

Muhammadiyah's Role in Indonesia's Independence: A Historical Systematic Review

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Abstract

This article systematically reviews how historical scholarship published up to 2020 explains Muhammadiyah's contribution to Indonesian independence. Employing a qualitative historical systematic review, the study synthesizes nineteen analytical sources consisting of journal articles, academic books, and an institutionally produced edited volume. The review distinguishes direct organizational action from the activities of cadres whose political and military roles were formed within Muhammadiyah networks. Five pathways emerge. First, Muhammadiyah created pre-political foundations of independence through modern education, healthcare, philanthropy, print culture, and organizational discipline. Second, 'Aisiyyah expanded women's literacy, public leadership, and participation in national women's networks. Third, youth formation through schools and Hizbul Wathan cultivated discipline, patriotism, and leadership, most visibly in General Soedirman. Fourth, Muhammadiyah leaders—including Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Abdul Kahar Muzakir, and Kasman Singodimedjo—participated in constitutional debates, the BPUPKI–PPKI process, and negotiations surrounding the state's religious foundation. Fifth, Muhammadiyah cadres contributed to defending and consolidating the Republic after the proclamation. The synthesis argues that Muhammadiyah's role cannot be reduced either to armed resistance or to the actions of several national heroes. Its principal contribution was infrastructural and cadre-based: it produced institutions, social capacities, moral vocabularies, and leadership networks that enabled Muslims to enter the national movement and sustain the new state. The literature nevertheless remains uneven, with excessive emphasis on elite male figures and limited independent evidence concerning local branches, women, ordinary members, and organizational coordination during the revolution. The review proposes a multidimensional framework connecting institutional nation-building, civic mobilization, cadre formation, constitutional negotiation, and republican defense.

Keywords: Muhammadiyah; Indonesian independence; historical systematic review; Ki Bagus Hadikusumo; General Soedirman; 'Aisiyyah; Nationalism.

Peran Muhammadiyah dalam Kemerdekaan Indonesia: Sebuah Tinjauan Sistematis Historis

Abstrak

Artikel ini secara sistematis mengkaji bagaimana literatur sejarah yang diterbitkan hingga tahun 2020 menjelaskan kontribusi Muhammadiyah terhadap kemerdekaan Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan *historical systematic review* kualitatif, penelitian ini mensintesis sembilan belas sumber analitis yang terdiri atas artikel jurnal, buku akademik, dan satu buku suntingan yang diterbitkan oleh institusi. Kajian ini membedakan antara tindakan organisasi Muhammadiyah secara langsung dan aktivitas para kader yang peran politik maupun militernya dibentuk melalui jaringan Muhammadiyah.

Hasil sintesis mengidentifikasi lima jalur utama kontribusi Muhammadiyah. Pertama, Muhammadiyah membangun fondasi pra-politik bagi kemerdekaan melalui pendidikan modern, pelayanan kesehatan, filantropi, budaya literasi, dan penguatan disiplin organisasi. Kedua,

'Aisyiyah memperluas literasi perempuan, kepemimpinan publik perempuan, serta partisipasi mereka dalam jaringan organisasi perempuan tingkat nasional. Ketiga, pembinaan generasi muda melalui sekolah-sekolah Muhammadiyah dan Hizbul Wathan menumbuhkan disiplin, semangat kebangsaan, dan kepemimpinan, yang tercermin secara nyata dalam sosok Jenderal Soedirman. Keempat, para tokoh Muhammadiyah—termasuk Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Abdul Kahar Muzakkir, dan Kasman Singodimedjo—berperan dalam perdebatan konstitusional, proses BPUPKI-PPKI, serta perundingan mengenai dasar keagamaan negara. Kelima, kader-kader Muhammadiyah turut berkontribusi dalam mempertahankan dan mengonsolidasikan Republik Indonesia setelah Proklamasi Kemerdekaan.

Sintesis penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran Muhammadiyah tidak dapat direduksi hanya pada perjuangan bersenjata ataupun pada kiprah beberapa tokoh nasional semata. Kontribusi utamanya bersifat kelembagaan dan berbasis kaderisasi, yaitu membangun institusi, kapasitas sosial, kosakata moral, serta jaringan kepemimpinan yang memungkinkan umat Islam berpartisipasi dalam gerakan nasional sekaligus menopang keberlangsungan negara yang baru berdiri. Namun demikian, literatur yang ada masih menunjukkan sejumlah ketimpangan, terutama kecenderungan memberikan perhatian yang berlebihan kepada tokoh-tokoh laki-laki di tingkat elite, sementara bukti independen mengenai peran cabang-cabang Muhammadiyah di daerah, perempuan, anggota biasa, serta koordinasi organisasi selama masa revolusi masih sangat terbatas. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, artikel ini mengusulkan suatu kerangka multidimensional yang menghubungkan pembangunan bangsa melalui institusi, mobilisasi kewargaan, pembentukan kader, negosiasi konstitusional, dan pembelaan terhadap Republik Indonesia.

Kata-kata Kunci: Muhammadiyah; kemerdekaan Indonesia; tinjauan sistematis historis; Ki Bagus Hadikusumo; Jenderal Soedirman; 'Aisyiyah; Nasionalism.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's independence was not produced solely by the proclamation of August 17, 1945 or by armed conflict against colonial forces. It emerged from a longer process in which associations, schools, religious networks, women's organizations, print media, youth movements, and political committees created the social capacity to imagine and organize a sovereign nation. Muhammadiyah, founded in Yogyakarta in 1912, occupied a distinctive position within this process. It was neither a political party nor an underground revolutionary organization, yet its educational, religious, social, and organizational activities contributed to the formation of a modern Muslim public capable of participating in national life (Alfian, 1989; Noer, 1973).

The relationship between Muhammadiyah and independence has often been narrated through prominent individuals. Ahmad Dahlan is portrayed as an early reformer who challenged intellectual stagnation and colonial social inequality. Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Abdul Kahar Muzakkir, and Kasman Singodimedjo are remembered for their involvement in the constitutional and political transition of 1945. General Soedirman is associated with Muhammadiyah schools and Hizbul Wathan before becoming commander of the republican armed forces. Siti Walidah and 'Aisyiyah are connected with women's education and the national women's movement. These figures are indispensable, but a hero-centred narrative can obscure the institutions and networks that formed their capacities and made their interventions possible.

Scholarship on Muhammadiyah under colonial rule demonstrates that the organization developed a reformist repertoire combining scriptural renewal, modern schooling, social service, disciplined association, and strategic engagement with colonial regulation (Alfian, 1989; Nakamura, 2012; Peacock, 1978). The movement's schools integrated religious and

general knowledge, while its hospitals, orphanages, and philanthropic initiatives established indigenous capacities in sectors where colonial provision was limited or socially unequal (Fauzia, 2017; Fuad, 2004). These activities did not constitute direct warfare, but they weakened colonial dependency by producing educated subjects, professional skills, autonomous institutions, and a public ethic of collective responsibility.

The political significance of these activities is frequently underestimated because Muhammadiyah formally concentrated on da'wa, education, and welfare. Alfian (1989) shows that the organization's behaviour under Dutch colonialism involved a complex relationship among religious reform, social modernization, and political adaptation. It avoided becoming a party, yet many members moved through Sarekat Islam, MIAI, Masyumi, BPUPKI, PPKI, and other political arenas. Muhammadiyah therefore functioned as a civic and religious infrastructure from which cadres entered broader nationalist coalitions.

The independence process also required the widening of social participation. 'Aisyiyah, established in 1917, created educational and organizational spaces for Muslim women and participated in the networks that culminated in the Indonesian Women's Congress. Its activities challenged the assumption that women's citizenship should remain exclusively domestic. Women's literacy, health education, early-childhood institutions, public speaking, and association-building contributed to a social conception of independence that extended beyond the transfer of state authority (Ardiyani, 2017; Ro'fah, 2016).

Youth formation constituted another pathway. Muhammadiyah schools and the Hizbul Wathan scout movement cultivated discipline, leadership, physical resilience, service, and attachment to the homeland. Nasution (2007) identifies this environment as important in General Soedirman's formation. The claim should not be exaggerated into institutional ownership of his military career, but it demonstrates how a social-religious association could create dispositions later mobilized in the defence of the Republic.

The most direct contribution occurred in the constitutional transition. Ki Bagus Hadikusumo and Abdul Kahar Muzakkir participated in bodies preparing independence, while Kasman Singodimedjo played roles in the PPKI transition and early republican institutions. The debates surrounding the Jakarta Charter, the religious foundation of the state, and the first principle of Pancasila reveal both Islamic aspiration and the demands of national compromise (Hakiem, 2013; Hisyam, 2011; Mahanani, 2020). These episodes should not be simplified into either unconditional acceptance or permanent rejection. They involved negotiation among leaders who understood independence as a shared achievement but differed over the formal relationship between Islam and the state.

Existing literature remains fragmented. Studies of colonial Muhammadiyah emphasize modernization and organizational behaviour; educational histories examine schools and anti-feudal reform; gender studies reconstruct 'Aisyiyah; political biographies focus on Ki Bagus, Kasman, and Kahar; and military histories examine Soedirman. This fragmentation makes it difficult to identify the mechanisms connecting institutional development, cadre formation, constitutional participation, and armed defence.

A further problem concerns attribution. Statements that Muhammadiyah 'won' or 'founded' Indonesian independence risk converting the contribution of individual members into a total organizational claim. Conversely, restricting Muhammadiyah's role

to explicitly authorized organizational resolutions ignores how associations influence history through education, networks, moral formation, and cadre circulation. A historically responsible interpretation must distinguish organizational policy, institutional effects, individual affiliation, and later memory.

This article addresses three questions. First, how does literature published up to 2020 conceptualize Muhammadiyah's role in Indonesia's independence? Second, through which institutional, social, political, and military pathways was that role expressed? Third, what evidentiary and historiographical limitations affect existing claims? The article contributes a multidimensional framework that treats independence as a process of nation-building, civic mobilization, state formation, and republican defence rather than a single event.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative historical systematic review. The approach combines systematic literature-review procedures with source criticism appropriate to historical research. Systematic review was used to identify, classify, and compare dispersed scholarship, while historical criticism was used to distinguish contemporaneous evidence, later recollection, institutional memory, and scholarly interpretation. The review followed the general stages of planning, source identification, relevance assessment, data extraction, thematic coding, and synthesis described by Tranfield et al. (2003), Thomas and Harden (2008), and Snyder (2019).

The temporal boundary included publications issued no later than December 31, 2020. Searches used combinations of Muhammadiyah, Indonesian independence, nationalism, colonialism, Ahmad Dahlan, Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Kasman Singodimedjo, Abdul Kahar Muzakkir, Soedirman, Hizbul Wathan, 'Aisyiyah, BPUPKI, PPKI, Jakarta Charter, education, and social welfare. English and Indonesian terms were used across scholarly databases, Indonesian journal portals, publisher platforms, library catalogues, official repositories, and backward citation searching.

A source was included when it was bibliographically traceable, substantively relevant to the period from late colonial rule through the consolidation of sovereignty, and capable of answering at least one review question. The final analytical corpus comprised nineteen works: twelve journal articles and seven academic or institutionally produced books. Methodological references were not counted as part of the historical corpus. Sources published after 2020 were excluded even when they provided useful later interpretation.

The corpus was appraised according to source type. Historical monographs were assessed for documentation, archival depth, and distinction between evidence and interpretation. Journal articles were assessed for clarity of research question, method, attribution, and consistency between evidence and conclusion. The edited Muhammadiyah volume was treated as an institutionally produced historical source: valuable for documents, testimony, and organizational memory, but not automatically equivalent to independent verification.

Data extraction recorded period, geographical scope, institutional arena, principal actors, type of contribution, evidence base, interpretation of nationalism, relationship between Islam and the state, and identified limitation. Initial codes included education, social welfare, women's mobilization, print culture, cadre formation, scouting, constitutional debate, compromise, military defence, political networks, and republican consolidation. Codes were consolidated into five pathways. Repeated stories derived from the same memoir or organizational account were treated as transmission chains rather than independent confirmations.

PRISMA principles informed transparency, but no fabricated record totals were inserted. The article reports the verified analytical corpus rather than claiming exhaustive retrieval of every local document, branch archive, memoir, or Dutch- and Japanese-language record. The purpose is a conceptually integrated review of accessible scholarship, not a definitive institutional history.

Table 1. Review protocol and source-critical decisions

Component	Decision
Review design	Qualitative historical systematic review with thematic synthesis and source criticism
Temporal boundary	Publications issued no later than December 31, 2020
Historical focus	Late colonial period, Japanese occupation, proclamation, revolution, and early republican consolidation
Analytical corpus	19 sources: 12 journal articles and 7 books or edited volumes
Evidence distinction	Organizational action, institutional effect, individual affiliation, and later memory analyzed separately
Principal themes	Institutional nation-building, women's mobilization, cadre formation, constitutional negotiation, and republican defence
Source caution	Official or movement-produced narratives establish institutional memory but require independent corroboration
Reporting caution	No fabricated PRISMA counts or claim of exhaustive archival coverage

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics and Structure of the Literature

The corpus spans classic studies of Indonesian Islamic modernism, organizational histories, political biographies, gender history, and studies of education, philanthropy, and military leadership. Earlier monographs provide broad explanations of Muhammadiyah under colonialism, while later articles concentrate on particular actors or institutions. The result is a literature rich in episodes but uneven in integration.

Three patterns are visible. First, international scholarship commonly treats Muhammadiyah as a modernist association whose schools, welfare institutions, and disciplined organization generated an indigenous civil society (Alfian, 1989; Fuad, 2002; Nakamura, 2012). Second, Indonesian historical writing often emphasizes national figures, especially Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Kasman Singodimedjo, Abdul Kahar Muzakir, Ahmad Dahlan, Siti Walidah, and Soedirman. Third, movement-produced history presents these figures as evidence that Muhammadiyah was embedded in the birth of the Republic. Each pattern illuminates a different level and also carries a different risk: structural abstraction, hero-centred narration, or institutional self-legitimation.

The reviewed literature supports a multidimensional interpretation. Muhammadiyah's role began before formal independence through the production of human and institutional capacities. It became more visibly political during the Japanese occupation and constitutional transition, and it continued through the defence and consolidation of the Republic. Figure 1 summarizes these interconnected milestones.

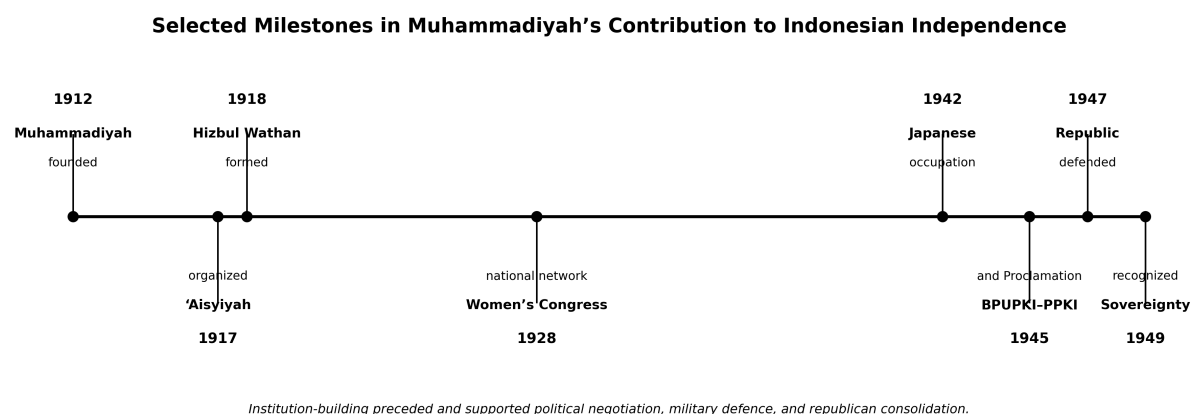


Figure 1. Selected milestones in Muhammadiyah's contribution to Indonesian independence

Table 2. Core analytical corpus and principal contribution

Source	Type	Primary focus	Contribution to synthesis
Noer (1973)	Book	Islamic modernism, 1900–1942	Places Muhammadiyah within the wider anti-colonial Muslim awakening
Peacock (1978)	Book	Religious reform and organizational culture	Explains disciplined reformist identity and social transformation
Alfian (1989)	Book	Political behaviour under Dutch colonialism	Distinguishes non-party organization from political influence
Fuad (2002)	Journal article	Civil-society potential and limits	Interprets Muhammadiyah as indigenous civic infrastructure
Fuad (2004)	Journal article	Education and modernity	Connects schooling with Muslim modernization and public capacity
Nasution (2007)	Journal article	General Soedirman	Links Muhammadiyah and Hizbul Wathan formation to republican defence
Syuja' (2009)	Book	Early Ahmad Dahlan movement	Documents action-oriented reform and organizational beginnings
Suswandari & Suwarno (2010)	Journal article	Education and anti-feudal reform	Shows education as emancipation from hierarchy and dependency
Hisyam (2011)	Journal article	Ki Bagus and religion–state relations	Reassesses Jakarta Charter and constitutional debate

Source	Type	Primary focus	Contribution to synthesis
Nakamura (2012)	Book	Muhammadiyah in local society	Explains embedded networks, adaptation, and organizational durability
Hakim (Ed., 2013)	Edited book	Ki Bagus, Kasman, and Kahar	Institutional memory and documentary reconstruction of elite roles
Syaifullah (2015)	Book	Muhammadiyah political shifts	Explains cadre movement between association and party politics
Ro'fah (2016)	Book	'Aisyiyah, 1917–1998	Restores women's organization to national and social history
Fauzia (2017)	Journal article	Colonial charitable activism	Shows welfare institutions as organized public autonomy
Ardiyani (2017)	Journal article	Siti Walidah and women's education	Clarifies educational emancipation and female public agency
Baidhawiy (2017)	Journal article	Qur'anic ethos and public service	Provides ethical interpretation of humanitarian nation-building
Pangesti et al. (2019)	Journal article	Political role of Ki Bagus	Reconstructs participation during occupation and state preparation
Suwarno (2019)	Journal article	Hermeneutics of Muhammadiyah's birth	Connects religious interpretation with social intervention

Source	Type	Primary focus	Contribution to synthesis
Mahanani (2020)	Journal article	Ki Bagus, Islam, and the state	Analyzes constitutional aspiration and acceptance of Pancasila

Institutional Nation-Building Before Political Independence

The first pathway is institutional nation-building. Muhammadiyah's colonial-era contribution was strongest in fields that conventional political history often classifies as social or religious rather than nationalist. Modern schools, teacher training, publications, clinics, orphan care, and voluntary associations created spaces in which indigenous Muslims acquired knowledge, administrative experience, and confidence independent of colonial institutions. Noer (1973) and Alfian (1989) place this activity within the wider emergence of organized Muslim modernism.

Education was politically consequential even when it did not employ revolutionary language. Muhammadiyah schools combined Islamic instruction with subjects associated with modern schooling, used classrooms and graded curricula, and trained students for participation in a changing society. Fuad (2004) interprets this programme as an engagement with modernity rather than a simple imitation of Dutch education. The schools contested colonial asymmetry by making modern knowledge available within an indigenous religious framework.

Suswandari and Suwarno (2010) further interpret Ahmad Dahlan's educational project as a challenge to feudal relations. The significance of the reform lay not only in curriculum but also in the production of learners capable of reasoning, organizing, and crossing inherited social boundaries. In this sense, education generated the social subject of independence before political sovereignty was achieved.

Welfare and philanthropy supplied a second institutional foundation. Fauzia (2017) shows that *Penolong Kesengsaraan Umum* transformed charitable obligation into organized public service during the colonial period. Clinics, poor relief, orphan care, and fundraising created indigenous organizational competence and a practical claim that society could manage its own welfare. Such institutions reduced dependence on colonial and missionary provision while cultivating a public ethic based on service rather than state patronage.

Print and association strengthened this infrastructure. Meetings, congresses, magazines, sermons, and branch networks circulated a shared vocabulary of reform and enabled local communities to imagine themselves as part of a movement extending beyond village and region. Nakamura (2012) demonstrates that Muhammadiyah's durability depended on its capacity to become locally embedded while sustaining a wider organizational identity. This combination of locality and

national linkage was essential to modern nation formation.

The literature therefore supports a broader definition of anti-colonial contribution. Muhammadiyah did not primarily organize insurrection against the Dutch. It contested colonial conditions by building alternative institutions, developing educated cadres, and normalizing collective self-management. These practices constituted what may be termed pre-political sovereignty: the capacity of a colonized population to educate, care for, organize, and represent itself.

Women's Mobilization and the Social Meaning of Independence

The second pathway is women's civic mobilization. 'Aisyiyah emerged in 1917 from the educational work of Ahmad Dahlan, Siti Walidah, and women in the Kauman community. Its development broadened Muhammadiyah's social base and challenged the confinement of women to a narrowly domestic role. Ro'fah (2016) shows that the organization created sustained structures for religious education, literacy, childcare, health, publication, and leadership.

Women's education was not simply an internal religious programme. Ardiyani (2017) interprets Siti Walidah's thought as a demand that Indonesian women receive educational opportunities comparable in dignity to those of men. Education prepared women to act as teachers, speakers, organizers, and social reformers. The resulting public agency contributed to the formation of citizens rather than merely more competent household members.

'Aisyiyah's participation in the wider women's movement also connected Islamic reform with Indonesian nationalism. Its activists entered congress networks that addressed education, marriage, health, and the status of women. These issues expanded the meaning of national freedom: independence required not only the removal of foreign rule but also the transformation of social relations that restricted half of the population.

The historiography nevertheless remains imbalanced. Women commonly appear as supporting figures to male leaders or as providers of social welfare, while their role in producing political consciousness, organizational continuity, and national networks receives less attention. The available scholarship indicates that 'Aisyiyah was not auxiliary to independence. It was one of the arenas in which the social content of independence was defined.

Cadre Formation, Hizbul Wathan, and Republican Defence

The third pathway concerns cadre formation and defence. Muhammadiyah's educational institutions and youth movements trained members in discipline, responsibility, collective action, and leadership. Hizbul Wathan, established as a scouting movement, combined religious education with physical training, outdoor skills, organization, and attachment to the homeland. These practices did not constitute a military organization under colonial rule, but they developed capacities

that could later be redirected toward national defence.

General Soedirman provides the clearest example. Nasution (2007) emphasizes his education and organizational experience in Muhammadiyah and Hizbul Wathan before his rise as a republican military leader. His later command cannot be explained by affiliation alone; military success also reflected experience in PETA, wartime conditions, strategic judgment, and personal authority. Nevertheless, the Muhammadiyah environment contributed to the ethical and organizational formation from which he acted.

This distinction is methodologically important. To say that Muhammadiyah formed a cadre who later defended the Republic is different from claiming that the organization directed every military action. Historical influence operated through dispositions, networks, trust, and prior experience. The pathway from scouting and teaching to military leadership illustrates indirect institutional causation rather than formal command.

The defence contribution also extended beyond one commander. Schools, branches, youth associations, and local members supplied information, shelter, logistics, legitimacy, and social networks during a period when the Republic lacked consolidated administrative reach. The literature documents these local mechanisms less systematically than elite biographies, leaving an important agenda for archival and regional research.

Constitutional Negotiation and the Founding of the State

The fourth pathway is direct participation in state formation. Muhammadiyah leaders entered the constitutional arena through personal authority, organizational representation, and wider Islamic political networks. Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Abdul Kahar Muzakkir, and Kasman Singodimedjo occupy central positions in movement historiography because their activities connected Islamic aspiration with the urgent construction of a unified republic (Hakiem, 2013).

Ki Bagus Hadikusumo's involvement in BPUPKI and PPKI demonstrates the complexity of this contribution. Studies agree that he regarded Islam as a substantive foundation for public morality and state order, but they differ over particular formulations and the interpretation of the Jakarta Charter. Hisyam (2011) cautions against simplified retellings of the seven-word formula, while Pangesti et al. (2019) and Mahanani (2020) emphasize his sustained advocacy for Islamic principles and eventual acceptance of the constitutional settlement.

The significance of the episode lies not only in the final wording of the constitution. It reveals that Muhammadiyah leaders participated in defining sovereignty, citizenship, law, and the relationship between religious majority and national plurality. Their contribution included both principled argument and negotiated compromise. Acceptance of the new state did not erase disagreement, but it enabled the Republic to begin with a common constitutional framework.

Abdul Kahar Muzakkir contributed through the independence-preparation process and Muslim educational networks, while Kasman Singodimedjo occupied roles in the transition to republican government and security. The edited volume by Hakiem (2013) assembles documents and recollections that place these figures within a shared Muhammadiyah background. Because it is institutionally produced, the volume is especially useful for movement memory and documentary leads, but its interpretations require comparison with independent historical scholarship.

The relationship between Muhammadiyah and political organizations was equally important. Cadres participated in Islamic federations and parties without converting Muhammadiyah itself into a party. Syaifullah (2015) describes shifts in Muhammadiyah's political relationship, demonstrating how the association maintained organizational autonomy while its members entered Masyumi and state institutions. This separation allowed Muhammadiyah to serve as a broad civic base across changing political coalitions.

Defending and Consolidating the Republic

The fifth pathway concerns the survival of the Republic after proclamation. Independence in August 1945 did not immediately produce effective sovereignty. Military conflict, administrative uncertainty, ideological competition, and diplomatic pressure continued until sovereignty was recognized and state institutions became more stable. Muhammadiyah cadres contributed in military, legal, political, educational, and social capacities during this transition.

Soedirman's leadership symbolizes armed defence, while Kasman's early republican roles illustrate the movement from activist networks into institutions of security, representation, and law. Ki Bagus continued to lead Muhammadiyah during a period when the organization had to maintain social services amid occupation and revolution. These roles show that independence required both resistance and institutional continuity.

Muhammadiyah's schools and welfare institutions also helped normalize republican life. They educated citizens, delivered services, and sustained social order in circumstances where the state's capacity remained uneven. Fuad's (2002) civil-society analysis helps explain this contribution: autonomous associations can support democracy and public welfare while also possessing internal limitations. The organization's independence from the state became a resource for the Republic, but it did not eliminate tensions over ideology, authority, and political strategy.

The review therefore rejects a narrow chronology ending with proclamation. Muhammadiyah's role extended from the creation of pre-independence capacities to the defence and social reproduction of the new state. Independence was both an event and an institutional process.

Integrative Thematic Synthesis

The five pathways are mutually reinforcing. Education and welfare created organizational capacity; women's and youth movements broadened participation; cadre formation supplied leadership; constitutional negotiation translated values into state design; and social networks helped defend and consolidate sovereignty. Figure 2 presents this relationship without treating it as a linear sequence.

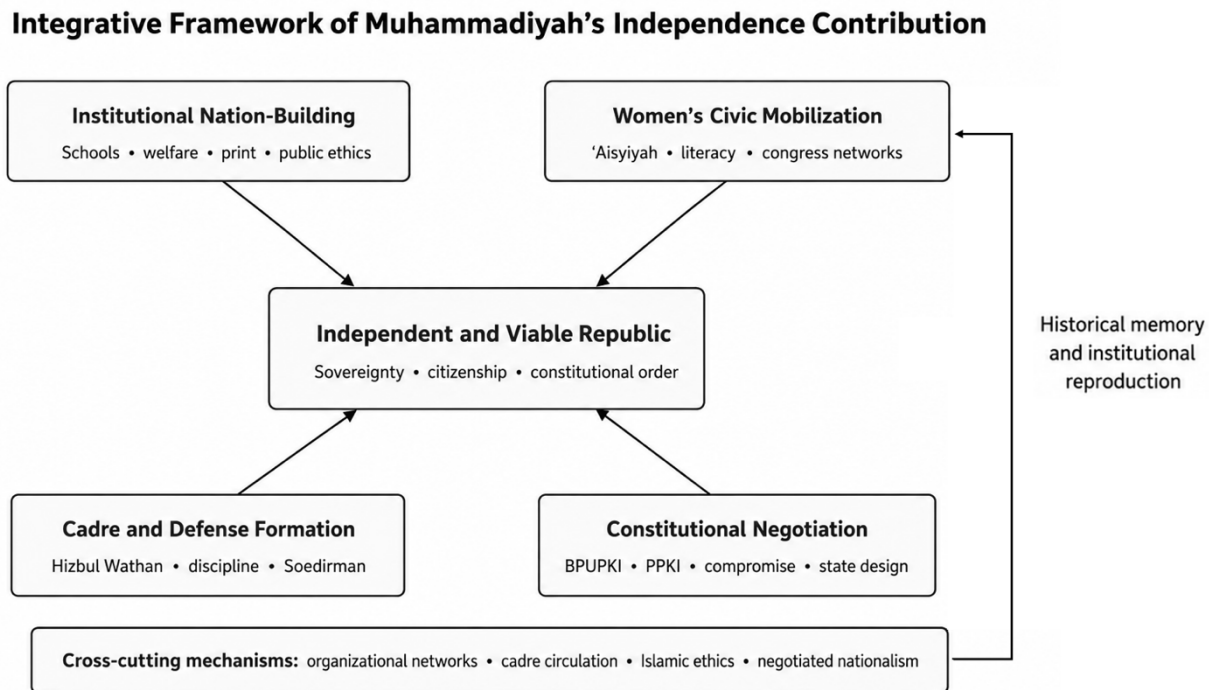


Figure 2. Integrative framework of Muhammadiyah's contribution to independence

Table 3. Thematic synthesis of contribution pathways

Pathway	Historical mechanism	Representative evidence	Interpretive caution
Institutional nation-building	Education, welfare, print, branch administration	Schools, orphan care, congresses, publications	Social service was politically consequential but not identical to direct anti-colonial action
Women's	Literacy,	Siti Walidah,	Women should not

Pathway	Historical mechanism	Representative evidence	Interpretive caution
civic mobilization	leadership, family reform, congress networks	'Aisyiyah, women's education	be reduced to auxiliary welfare roles
Cadre and defence formation	Discipline, scouting, teaching, leadership networks	Hizbul Wathan and Soedirman	Affiliation influenced formation but did not amount to organizational military command
Constitutional negotiation	Participation in BPUPKI-PPKI and Islamic political networks	Ki Bagus, Kahar, Kasman, Jakarta Charter debate	Accounts differ; memoir and institutional memory require source criticism
Republican consolidation	Military defence, law, representation, continuing services	Soedirman, Kasman, schools and welfare institutions	The contribution extended beyond proclamation and beyond elite actors

Discussion

From Event-Centred History to Infrastructural Independence

The principal finding is that Muhammadiyah's contribution is best understood infrastructurally. Conventional narratives of independence privilege declarations, negotiations, battles, and state institutions. Those events were decisive, but they depended on a society capable of supplying literate actors, organized communities, ethical legitimacy, communication networks, and welfare provision. Muhammadiyah helped create these conditions over several decades.

This interpretation expands the meaning of political action without dissolving analytical boundaries. A school is not automatically a nationalist organization, and a hospital is not a revolutionary cell. Their political significance arises when they reduce colonial dependency, develop indigenous competence, connect communities, and produce subjects able to enter public life. Institutional nation-building was therefore

neither apolitical nor equivalent to armed struggle.

The framework also explains why Muhammadiyah's role appears simultaneously indirect and decisive. The organization rarely acted as a unified political command, yet its cadres occupied consequential positions because the movement had invested in education, discipline, association, and public service. Independence was enabled through accumulated capacities rather than only through explicit resolutions.

Organization, Cadres, and the Problem of Attribution

A second contribution of the review is the separation of organizational and individual levels. Ahmad Dahlan, Siti Walidah, Ki Bagus, Kahar Muzakkir, Kasman, and Soedirman cannot be detached from Muhammadiyah networks, but neither should their entire biographies be absorbed into organizational ownership. Individuals participated in multiple institutions and responded to changing historical contexts.

Four levels of attribution should be distinguished. The first is formal organizational action, such as establishing schools or welfare bodies. The second is institutional formation, through which members acquired skills and values. The third is cadre circulation, when individuals moved into political, military, or state institutions. The fourth is retrospective memory, through which later Muhammadiyah narratives interpret those careers as part of organizational history.

Confusing these levels produces either inflation or erasure. Inflation occurs when every action by an affiliated individual is presented as an official Muhammadiyah decision. Erasure occurs when the influence of education, networks, and organizational identity is ignored because no central directive existed. The historical evidence supports a mediated relationship between association and action.

Islamic Commitment and Negotiated Nationalism

The constitutional theme shows that Muhammadiyah's nationalism was negotiated rather than secular in the sense of excluding religion. Leaders understood Islamic teaching as a source of ethics, law, and public order while also confronting the practical necessity of a plural national state. The result was neither simple theocracy nor the privatization of religion.

Ki Bagus Hadikusumo's role illustrates this tension. His advocacy for Islam and his eventual participation in the Pancasila settlement are sometimes narrated as contradictory. The literature suggests instead that both belonged to a political ethics of principled negotiation. He argued from a particular religious commitment while accepting a constitutional agreement necessary for the Republic's unity (Hisyam, 2011; Mahanani, 2020).

This negotiated nationalism became an enduring feature of Muhammadiyah. The association could support the Republic while continuing to debate the meaning of its religious foundation. Independence did not end ideological difference; it created a

political framework within which difference could be contested.

Gender, Ordinary Members, and Historiographical Silence

A major limitation of existing historiography is its concentration on elite men. 'Aisyiyah scholarship demonstrates that women formed organizations, educated communities, developed publications, and entered national networks, yet their contribution is often treated as a supplementary chapter. This reflects the gender structure of historical archives and the tendency to define politics through offices and formal negotiations.

Ordinary members and local branches are similarly underrepresented. National figures depended on teachers, nurses, fundraisers, publishers, youth leaders, hosts, and branch administrators. These actors rarely left extensive memoirs, but their work sustained the institutions through which national consciousness and republican resilience developed.

Future historical research should therefore move from organizational centres to local social history. Branch minutes, school archives, women's magazines, oral histories, wartime correspondence, and regional government records may reveal how national goals were translated into everyday practices.

Theoretical Contribution: A Multidimensional Model of Movement-Based Independence

The integrative model advances a movement-based interpretation of independence. Religious associations contribute to national liberation through at least four mechanisms: institutional substitution, social-capacity formation, cadre circulation, and normative negotiation. Institutional substitution occurs when indigenous organizations provide education or welfare not adequately supplied by colonial rule. Social-capacity formation develops literacy, discipline, trust, and collective efficacy. Cadre circulation transfers these capacities into political and military arenas. Normative negotiation connects movement values with the constitutional order.

Republican defence forms a fifth mechanism because sovereignty must be protected and reproduced after declaration. Military leadership, administrative service, and autonomous social institutions enabled the Republic to survive periods of weak state capacity. The contribution of Muhammadiyah therefore linked civil society and state formation rather than placing them in opposition.

This model may be useful beyond the Muhammadiyah case. It suggests that the historical significance of a social movement cannot be measured only by formal party activity or participation in rebellion. Associations may change the probability of national independence by transforming who can learn, organize, lead, negotiate, and maintain public life.

Table 4. Conceptual propositions derived from the review

Proposition	Historical meaning
1. Institutional capacity precedes formal sovereignty.	Education, welfare, media, and association can create the human and organizational conditions required for independence.
2. Social movements influence politics through cadre circulation.	Members carry skills, trust, and moral vocabularies from civic organizations into parties, armies, and state institutions.
3. Women's mobilization changes the substantive meaning of independence.	National freedom includes expanded education, leadership, health, and public agency, not only transfer of governmental authority.
4. Religious nationalism is produced through negotiation.	Islamic commitment and plural citizenship are mediated through debate, compromise, and constitutional agreement.
5. Independence must be defended and institutionally reproduced.	The survival of the Republic depends on military defence and autonomous social institutions capable of sustaining public life.

Implications for Muhammadiyah Studies and Historical Education

For Muhammadiyah studies, the findings imply that institutional history should be connected more explicitly with national history. Schools, hospitals, women's groups, youth movements, and publications should not be described only as internal achievements. Their role in producing citizens, leadership, and public autonomy deserves systematic historical analysis.

At the same time, movement historiography should resist triumphalism. Claims of contribution must identify the level of action and the evidence supporting it. Institutional publications may preserve otherwise neglected memories, but they should be compared with state archives, contemporary press, personal papers, and scholarship outside Muhammadiyah.

For historical education, the review supports a broader presentation of independence. Students should encounter not only battles and elite negotiations but also the long social preparation undertaken through education, women's activism, health services, youth formation, and civic organization. This approach reveals that independence was built by multiple institutions and forms of labour.

The history also has contemporary implications. Muhammadiyah's early contribution derived from the capacity to build institutions before possessing state power. Its continuing national relevance therefore depends less on symbolic ownership of heroes than on maintaining accessible education, social solidarity, ethical leadership, and constitutional citizenship.

Limitations and Future Research

This review is limited to English- and Indonesian-language publications accessible up to 2020. It does not cover every branch archive, memoir, Dutch intelligence report, Japanese occupation record, school register, or local newspaper. The corpus contains both independent scholarship and movement-produced sources with different evidentiary functions. Several central stories remain dependent on later recollection, and the repetition of a narrative does not necessarily constitute independent corroboration.

The literature is also geographically and socially uneven. Yogyakarta and nationally prominent figures receive disproportionate attention. The roles of local branches outside Java, ordinary teachers and health workers, women below the leadership level, and members involved in logistics during the revolution remain insufficiently studied.

Future research should construct a verified digital corpus of pre-1950 Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah publications; compare branch experiences across regions; examine school and Hizbul Wathan networks through prosopography; reconstruct women's wartime and congress participation; and distinguish organizational directives from informal cadre action. Archival triangulation is particularly needed for the Japanese occupation and the constitutional negotiations of 1945.

CONCLUSION

This historical systematic review demonstrates that Muhammadiyah's role in Indonesian independence was multidimensional and cumulative. Its most important contribution did not begin in the constitutional chambers of 1945 or on the revolutionary battlefield. It began with decades of institutional nation-building through education, social welfare, print culture, women's organization, youth formation, and disciplined association.

These institutions produced capacities later visible in direct political and military participation. 'Aisyiyah expanded women's public agency; Hizbul Wathan and Muhammadiyah schools contributed to the formation of leaders such as Soedirman; and figures including Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Abdul Kahar Muzakkir, and Kasman Singodimedjo entered the constitutional and early republican arenas. Their activities connected Islamic commitment with the negotiated construction of a plural national state.

The review also clarifies the problem of attribution. Muhammadiyah should not be credited institutionally for every decision made by an affiliated individual, but affiliation cannot be treated as incidental when organizational education, networks, and ethical formation shaped those individuals. The movement's historical influence operated

through formal institutions, cadre circulation, political negotiation, and later republican service.

Muhammadiyah's contribution is therefore best described as infrastructural independence: the creation of indigenous capacities to learn, organize, care, deliberate, lead, and defend. Armed struggle and constitutional agreement were indispensable, but they became sustainable because social movements had already developed the people and institutions capable of carrying them. A more complete historiography must now recover the local branches, women, ordinary members, and everyday institutional labour that remain behind the better-known national heroes.

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