



THE IDEOLOGY OF THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT OF THE PROSPEROUS JUSTICE PARTY (A CASE STUDY OF PKS MEDAN POLONIA)

Saufi Arantika¹, Wirman², Fitriani³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia *Corresponding Author: saufiarantika2@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) is one of the Islamicbased political parties in Indonesia with strong ideological roots, often associated with transnational Islamic da'wah movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood from Egypt. This study aims to analyze the Islamic movement ideology promoted by PKS in Medan Polonia. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings indicate that PKS remains committed to Islamic values as its ideological foundation while exhibiting pragmatic and moderate strategies in local political contexts. PKS integrates da'wah with political and social activities through tarbiyah-based approaches, community service, and interpersonal communication. The transformation from an exclusive da'wah movement to an inclusive political party illustrates PKS's adaptability in facing the dynamics of Indonesian democracy.

Keywords: PKS; Islamic Ideology; Political Islam; Medan Polonia, Da'wah Movement

1. INTRODUCTION

In a modern state, the development of political parties is significant. Various forms of politics grow and evolve. Naturally, the models and structures of one party differ from another. This diversity has led political scientists to attempt classifications or groupings of political parties, categorizing them into specific types. Mariam Budiardjo (1972, Jakarta) stated that party classification can be conducted in various ways. Viewed from the composition and function of membership, political parties are generally divided into two types: mass parties and cadre parties.

First, mass parties prioritize power based on the number of members. As a result, they are typically composed of supporters from various political streams

and tend to advocate for broad and somewhat vague programs. The weakness of mass parties lies in the tendency of each stream or group within them to push their own interests especially during critical moments which can lead to the disintegration of the party and the formation of new splinter groups.

Second, cadre parties focus on organizational strength and the working discipline of their members. Party leaders usually preserve the purity of political doctrine by filtering prospective members and dismissing those who deviate from the established party line.

According to Hidayat Nur Wahid, Vice Chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR RI), the resilience of Indonesia's ideology, Pancasila, reflects a historical achievement a unified effort by diverse groups to create a strong and stable foundation. Pancasila has withstood and adapted to many dynamics (Hidayat Wahid, 2020).

Much of the political spectacle within a nation surprises the public, especially concerning political parties their role in winning elections, their strategic movements, and their approaches to the people. Party ideologies are broadly classified into two major streams: nationalist-democratic and religious. Both can garner public support, but it is typically the party whose ideology resonates most with the majority of citizens that emerges victorious (Hidayat Nur Wahid, 2020).

Mohammad Sohibul Iman, President of PKS, explained the foundational ideology of the party which forms the soul of PKS within the Indonesian context. He stated that PKS embraces two forms of ideology: a principal ideology and a working ideology. "When we talk about ideology or foundation, we actually have two: the principal ideology, which is Islam as the source of inspiration for the Islamic movement, and which can be acknowledged as the foundational ideology of a political party in Indonesia." PKS also has a working ideology, which is justice. Therefore, all PKS's political efforts are directed toward achieving justice in every form economic, political, legal, and religious justice (Sohibul Iman, PKS Headquarters, 2020).

The various grand ideologies in Indonesia have contributed to shaping the modern nation. Ideologies such as Islamism, nationalism, socialism, and liberalism have functioned as political instruments in the struggle for independence. Ideology has become a consolidated element in the formation of the nation-state, particularly the two dominant ideologies: Islam and nationalism. Since the Reformation era, society has been granted the freedom to form ideological groups. The opening of civic spaces has encouraged the emergence of interest groups advocating for societal change and transformation (Syahrir Karim, 2012).

The emergence of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) cannot be separated from both domestic and international political developments between early 1998 and the fall of the New Order regime. PKS was born and brought a new color to Islamic politics in Indonesia. According to Anis Matta, the history of Indonesian political movements has been polarized into three main ideological streams: Islam,

nationalism, and socialism. The dialogue and dialectic among these three have triggered social upheavals and dynamic political developments since the founding of Budi Utomo, the Islamic Union (Sarekat Islam), the Youth Pledge, and the birth of the Indonesian state (Anis Matta, 2015).

Ideologies operating in societies with diverse social, cultural, and political backgrounds require a particular method of da'wah (Islamic propagation) so that messages are effectively conveyed and accepted. This is consistent with the saying of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "Whoever calls others to guidance will have a reward like that of those who follow it, without their rewards being diminished in the slightest. And whoever calls to misguidance will bear the sin of those who follow him, without their sins being diminished in the slightest." (Narrated by Muslim, Malik, Abu Dawud, and Tirmidhi).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining an indepth understanding of the form, content, and implementation of the Islamic movement ideology of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in the Medan Polonia area. The type of research conducted is qualitative research using a case study model. The main focus is on the ideology of PKS and how that ideology is carried out through political and socio-community activities at the local level. The approach adopted is phenomenological, which seeks to explore the meaning of PKS ideology from the perspectives of actors and communities directly interacting with it in Medan Polonia District. Qualitative methodology itself is rooted in Max Weber's positivism paradigm. According to Immanuel Kant and Wilhelm Dilthey (2006), the object of qualitative research is to uncover the meanings behind actions that trigger social phenomena.

To obtain the desired data, a standard and systematic process known as data collection is conducted. Data collection techniques may involve various methods and sources. In this study, the researcher collected data from both primary sources (those who directly provide information) and secondary sources (those who do not directly provide the data, such as through intermediaries). The researcher employed multiple data collection methods. These include:

- Observations at the PKS Medan Polonia Branch Office (DPC), the Medan City DPRD Office, the PKS City Regional Board Office (DPD), and community activities facilitated by PKS, including local PKS figures.
- Interviews with Mr. Ferri Syahputra, Chair of DPC PKS Medan Polonia, five active PKS cadres, residents of Medan Polonia, and one community figure.

In total, interviews were conducted with 16 individuals, representing approximately 0.022% of the Medan Polonia subdistrict population. The composition of informants includes both internal PKS members and members of

the public familiar with or involved in the party's activities. Although the sample size is relatively small, participants were selected purposively based on their involvement in PKS's da'wah and political activities.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The Ideology of the Islamic Movement and the Political Struggle of PKS

The ideology of the Islamic movement refers to a set of Islamic values and principles that serve as the foundation for political engagement. According to Munir Mulkhan (2015), political Islamic ideology emphasizes the integration between religion and state power as part of an effort to build a civil society (madani society). These values serve not only as a religious moral compass but also as a political doctrine that guides Muslim political actors in navigating contemporary socio-political challenges.

The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and its ideological foundation are deeply rooted in the Tarbiyah Movement, which originated on university campuses during the 1980s. The movement emphasized personal Muslim development (tazkiyah al-nafs), systematic cadre training, and collective action ('amal jama'i) as the ideological backbone of its political orientation. PKS is thus not a sudden phenomenon but the institutional manifestation of a long-standing process of da'wah-based activism transitioning into formal politics.

Dhume portrays PKS as "a gradual and evolutionary movement aimed at establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia." He goes further by suggesting that PKS hides this agenda behind a public narrative of anti-corruption and clean governance, while continuing to pursue fundamentalist values, both overtly and covertly (Andrew Steele, 2020; Burhanuddin Muhtadi, 2020). Initially focusing on religious propagation, the Tarbiyah movement gradually extended its scope into politics. For them, political activities must be imbued with da'wah values.

When the Reformasi era opened political opportunities, on August 19, 1998, the leaders of the Tarbiyah Movement officially declared the formation of the Justice Party (PK) at the Al-Azhar Mosque courtyard in Jakarta. PK became the first political party to explicitly adopt Islam as its foundational ideology. By 2002, the party rebranded itself as the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), incorporating aspects of Wahhabism, a puritanical Islamic reform movement (Salafiyyah). This reformist orientation served as a bridge for intellectual Islamic renewal in the context of 20th-century Islamic thought.

Religion, in this regard, plays a dual role. First, in its manifest function, it gives meaning to life, shapes rituals, builds community, supports social life, and encourages transformation. Second, in its latent function, it expresses collective consciousness, maintains social cohesion, and secures public order. While the religious function may vary among communities, Raschke, Kirk, and Taylor (2007) assert that religious movements are tasked with liberating people—protecting

them from suffering and enabling them to live fully, including through social and political participation.

In the case of PKS Medan Polonia, Islamic values are used as a fundamental reference in the formulation of work programs and political activities. The party's ideological identity reflects a combination of Islamic populism, political da'wah, and Tarbiyah-centric organizational discipline. PKS Medan Polonia implements its Islamic ideology through several key strategies: social service activities (such as charity work, healthcare services, and disaster relief), political education for both cadres and the public, and active participation in elections and public policymaking via elected representatives.

However, as a da'wah-based political party, PKS's political campaign is essentially ongoing, well before formal electoral periods begin. This is due to the party's consistent engagement in community service, which becomes a soft campaign that builds public familiarity and trust. As a result, by the time elections take place, voters often already recognize and support PKS candidates. This approach is a hallmark of PKS's political communication strategy: campaigning is not confined to electoral season but is part of a sustained effort to shape public perception and political behavior (see Communicatus: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, 2020).

Historical Roots and Ideological Identity of PKS Medan Polonia

In the book The Political Ideology of PKS: From Mosque to Parliament, it is noted that the seeds of the Justice Party (PK) began to emerge in the 1970s. At that time, these seeds took the form of campus-based da'wah activism. These activists organized and managed religious study groups (pengajian) under the umbrella of Campus Da'wah Organizations (Lembaga Dakwah Kampus - LDK). These institutions frequently held religious activities such as student Islamic gatherings. However, during the New Order era, these activities were often conducted discreetly or covertly. When events were held openly, they were typically framed as general student activities to avoid political scrutiny (M. Imdadun Rahmat, Pelangi Aksara, 2008).

The ideological structure and identity of PKS Medan Polonia are grounded in Islamic values that shape its political conduct. Its ideological character can be described as Islamic-populist, political-da'wah-oriented, and Tarbiyah-centric. These three pillars define not only the internal organization and cadre-building of the party but also its outreach strategies.

Implementing Ideology in Political Activity

PKS Medan Polonia translates its ideological foundation into concrete political and social actions, such as:

• Social welfare programs including health services and disaster relief.

- Political education programs aimed at cadre development and public political literacy.
- Active involvement in local elections and public policy formulation through elected officials.

Despite this, the party often encounters a dilemma between ideological purity and political pragmatism. On one hand, it strives to uphold the values of Islamic da'wah; on the other hand, it must navigate the practical realities of Indonesian politics, such as forming coalitions with secular parties, adapting to campaign trends, and maintaining cadre militancy amid growing public skepticism. These tensions raise fundamental questions about the sustainability of ideological consistency in a democratic, pluralistic environment.

The Nature of Ideology and PKS's Struggle for Coherence

Ideology, in principle, refers to a body of teachings or a system of values concerning worldly affairs, arranged systematically to serve as a political or state guideline. Therefore, it is essential to formulate ideology through ijtihad—a process of intellectual reasoning grounded in both divine revelation and rationality—as a framework for societal and political life. For conscious Muslims, understanding the objectives of the struggle and the purpose of human existence on earth is a religious imperative. Ideology offers direction and objectives for the movement as well as the principles upon which political, economic, cultural, educational, and defense systems are built. Given the guidance provided by the Qur'an and Sunnah, every Muslim has the opportunity to formulate an ideology that aligns with Islamic values (Mohammad Natsir, 2007).

The characteristics of ideology are profound and expansive; they are long-term and, in their foundational aspects, often regarded as universal. Ideology becomes a unifying force for a community, a source of identity, and a justification for group behavior. In Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah serve as the foundation for state life. Thus, it can be argued that Islam contains elements that can function as a political ideology.

Transnational Influences and Strategic Political Da'wah

In an interview with Sitaresmi Sulistyawati Soekanto (2011), Deputy Secretary General of the PKS Central Board, she acknowledged that the ideological influence of the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun) on PKS is inescapable. This influence is reinforced by the fact that many Indonesian students pursue Islamic studies in the Middle East, especially in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The transmission of ideological frameworks from the Middle East to Indonesia has long shaped various Islamic organizations, including PKS. For example, Muhammadiyah's reformist outlook is said to be influenced by Muhammad 'Abduh and Wahhabi thought.

According to Bubalo and Fealy (2005), PKS benefits from two strategic advantages. First, its conservative base continues to believe in the party's commitment to constitutionalizing shariah principles, with references to the Medina Charter serving as a historical precedent from the Prophet Muhammad's time. Second, many Indonesian citizens are drawn to the inclusive and pluralistic spirit of the Medina Charter, which respects non-Muslims and national diversity. However, above all, the overarching project of Islamizing the state remains central to the party's ideological aspirations.

Given widespread public reluctance to support the establishment of an Islamic state, PKS has strategically chosen to articulate its Islamic values in diplomatic and politically neutral language. Rather than explicitly calling for the formalization of an Islamic state, the party focuses on implementing shariah-based policies under the framework of Indonesia's pluralistic democracy.

PKS's Foundational Transition and Institutionalization

According to Damanik, Rahmat, and Noor (2002), approximately 50 Muslim leaders were involved in the declaration of the Justice Party (PK) in its early stages. Figures such as Hidayat Nur Wahid, Luthfi Hasan Ishaaq, Salim Segaf Al-Jufri, Yusuf Supendi, Untung Wahono, Almuzzammil Yusuf, Fahri Hamzah, and Nur Mahmudi Ismail played pivotal roles. In 2002, PK was rebranded as the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). On April 17, 2003, the party's Majelis Syura (Consultative Council) formally decided to merge the old PK with the new PKS, a merger that was officially notarized on July 3, 2003.

Despite its formal structure, PKS has often been criticized for inconsistencies between its ideological aspirations and its real political behavior. Some scholars suggest that this reflects a hidden agenda to manipulate democratic processes while maintaining ideological rigidity. Such behavior—rational and strategic—demonstrates a growing tendency among Islamic political parties in Indonesia to adopt moderate, electoral politics as a means of survival and influence. As Hwang (2009) notes, several indicators contribute to the normalization or moderation of Islamism, such as consistent participation in general elections and the formation of coalitions with secular parties as a pragmatic route to electoral success and parliamentary power. This pragmatic strategy is what leads many scholars to categorize PKS as a "Nationalist-Islamic" party one that balances religious identity with the necessities of democratic engagement.

Tarbiyah Roots, Political Integration, and Cadre Development

PKS emerged from the Tarbiyah movement, which was initially focused on da'wah activities during the early 1980s under the New Order regime. The Tarbiyah movement can be understood as an alternative to various Islamic movements at the time. Political Islam understood as the tendency of Muslims to

actively engage in politics by advocating their religious values was seen as both a corrective and a transformative force (Qodir, 2013:127).

The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), officially established on April 20, 2002, originated from campus-based da'wah initiatives. These began with the founding of the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia – DDII) in 1967, spearheaded by Muhammad Natsir. During the New Order era in 1985, many Islamic leaders opposed the imposition of Pancasila as the sole ideological foundation for all mass organizations. In response, the Jamaah Tarbiyah emerged and expanded across university campuses, eventually forming the Campus Da'wah Organizations (LDK). These organizations served as platforms for religious education and cadre development among university students. By 1986, the Forum Silaturahmi Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (FSLDK) was established, even as campus da'wah began to be associated with radical Islamic groups like Darul Islam.

The PKS party logo has undergone redesign, now featuring a circular shape dominated by orange and white with accents of black. PKS Secretary-General Aboe Bakar Alhabsy stated that the new logo reflects the party's commitment to becoming more inclusive and approachable across all societal segments. The orange color symbolizes warmth, hope, and youthfulness. White represents purity, sincerity, and dignity. Black conveys strength, discipline, assertiveness, and institutional credibility. Meanwhile, the symbol of 17 stalks of rice arranged vertically stands for values such as justice, brotherhood (ukhuwah), integrity (istikamah), courage, and perseverance in realizing justice and prosperity.

Orange, as a new visual identity, signals the party's desire to be seen as youthful, optimistic, and accessible. At the same event, PKS President Ahmad Syaikhu declared the party's ambition to increase its vote share in the 2024 general election. The Majelis Syura set a target of at least 15% of the national vote. All party cadres were instructed to preserve their leadership and public trust, especially those who had previously held public office, so that political capital would not be lost to other parties.

Religious Propagation and Public Reception

The term "Polonia", where PKS Medan Polonia operates, is derived from Latin, meaning Poland. The area was named after Baron Ludwig Michalski, a Polish national who, on December 14, 1869, received a 75-year land concession from the Sultan of Deli to establish a tobacco plantation. He named the land "Polonia" after his home country.

Da'wah is inseparable from the life of the Muslim community, permeating nearly all layers of society (Abdul 'Aziz, 2011:5). According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, da'wah means (1) religious propagation or persuasion; (2) spreading religion within society and encouraging adherence to its teachings. For PKS, Islam is not merely a symbolic identity, but the core of its political ethics and

policy direction. The party's Tarbiyah programs function as the main instrument for building cadre militancy. These programs offer not only religious instruction but also guidance on how members should understand and engage with social and political realities.

PKS Medan Polonia organizes weekly meetings (halaqah), structured mentorships, and intensive cadre development programs. In practice, PKS integrates da'wah and electoral politics. On one hand, they conduct religious and social activities such as Islamic lectures, charity events for the underprivileged, and free medical services. On the other hand, the party also nominates candidates in legislative and regional elections.

Despite its Islamist ideological foundations, PKS faces significant challenges in political practice. Political compromises are sometimes made to remain relevant within the mainstream. These adjustments have sparked criticism among both party members and external observers, questioning whether PKS has remained true to its identity as an Islamist movement or whether it has become a pragmatic political party.

Da'wah as a Strategic Framework for Political Engagement

According to Sayyid Qutb, da'wah derives from the Arabic root word da'aa, meaning "to call" or "to invite." It is a strategic and organized concept that must be implemented by da'i (Islamic preachers) to guide individuals toward a targeted objective, eventually achieving the desired ideals (Syabib, 2007). This view reflects the importance of structured messaging and clear direction in religious propagation, especially in a political context.

Sayyid Mutawakkil, as interpreted by Ali Ibn Salih Al-Murshid, emphasizes da'wah as a process of organizing and empowering human resources to carry out the teachings of Islam, uphold social norms (ma'ruf), and free human life from social ills (munkar). Thus, da'wah becomes an act of organizing society, leading people toward goodness, upholding social norms and culture, and protecting them from destructive behavior (Abidin, 2013:119).

In this framework, da'wah is not a passive practice, but rather a transformative movement that mobilizes segments of society to improve the quality of life and human development. To achieve this, a clear agenda and reform-oriented programs are essential. These agendas are then advanced through engagement with relevant stakeholders (Abu Ridha, 2004:51).

Political Cadre Development and Leadership Formation

Political parties, including PKS, play a significant role not only in recruiting new members but also in developing a systematic cadre education and leadership training process. This process is essential for the transmission of political knowledge, which includes party vision, mission, history, and strategy, as well as broader national issues.

Moreover, it is necessary to establish a healthy and transparent internal competition system. Political cadres and future leaders must be accustomed to competing on merit, free from collusion, nepotism, or favoritism. As Firmanzah (2008: 70–71) notes, only through such a transparent system can political cadre development produce highly competent and ethical leaders.

In essence, politics is an integral part of da'wah—a means to influence people toward Islamic values. There is no substantive difference between a jama'ah (religious community) and a political party; both function as tools for commanding good and forbidding evil (amar ma'ruf nahi munkar). In the modern era, where social life is marked by technology and virtual realities, da'wah must be contextualized and adapted accordingly. One way to enhance political engagement is through the integration of religious values with contemporary communication strategies (Abu Ridha, 2004:51). An informant, H. Kasman Lubis, Lc., explained in an interview: "In general, da'wah has been well received; thank God, I've never encountered rejection. In fact, people often feel enlightened. Many da'i still dwell on classical stories, while I usually relate to current events—either in Medan or the Middle East—so the audience feels more connected. People often think politics is dirty, but I try to change that perspective by linking political history to the da'wah message. As for tarbiyah, many avoid it because they think it's too intense or extreme, but actually, it's not. Most people now want da'wah to be fresh and relevant." (Interview with researcher, PKS office, 2024).

PKS designs activities that are inclusive and responsive to diverse community needs. For example, large-scale celebrations like party anniversaries (Milad) are designed to involve the public and foster enthusiasm. Nonetheless, PKS remains cautious in its approach to da'wah, recognizing that not all communities are ready to accept direct religious messaging.

4. CONCLUSION

After conducting a thorough reading and analysis based on the previous explanations, the following conclusions can be drawn:

It was found that PKS shares ideological proximity with political movements discussed in reception theory (Cultural Transformation). The acceptance of an ideology or culture is permissible, provided that the process follows an acceptable and systematic framework. The absorption of cultural values can occur through stages and conditions of transformation, including accommodation, acculturation, assimilation, or amalgamation.

The ideological intersection of PKS is notably linked to the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwanul Muslimin) in Egypt. A significant number of PKS cadres studied in Egypt and joined the Brotherhood's activities as part of a revivalist effort. This connection is evident in several principles shared with the Muslim Brotherhood. However, PKS did not adopt the entirety of the Brotherhood's ideology. This

selective adoption is due to Indonesia's distinct sociopolitical context, which differs substantially from that of the Middle East.

The Tarbiyah movement within PKS only incorporated the core principles and general structural framework of the Brotherhood's Tarbiyah model. These activists later established the Justice Party (PK), which eventually evolved into PKS. Therefore, PKS's political thought cannot be separated from the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. This connection is affirmed by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a prominent figure of the Brotherhood, as well as by the founders of PKS, particularly during the 1999 general election, where PKS aligned itself ideologically with like-minded political parties globally.

Regarding the supporting and inhibiting factors in PKS's da'wah development, several factors contribute to its success: official recognition by the government, public support that fuels the party's cadre-building efforts, and the consistent learning commitment of da'i (preachers), as well as the active participation of mad'u (recipients of da'wah) in da'wah activities to enhance their understanding. Conversely, PKS's limitations in da'wah stem from its current lack of political dominance, external challenges from opposing parties, and internal obstacles, including individual weaknesses within the organization.

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