presidential candidates. Eliminating the nomination threshold aims to provide justice for all election participants.

5. The proposal for an election witness fund financed by the State Budget will damage the order of the election administration and burden the state budget. Providing witness funds to political parties does not necessarily reduce fraud in elections. To reduce fraud, ways can be taken to strengthen the supervisory function in elections. The state can use these funds to finance the health, education and so on sectors.
6. The city district election commission is the organizer of the election which is the spearhead of the implementation of elections in the regions. If this institution is *ad hoc*, then it is not free to hold regional elections. For example, based on the provisions of laws and regulations, especially related to state financial governance, *ad hoc institutions* are not allowed to manage their own finances. This will certainly hinder and disrupt the process of implementing elections and also the election of regional heads. In addition, the regency/city KPU has so far had permanent work arrangements (organic secretarial employee apparatus). Therefore, it is time for the regency/city KPU to be made a permanent institution.
7. In the future, the Central Executive of Muhammadiyah hopes that the House of Representatives together with the government can draft an Election Law that is not single-use. Thus, we have a law that truly represents the common interest, not just the interests of political parties.

The official position of the organization was published through a press conference held at the Muhammadiyah Central Executive Office, Jakarta, Friday, June 9, 2017, in the midst of the discussion of the bill, which later became Election Law No. 7 of 2017. The press conference at that time was led directly by Bahtiar Effendy as the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Committee and the General Secretary Abdul Mu'ti.

The attitude shown by Din Syamsuddin in 2014 and Bahtiar Effendy in 2017 emphasized the collective nature of collegial in decision-making within Muhammadiyah. Din, who took the helm of the Islamic organization in 2014, still had to accept and sign a joint decision with the organization that wanted CLPR, despite personally rejecting it. Meanwhile, Bahtiar Effendy, although he personally has a preference for the *plurality/majority system*, also accepts Muhammadiyah's decision to offer two options for reforming the electoral system, namely CLPR or limited open proportionality. After the decision was taken, he as the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Committee directly led a press conference to announce the official stance of the organization to the public.

Three years after the implementation of the 2019 elections, the offer to adopt a limited open or proportional CLPR electoral system was again voiced by Muhammadiyah. This time, this attitude was "standardized" in the 48th Tanfidz Congress in Surakarta 2022 with the following editorial: "The open proportional system in legislative elections needs to be changed. The direct election of presidents, governors, regents, and mayors does not need to be changed. However, the election mechanism needs to be improved in a more efficient and effective direction, for example through a closed or limited open electoral system...."

However, there is something interesting behind the decision-making process this time. RH's informant said that during the congress, he was part of the material team that compiled the manuscript of Muhammadiyah's national views on tanfidz, including a special section that discussed the reform of the electoral system. According to RH, the original script he compiled with the team was not like the official version of tanfidz that was published. This is because the Muhammadiyah political scientists involved in the formulation of the text have agreed that the idea of improving the legislative electoral system will be brought to a moderate direction (MLPR), namely a hybrid model electoral system that combines elements of CLPR and OLPR. Therefore, they no longer use CLPR as an option offered by Muhammadiyah as before (2014 and 2017). However, at the last moment, the script they had compiled suddenly changed its redaction with the re-inclusion of the phrase "closed electoral system" as one of the official offers of the 48th Muhammadiyah Congress (al-Hamdi, 2024).

According to RH, the change in the manuscript occurred due to a revision made by Abdul Mu'ti. In other words, the change occurred without the knowledge of the material team that compiled the tanfiz.

He said:

"This is *behind the scenes*.... In the draft, there is no sound (closed electoral system) actually. There is no such editorial in my opinion. That's the addition of Pak Sekum (Abdul Mu'ti). Because that's what made me actually the initial draft, but there is no sentence yet. Because of what? The choice *must* go through serious studies. Yes, you know, as a political scientist who I am indeed *concerned* about, I don't dare to put a choice (CLPR) *because* this represents the institution. If I were to say put it on the basis, what is my personal view? Yes, you can't. It should be based on studies. How many times?

RH's statement was also confirmed by one of the political science academic sources at the University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY) who did not want to be named. According to him, the emergence of the phrase "closed electoral system" was only an improvisation from Abdul Mu'ti. (Muqoddas, 2025) Meanwhile, Abdul Mu'ti dismissed if the two options for reforming the electoral system as listed in the 48th Congress Tanfidz were his personal decision. He stated that he did not want to make a personal opinion regarding the election and preferred to comply with the organization's decision that had been set in the 48th Congress in Surakarta. According to him, elections are a national agenda that must be critically studied and addressed with a constructive approach (of Muhammadiyah, 2023). He also claimed that the emergence of the closed proportional system option in the tanfidz only continued the results of previous Muhammadiyah studies, including the proposal that had been offered in 2014 (Afandi, 2023). In a meeting with Muhammadiyah-affiliated media journalists on Monday night, May 8, 2023, Abdul Mu'ti said:

"You (Muhammadiyah journalists) may disagree with the opinion of an Abdul Mu'ti, but do not disagree with the organization's decision."

The issuance of the decision of the 48th Muhammadiyah Congress in support of changing the electoral system towards CLPR has reaped polemics in the community from the end of 2022 to mid-2023. RH said that at that time, the LHKP had to "set up a body" to provide clarification to the public because of the strong rejection of CLPR. Moreover, as an institution that accommodates political issues and public issues that are of concern to Muhammadiyah, LHKP has a strategic role, namely intensifying Muhammadiyah's *advocacy-based* advocacy movement and encouraging evidence-based *policies* (Tanfidz, 2022). Therefore, as the chairman of the LHKP, RH also had to deal with public questions that demanded an explanation of Muhammadiyah's argument about the CLPR proposal.

In his explanation to CNN Indonesia on January 4, 2023, RH said that Muhammadiyah did not make CLPR a "dead price" offer for electoral system reform, but also did not agree with OLPR. This is because both CLPR and OLPR have advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, the main message that Muhammadiyah wants to convey in the decision of the 48th Congress is the need to modify or improve the OLPR electoral system which is considered to be liberal, not solely directing the return of the CLPR system. He said:

"The decision of the congress is in the spirit of reform, a change in the system. The spirit is... So, the parent sentence is 'reformasi'. While the subsentences give an example: return to closed or semi-open. *Well*, this subsentence can be debated because it is not a subsentence, yes. Except in the subparagraph it already states (emphatically) that 'the system must be that'... If you read the decision of the congress, the parent sentence is 'reform of the electoral system'. *Well*, then a sentence like that. So read it as I explained it on CNN (Indonesia). This shows that there are many alternatives to the electoral system." (Muqoddas, 2025)

From the above explanation, it becomes clear that there has been a change in the direction of Muhammadiyah's advocacy regarding the discourse on electoral system reform as a result of the organization's evaluation of the OLPR which has been implemented since 2009. The change started from the push towards a closed system (CLPR) in 2014, until when this research was carried out, it was increasingly towards a semi-open proportional system (MLPR). Although Muhammadiyah officially supports the option of changing the CLPR legislative electoral system or semi-open proportional as stated in the 48th Tanfidz Muktamar, the preferences of its internal actors are not homogeneous. The organization's decision reflects the compromise of these diverse views, and with

an open attitude between actors that allows dialogue and revision of discourse according to the demands of political dynamics in Indonesia. The decision-making poses in Muhammadiyah related to the reform of the electoral system show a democratic but complex internal dynamic. Although the official decisions of the organization reflect a collective compromise, there is tension between the individual preferences of Muhammadiyah actors and the decisions of the organization. The editorial change in the Tanfidz manuscript that re-included the CLPR option without the knowledge of the drafting team shows that there is an intervention of individual leadership, such as from Abdul Mu'ti, that influences the direction of organizational decisions. This triggered polemics, both within the organization and in the public, so LHKP Muhammadiyah had to clarify to the public.

Identification of Muhammadiyah's Strategy in Advocating for Post-New Order Electoral System Reform

The discourse on electoral system reform has begun to receive special attention from Muhammadiyah since 2009. However, until 2022, the efforts they made to realize this discourse have not been structured. Although there is a massive use of mass media—including press conferences—by Islamic organizations to shape public opinion, that method alone is not enough. The findings in this study show that the LHKP as an institution that deals with political and public policy studies in Islamic organizations is not so neat in developing its advocacy strategy on this issue. When LHKP was chaired by Imam Addaruqutni (2010–2015), the institution began to publish the HIKMAH Journal as a means to accommodate the aspirations and disseminate the political thoughts of Muhammadiyah citizens, as well as to expand civic *education* that has been developed in various Muhammadiyah universities (Syahputra, 2014). However, these efforts have not been able to touch the more strategic realm to influence policymakers. In fact, when Muhammadiyah tried to provide input on the drafting of the Election Law No. 7 of 2017, the function it carried out was more of an advisory only. This was acknowledged by RH's informant who said that Muhammadiyah actors involved in LHKP in the 2010-2022 period had their own obstacles to put electoral system reform as their priority advocacy agenda, even though the issue received serious attention from the organization. He said:

"The one who oversees the issue (reform of the electoral system) is *the* LHKP. Yes, I saw the LHKP before me, the *size* was lacking, both as a *think tank* and as a formulator (study maker). I see it (the obstacle), one; lack of people, whether it's their limited time or their busyness. From 2010-2015 (the chairman of the LHKP was) Mas Imam Addaruqutni, until the last one (2015-2022) yesterday there were two changes (chairman of the LHKP), Mas Riefqi Muna continued to Pak Yono (Reksoprodjo) and then to me. I see that there is room for their limitations. Yes, what should be that the LHKP can make formulas and this is what I am doing, we make formulas. That's right, the LHKP is the *think tank* of Muhammadiyah. Now the problem is, how far is the think tank at that time (doing)? I saw that LHKP in the era of Mas Addaruqutni was busy making journals at that time. Yes, there is a journal, the HIKMAH Journal. But in more strategic forums, it seems that they don't *take* their role like that." (Muqoddas, 2025)

In parliament, the discourse on electoral system reform that Muhammadiyah has been echoing since 2014 has received a dynamic response. On several occasions, a number of political parties have shown their support for the discourse. But the more they come here, the more parties want the OLPR to be maintained. The tendency of political parties to choose a status quo position against the OLPR is shown by the change in the map in the House of Representatives in 2022-2023 where there is only one in nine parties in the House of Representatives that support the CLPR, namely the PDIP. In fact, during the discussion of the revision of the Election Bill in 2016, Golkar also provided support for the discourse. Later, the party with the banyan symbol changed its attitude and openly expressed its rejection of the CLPR. Meanwhile, PAN, the party that was born from the "womb" of Muhammadiyah, has never given any support to the implementation of CLPR since the beginning of the reform. The same attitude was also shown by the party towards the discourse of a limited or semi-open proportional system. That fact can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. Debate Map of the DPR/DPRD Electoral system in the Legislative Process in the Post-Reform Parliament

Regulation Products	Supports OLPR	Supports CLPR	Supports Other Systems
UU No. 3 Tahun 1999	—————	The ABRI Faction, the United Development Faction (PPP), and the Indonesian Democratic Faction (PDI)	The Development Work Faction (Golkar) and the Government support FPTP or the majority-plurality system.
UU No. 12 Tahun 2003	PKB, PAN, PK, and PPP	PDIP and PBB	Golkar (supports a semi-open list proportional representation system, candidates with 100 percent of the votes are automatically elected).
UU No. 10 Tahun 2008	PAN, PKB, PPP, PBR, and the Pioneer Star Faction of Democracy (PBB, Pioneer Party, PPK, PPD, PNIM)	MCC	Golkar and PDIP (support a limited open proportional representation system, candidates with 30 percent of the vote. BPP is automatically selected)
UU No. 8 Tahun 2012	PAN, Democrats, Golkar, Hanura, PPP, Gerindra	PDIP and SMEs	—————
UU No. 7 Tahun 2017	Gerindra, PKB, Democrats, PPP, PAN, PKS, NasDem, and Hanura	PDIP and the Golkar Party	The government offers a limited open (semi-open) list proportional representation system.

Source: Fahmi, 2010; Burhani, 2011; Malay, 2013; Pahlev, 2014; Riwanto, 2016; Romli, 2018.

From the table above, it appears that support for the OLPR is consistently shown by PAN. In fact, there are several Muhammadiyah cadres who are quite prominent in the elite ranks of political parties with the sun symbol. One of them is Salah P Daulay (SPD) who has been a legislative member of PAN since 2014 and served as chairman of the PAN faction of the House of Representatives in 2019–2024. Regarding PAN's stance that it never gave support to Muhammadiyah's proposal regarding the discourse on electoral system reform, the SPD said:

"In the National Mandate Party (PAN), we are still exploring whether a closed or open system is more profitable. However, PAN tends to favor an open system because it provides wide opportunities for candidates from different backgrounds to compete. Despite this, we remain open to the dynamics and further study. The decision to change the electoral system must be carefully considered so as not to harm the party's position in political contestation." (al-Hamdi, 2024)

Furthermore, he said, Muhammadiyah always establishes communication—both formally and informally—with political parties to convey its aspirations. According to the SPD, there are many Muhammadiyah inputs that are accommodated and fought for by political parties in parliament. However, not all Muhammadiyah proposals were adopted, including proposals related to electoral system reform, because political parties also prioritized their interests and sustainability. Plus, political dynamics in parliament involve theses, antitheses, and synthesis, reflecting the complexity of political decisions in competitive liberal democracies. This implies that when in the party

environment, the SPD as Muhammadiyah cadres in PAN tend to take *a position* to prioritize the interests of the party over the aspirations of the organization.

Meanwhile, MMA admitted, with the current party system model, it is difficult to reform the electoral system as aspired or fought for by Muhammadiyah. The reason is that the current parties, including PAN, have already enjoyed votes from popular candidates, especially artists, even though they are incompetent. The candidates appear to have become effective *vote getters* to win seats in parliament. MMA says:

"Because of extraordinary political pragmatism, they (the parties) trust more for example with artists. The party system that is built now how can they get a lot of votes, right? So who can get the most votes is placed (to sit in parliament). The case in Senayan (DPR) '*ho ha ho ho*' is only D3 (come, sit, be quiet) or D5 (come, sit, be quiet, listen, get money), so that's another matter. But they are the ones who are expected to get seats."

In addition to the above reasons, MMA considers that Muhammadiyah has difficulty in channeling its aspirations to PAN, even though the party was founded by Amien Rais, who incidentally is the former chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Committee. This happened because since its establishment until now, the representation of Muhammadiyah in the PAN structure is still far from the word representative and proportional. The dominance of groups outside Muhammadiyah is actually more prominent in the party's management (Murod, 2021).

As described in the previous discussion, the LHKP plays an important role in formulating ideas related to political issues through collective studies, although the influence of the Muhammadiyah elite also shapes the discussion. And the actors in the mass organizations also agreed that the electoral system that is to be used as a solution in the future must be based on academic studies, not departing from the short-term political desires of the rulers. LHKP itself has only begun to make a structured scientific study related to electoral system reform, including legislative (DPR/DPRD), in 2020 (Al-Hamdi, et al., 2025). From there, they began to formulate an MLPR formulation that was considered to be a middle ground for OLPR and CLPR. Furthermore, the LHKP seeks to introduce a new variant of the electoral system to policymakers, including the government.

The RH informant said that after the idea of the MLPR system was launched in early 2025, the LHKP immediately held an audience with the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas). The meeting took place behind closed doors on February 21, 2025. On that occasion, RH and a team from LHKP proposed revisions to three political laws, namely the Political Party Law, the Election Law, and the Regional Election Law, to be consolidated into the Omnibus Law on Politics (Editor, 2025). In the same month, the draft proposal was also submitted by LHKP personally to the Directorate General of Politics and General Government of the Ministry of Home Affairs to be considered by the government in the revision of the Election Law in the future. According to RH, both Bappenas and the Ministry of Home Affairs responded well to Muhammadiyah's proposal. Finally, the LHKP also conveyed the same input to political parties.

"This political party is quite interesting. Some of them responded to invite LHKP into their internal forums. But indeed, this political party *is* indeed difficult to control. We have sent out ideas, asking them to discuss this, including how we can discuss specifically each party. But until now, even though we have contacted the idea personally, there has been no concrete steps regarding what should be done in the midst of the situation of the Election Law, whether it is discussed in the Baleg (Legislative Body of the House of Representatives) or Commission II... But we still try to lobby, provide input, build public opinion through the media, including lobbying the House of Representatives through factions." (al-Hamdi, 2025)

From the above explanation, it appears that there are continuous efforts from Muhammadiyah to encourage reform of the electoral system, although the main goal has not been achieved until this research is conducted. In advocating for these ideas, Muhammadiyah tends to use a collaborative approach while avoiding a confrontational approach with policymakers. The findings in this study show that the choice of strategy used by LHKP PP Muhammadiyah is in line with Start & Hovland (2004), that as *a think tank*, they work based on *science* and strong scientific evidence. In terms of the choice of movement strategy, *think tanks* choose to build collaborations with policymakers to channel their new ideas.

Conclusion

The description in this chapter shows that Muhammadiyah, as an Islamic organization that prioritizes the approach of *da'wah amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, actively conveys its political ideas in two ways. First, through formal channels, such as the LHKP, which conduct in-depth studies involving academics and politicians. The results of the study were then submitted to parliament as input for the revision of the election law. Second, Muhammadiyah also voiced its aspirations openly in the public sphere to promote political morality. Although this input is a reference for political parties, the final decision in the House of Representatives requires cross-faction consensus, so it does not depend only on one party like PAN.

Since 2009, Muhammadiyah has consistently encouraged the reform of the electoral system while maintaining a non-partisan attitude. However, the preferences of Muhammadiyah's internal actors towards the electoral system are not homogeneous. Muhammadiyah's official decision, as stated in the 48th Tanfidz Congress in 2022 in Surakarta, reflects a compromise by supporting the change from OLPR to CLPR or MLPR, despite internal dynamics due to individual interventions that can affect the sound of the organization's official decisions. This dynamic shows a democratic but complex decision-making process, where an open attitude between actors allows dialogue and revision of discourse according to political needs.

Based on the theoretical framework of Start and Hovland (2004) on the role of *think tanks* in *science and evidence-based policy advocacy*, Muhammadiyah, through the Institute of Wisdom and Public Policy (LHKP) shows its commitment to encouraging reform of the post-New Order electoral system with an approach based on scientific and non-confrontational studies. This research reveals that the preferences of Muhammadiyah's internal actors for the electoral system vary, including the majority/plurality system, *Closed-List Proportional Representation* (CLPR), *Open-List Proportional Representation* (OLPR), and limited open proportional system (MLPR).

Muhammadiyah's advocacy strategy is collaborative, involving hearings with Bappenas and the Ministry of Home Affairs in February 2025, the submission of a draft of the Political Omnibus Law, as well as lobbying to political parties and the House of Representatives. Despite the positive response from government agencies, support from political parties has been limited due to their tendency to maintain the OLPR for pragmatic gains. This is exacerbated by the lack of representation of Muhammadiyah cadres in the party structure, including PAN which has historical ties with the organization. This challenge reflects the difficulty in translating science-based aspirations into policy amid competitive liberal political dynamics.

Thus, Muhammadiyah's advocacy is in line with the approach of Start and Hovland (2004) which emphasizes scientific evidence-based collaboration to influence policymakers. However, full success has not been achieved until this study was conducted, mainly due to the limitations of the advocacy structure before 2022 and resistance from political parties. Nevertheless, Muhammadiyah has consistently maintained a non-partisan approach, utilizing the media, and building dialogue to strengthen public opinion and encourage more democratic and civilized electoral system reform.

CONCLUSION

The findings described earlier may finally answer a number of questions in this study. First, *Muhammadiyah* as a *civil society organization* or *CSOs* played a significant role in advocating for the reform of the legislative electoral system (DPR/DPRD) in post-New Order Indonesia (1999–2024). Based on Merkel's theory (1999), *Muhammadiyah* carries out two main functions of *civil society* in strengthening democracy after authoritarian regimes: (1) the function of supervision and control of state power, as well as (2) the function of articulating community values and social interests. Regarding the first function, *Muhammadiyah* has consistently criticized the *OLPR* electoral system because it is considered to encourage transactional political practices, such as money politics, community polarization, and candidate domination based on popularity rather than meritocracy. This organization provides input to policymakers (DPR and government) to reform the electoral system to be more fair and reflect the sovereignty of the people, as enshrined in the 1945 Constitution. Meanwhile, the second function is carried out by the Institute for Wisdom and Public Policy (LHKP) through scientific forums, seminars, and studies. From there, *Muhammadiyah* created a public space to advocate for an electoral system that supports justice and public trust, free from market economic influences. An example is the proposed moderate list proportional representation (*MLPR*) system

that integrates elements of individual competition (*OLPR*) and party control (*CLPR*) to minimize money politics and improve the quality of democracy. This role can be seen from *Muhammadiyah's* efforts to provide input on the discussion of the Election Bill (for example, Law No. 7 of 2017) and issue official recommendations at the 48th Congress in Surakarta in 2022, which encouraged the change from *OLPR* to *CLPR* or *MLPR*. Although only two of the seven *Muhammadiyah* inputs in Law No. 7 of 2017 were accepted (the status of the regency/city KPU as a permanent institution and the elimination of witness funding from the state budget), the organization remained active in voicing reforms through formal and public channels.

Second, *Muhammadiyah* persistently encourages changes in the *OLPR* system because this organization considers that the system is not in line with the values of *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution, and damages the quality of democracy. Based on *Muhammadiyah's* evaluation, *OLPR* has led to the rise of money politics and transactional practices that reduce the sovereignty of the people to the object of political manipulation. The system also creates unfair competition between candidates within one party, which weakens the coherence of the party system. In addition, in the *OLPR*, elected legislators tend to be based on popularity alone, not capacity, meritocracy, or professionalism, thus sacrificing the interests of the people. The system is also said to form a polarization of society due to *SARA*-based identity politics (ethnicity, religion, race, inter-group). The persistence of *Muhammadiyah* is driven by the organization's commitment to realize a substantial democracy based on justice, openness, and meritocracy, not just procedural democracy. The organization seeks to address the weaknesses of the *OLPR* by proposing *CLPR* or *MLPR* as a fairer and more effective solution.

Third, the *Muhammadiyah* actors who play a role in this discourse have diverse backgrounds, but they are generally dominated by academics and politicians. Some of the prominent names include Abdul Mu'ti, who played a role in formulating the organization's official position, including his intervention in the editorial of the 48th Tanfidz Congress in 2022 to include the *CLPR* option. Next is Ridho al-Hamdi, as the chairman of LHKP PP *Muhammadiyah* for the 2022–2027 period, who is also an academic from the University of *Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta* (UMY). Other names such as Bahtiar Effendy (former chairman of *Muhammadiyah* Central Committee), Busyro Muqaddas (chairman of Law, Human Rights, and Wisdom of *Muhammadiyah* Central Committee), and Din Syamsuddin (former chairman of *Muhammadiyah* Central Committee) were also involved in this discourse, including taking decisions on a collective collegial basis. The heterogeneity of the actors' preferences reflects the pluralistic nature of *Muhammadiyah* as a *civil society* (according to Merkel's theory), with minimal normative consensus for a more fair and democratic electoral system reform. Another finding that is also worth highlighting in this study is that, when part of a political party, *CSO* actors tend to take a position to prioritize the interests of the party rather than adopting the demands of the *CSO* from which they come, as long as the demands are considered to threaten the sustainability of the party. This is evidenced by the arguments of SPD informants when explaining why PAN chose to continue to support the *OLPR* system rather than agreeing with *Muhammadiyah's* aspirations related to the *CLPR* system or semi-open proportionality.

Fourth, based on the framework of Start and Hovland (2004), *Muhammadiyah* uses a science-based and evidence-based policy advocacy approach with a collaborative and non-confrontational strategy to influence election policies. The strategy taken includes advising, where *Muhammadiyah* provides formal input to the House of Representatives and the government, such as in the discussion of the 2017 Election Bill, which covers seven strategic issues (Table 1.2). LHKP also submitted a draft of the Political Omnibus Law to Bappenas and the Ministry of Home Affairs in February 2025. The next strategy is lobbying, where the LHKP seeks to build a dialogue with policymakers, including conducting political lobbying through closed hearings with Bappenas and the Ministry of Home Affairs, as well as communication with factions in the House of Representatives. LHKP also contacted political parties personally to discuss the *MLPR* discourse. Beyond that, *Muhammadiyah* also takes an advocacy strategy by utilizing mass media, press conferences, and public forums (for example, pre-muktamar seminars and the launch of the book *The Indonesian Electoral System* in 2025) to shape public opinion and promote political morality. *Muhammadiyah* organizationally avoids the use of activism strategies because of its collaborative approach, the mass organization avoids confrontation, and focuses on scientific studies conducted by the LHKP, such as the development of *MLPR* which will be published in book form in January 2025.

However, the success of *Muhammadiyah's* advocacy on the issue of electoral system reform has been limited due to several reasons. The first is the resistance of the majority of political parties, where 8 out of 9 factions in the House of Representatives reject the *CLPR* in 2023. Second, there are limitations in the advocacy structure before 2022, where the LHKP is less organized in formulating strategies. Next, the competitive dynamics of liberal politics have encouraged political parties to prioritize pragmatism rather than accommodating *Muhammadiyah's* reform aspirations. Fourth, the lack of representation of *Muhammadiyah* cadres in the structure of political parties, including PAN which tends to prioritize party interests, is also another obstacle. Nevertheless, *Muhammadiyah* organizationally remains consistent in maintaining a non-partisan attitude, utilizing formal channels (LHKP) and public channels (media, seminars) to encourage reform of the electoral system that is more democratic and civilized.

Although the main goal of electoral system reform (towards *CLPR* or *MLPR*) has not been achieved until 2024, *Muhammadiyah* has succeeded in strengthening public discourse on the need for a fairer and more democratic electoral system. The sustainability of this advocacy in the future depends on strengthening the structure of the LHKP, increasing collaboration with political parties, and responding to complex political dynamics in Indonesia.

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