

Muhammadiyah's Political Khittah and Civic Engagement in Contemporary Indonesia

Dadang Husen Sobana

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung, Indonesia

dadanghusensobana@uinsgd.ac.id

Abstract

This article systematically reviews the relationship between Muhammadiyah's political khittah and its civic engagement in contemporary Indonesia. Political khittah refers to the organizational guidelines through which Muhammadiyah distinguishes its identity as a movement of *da'wah* and *tajdid* from formal affiliation with political parties. The apparent separation from party politics, however, has never meant withdrawal from public life. Using a qualitative conceptual systematic review, the study synthesizes 18 traceable sources: twelve peer-reviewed articles, four academic books, and two official Muhammadiyah documents. The analysis identifies four principal modes of engagement: the provision of civic infrastructure through education, health, welfare, and philanthropy; moral and policy advocacy toward the state; civic education concerning pluralism, constitutionalism, and national integration; and individual political participation by members who remain organizationally unaffiliated. The findings show that the khittah functions as a boundary-management mechanism. It protects organizational autonomy, prevents the movement from becoming an electoral vehicle, and preserves the ability to criticize governments and parties. At the same time, the boundary is porous because leaders and members may enter parties, elections, public offices, or advocacy networks in their individual capacities. This produces recurring tensions involving partisan spillover, elite capture, ambiguous representation, dependence on state resources, and uneven internal pluralism. The article proposes the concept of bounded civic engagement to explain this configuration. Muhammadiyah's political stance is neither apolitical neutrality nor partisan mobilization, but principled nonpartisanship combined with active participation in democratic public life.

Keywords: Muhammadiyah, political khittah, civic engagement, civil society, nonpartisanship, moral politics, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Islamic organizations and politics in Indonesia cannot be understood only by asking whether an organization supports a party or contests elections. Large religious associations shape politics through educational institutions, welfare services, public authority, social networks, moral discourse, and the formation of citizens. Muhammadiyah is an important example. Since its establishment in 1912, the organization has developed a nationwide infrastructure of schools, universities, hospitals, philanthropic bodies, publishing networks, women's organizations, youth movements, and community associations. This infrastructure gives Muhammadiyah political relevance even when it does not operate as a political party (Alfian, 1989; Fuad, 2002; Nakamura, 2012).

Muhammadiyah's formal relationship with party politics is governed by a series of organizational guidelines known as khittah. The term denotes a line, orientation, or strategic guideline for collective struggle. The Khittah Ujung Pandang of 1971 and the Khittah Surabaya of 1978 consolidated the principle that Muhammadiyah is a *da'wah*

movement that does not maintain an organizational affiliation with a political party. The Khittah Denpasar of 2002 reaffirmed this independence while explicitly recognizing politics as an important sphere of worldly affairs that must be guided by religious and moral values (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2010; Nashir, 2008).

The resulting position is frequently summarized as neutrality. This description is incomplete. Neutrality may imply equidistance, passivity, or indifference, whereas Muhammadiyah has repeatedly intervened in public debates, criticized governments, articulated policy proposals, educated voters, supported anti-corruption initiatives, defended constitutional arrangements, and permitted its members to participate in political parties in their individual capacities. The organization has also produced influential national leaders and public officials. Its refusal to affiliate with a party therefore does not remove politics from Muhammadiyah; it relocates politics from organizational partisanship toward social influence, public advocacy, and citizen formation (Alfian, 1989; Al-Hamdi, 2013; Argenti, 2017).

This distinction became especially important after the fall of the New Order in 1998. Democratization expanded opportunities for political parties, elections, public protest, policy advocacy, and associational action. Muhammadiyah leaders and members responded in diverse ways. Some entered electoral politics, some promoted new parties or joined existing ones, while the organization itself continued to insist on formal independence. Studies of Muhammadiyah elites show several political orientations rather than a single ideological line, ranging from transformative idealism to pragmatic accommodation (Al-Hamdi, 2012, 2013). The diversity demonstrates that organizational khittah does not eliminate political disagreement. Instead, it creates a shared boundary within which different individual choices are negotiated.

The literature also locates Muhammadiyah within Indonesian civil society. Civil society organizations maintain a sphere of collective action that is institutionally distinct from both the state and the market, while interacting with both. Their democratic contribution may include limiting state power, providing public goods, cultivating trust, representing social interests, and educating citizens. Hefner (2000) emphasizes the importance of civic associations and democratic Muslim networks in Indonesia's transition, whereas Fuad (2002) identifies both the potential and limits of Muhammadiyah as a civil-society actor. Muhammadiyah's independence provides room for criticism, but its scale, institutional interests, and proximity to political elites may also produce accommodation and internal hierarchy.

A narrow interpretation of civic engagement as voting or party membership would miss much of Muhammadiyah's political significance. Its schools and universities produce civic knowledge and professional elites. Its hospitals and welfare institutions establish relationships between citizens and public services. Its philanthropic and humanitarian activities mobilize volunteers, resources, and public trust. Its interfaith programmes contribute to pluralism and peacebuilding, while its policy institutions articulate concerns about legislation, corruption, health, education, and social justice (Biyanto, 2020; Latief & Nashir, 2020). These activities are not electoral, but they affect the quality and distribution of citizenship.

The organization's political thought also developed toward an explicit affirmation of the Indonesian constitutional order. The 2015 formulation of the Pancasila state as *Dar al-'Ahd wa al-Shahadah* describes Indonesia as both a national covenant and a field in which Muslims demonstrate constructive ethical responsibility. The formulation rejects the assumption that Islamic commitment requires replacing the constitutional state with an exclusive religious order. It directs religious energy toward improving the justice, prosperity, and morality of the existing republic (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2015). This position connects organizational independence with constitutional civic engagement.

Nevertheless, the relationship among *khittah*, political participation, and civic action remains conceptually fragmented. Historical works emphasize the political conduct of Muhammadiyah under colonialism or earlier parliamentary regimes (Alfian, 1989; Suwarno, 2020). Studies of the Reformasi era examine elite attitudes, the Jakarta Charter, and party politics (Al-Hamdi, 2012, 2013, 2015). Civil-society studies focus on moral politics, education, pluralism, and global humanitarian engagement (Argenti, 2017; Biyanto, 2020; Fuad, 2002; Latief & Nashir, 2020). Official documents prescribe organizational principles but do not by themselves prove how consistently those principles are implemented.

This article addresses that fragmentation through a conceptual systematic review of literature published no later than December 31, 2020. It asks three questions. First, how does Muhammadiyah's political *khittah* define the boundary between organizational independence and political participation? Second, through what mechanisms does Muhammadiyah engage civic and political life without becoming a party organization? Third, what tensions and limitations arise from this configuration in contemporary Indonesia? The article argues that the *khittah* produces bounded civic engagement: an arrangement in which organizational nonpartisanship protects autonomy while multiple forms of public participation remain open. This concept clarifies why Muhammadiyah can simultaneously avoid formal party affiliation, exercise political influence, and enable individual members to participate across different political formations.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative conceptual systematic review. The design was selected because the object of analysis is not the effectiveness of a single programme but the structure of an organizational-political relationship. The review therefore synthesizes definitions, historical interpretations, institutional arguments, and descriptions of civic practice. The unit of analysis is the claim made by a source concerning political *khittah*, organizational autonomy, political participation, civil society, public advocacy, or citizenship.

The temporal boundary included works published no later than December 31, 2020. The boundary is consistent with the wider article series for which the review was prepared and prevents later political developments from being read retrospectively into the earlier literature. Historical sources were retained when necessary to reconstruct the emergence of the *khittah* and the long-term relationship between Muhammadiyah and

politics. The phrase contemporary Indonesia refers principally to the Reformasi period through 2020, while earlier sources provide historical explanation.

The search and verification process used combinations of the terms Muhammadiyah, khittah politik, political khittah, civil society, civic engagement, moral politics, democracy, political participation, Pancasila, party politics, interfaith relations, and public policy. Searches were cross-checked through journal portals, publisher pages, library catalogues, official Muhammadiyah publications, and the reference lists of eligible studies. A source was included when its bibliographic identity was traceable, its content was substantively available, and it directly contributed to at least one review question.

The final analytical corpus contained 18 sources: twelve peer-reviewed articles, four academic books, and two official Muhammadiyah publications. The official documents were interpreted as evidence of formal organizational norms. They were not treated as independent proof of implementation or social effect. Academic studies were appraised according to the transparency of their evidence, the clarity of their argument, and their relevance to the distinction among organization, leaders, members, autonomous organizations, and affiliated institutions.

The extraction matrix recorded source type, period, object of analysis, definition of khittah, level of political actor, mode of engagement, democratic contribution, and reported tension. Coding proceeded in two stages. Descriptive codes included non-affiliation, moral politics, civic infrastructure, public advocacy, member autonomy, pluralism, constitutional commitment, humanitarian engagement, and elite proximity. Analytical coding then grouped these into themes concerning boundary formation, civic mechanisms, actor differentiation, democratic outcomes, and organizational risks.

The review does not present fabricated PRISMA counts for database identification, duplicate removal, or full-text exclusion. Books, official organizational decisions, and Indonesian journal articles are dispersed across heterogeneous catalogues and repositories, making a single exhaustive bibliographic universe unavailable. The study instead reports a transparently delimited analytical corpus and avoids claims that the 18 sources constitute every publication on the subject. The approach is systematic in its questions, inclusion logic, extraction categories, and thematic synthesis, while remaining conceptually interpretive.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Characteristics of the Analytical Corpus

The corpus spans from Alfian's 1989 study of political behavior under colonialism to five publications issued in 2020. The concentration in 2020 reflects increasing scholarly attention to Muhammadiyah's political consciousness, pluralism, global engagement, and historical relations with politics. Earlier books and official documents provide the

institutional and historical foundation, while post-Reformasi studies account for the diversification of elite attitudes and civic strategies.

2. Khittah as an Institutional Boundary

The first theme is the function of khittah as a boundary between Muhammadiyah and formal party organization. The boundary emerged from a long political history rather than an abstract rejection of politics. Muhammadiyah figures were involved in nationalist and Islamic political networks, and members participated in parties across different periods. However, experiences involving Masyumi, Parmusi, state pressure, and internal political conflict encouraged the organization to strengthen its identity as an autonomous social-religious movement (Alfian, 1989; Nashir, 2008).

The 1971 and 1978 khittah formulations state that Muhammadiyah does not maintain an organizational relationship with, and is not an affiliate of, any political party. This principle performs several functions. It protects the organization's religious and social programmes from electoral cycles; prevents any party from claiming exclusive ownership of Muhammadiyah's membership; and allows the organization to engage successive governments without becoming structurally dependent upon one partisan vehicle (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2010).

The Khittah Denpasar adds an important clarification. Politics is recognized as a legitimate field of worldly affairs that should be animated by religious and moral values. Muhammadiyah is therefore not required to abandon political questions. It is directed to pursue its national role through da'wah, tajdid, interest articulation, public criticism, social empowerment, and the cultivation of ethical citizens. The boundary concerns organizational form, not the public relevance of Islamic values (Nashir, 2008; Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2010).

This boundary is institutional rather than sociological. Muhammadiyah members remain citizens with constitutional political rights. They may vote, join parties, campaign, become legislators, or hold public office, provided that personal participation is not represented as an official organizational endorsement. The distinction permits political plurality among members but also creates practical ambiguity when prominent leaders possess strong public identification with Muhammadiyah.

3. Nonpartisanship Without Political Withdrawal

The second theme is that non-affiliation does not amount to political withdrawal. Muhammadiyah's social size, public authority, and organizational resources ensure that many of its actions have political effects. A recurring observation in the literature is that a movement can remain outside electoral competition while influencing political agendas through education, social service, and moral authority. Alfian (1989) similarly demonstrates that political behavior includes relationships with colonial authorities, nationalist movements, and public policy, not only participation in parties.

In the Reformasi period, Muhammadiyah engaged questions concerning democratic transition, constitutional reform, corruption, terrorism, religious freedom, social policy, and the role of Islam in the state. Al-Hamdi's studies show that elites did not speak with one voice. Transformative-idealistic, moderate-idealistic, realistic-critical, and accommodative-pragmatic tendencies coexisted (Al-Hamdi, 2012, 2013). The khittah did not erase these orientations; it prevented any one orientation from easily converting the organization into a partisan instrument.

The literature therefore supports the term principled nonpartisanship. The position is principled because it rests on a formal organizational decision and a moral understanding of politics. It is nonpartisan because the organization does not affiliate with a party. It is active because Muhammadiyah articulates public interests, evaluates government conduct, and mobilizes institutions in response to national problems (Argenti, 2017; Nashir, 2008).

4. Civic Infrastructure as Political Capacity

The third theme concerns civic infrastructure. Muhammadiyah's most enduring political contribution is not necessarily found in electoral endorsements but in the institutions through which citizens acquire education, health, organization, professional skills, and social trust. Fuad (2004) interprets the educational programme as a response to modernity, while Nakamura (2012) shows how local branches embed the movement in everyday associational life. These institutions produce citizens capable of participating in public affairs and create organizational channels independent of state administration.

Schools and universities introduce students to national curricula, public ethics, organizational discipline, and forms of collective deliberation. Hospitals and welfare institutions connect religious solidarity with public service. Philanthropic bodies mobilize donations and volunteers across social boundaries. Such activities have distributive consequences because they affect who obtains knowledge, health, and social protection. They also have political consequences because they create constituencies, professional elites, and networks able to communicate with government.

Fuad (2002) nevertheless warns that institutional size is not identical to democratic effectiveness. Large organizations may reproduce hierarchy, bureaucratic interests, or dependence on state recognition. Civic infrastructure advances democracy when it supports participation, accountability, and autonomy; it may weaken critical capacity when institutional survival becomes excessively dependent on government funding, permits, or elite access.

5. Moral Politics, Advocacy, and Policy Engagement

The fourth theme is moral politics. Muhammadiyah frequently presents its political role as *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* in public life: encouraging just policy and criticizing corruption, abuse, poverty, or exclusion. Argenti (2017) describes this role as moral

politics, emphasizing constructive criticism after the fall of the New Order. Moral politics differs from the pursuit of office because its immediate objective is to influence standards, decisions, and public conduct rather than to control executive or legislative institutions.

Moral discourse is accompanied by institutional advocacy. Councils, research centres, universities, professional associations, and leadership forums generate policy recommendations and public statements. The organization can act as an interest group without becoming a party. It communicates the concerns of schools, hospitals, workers, religious communities, and vulnerable groups to state officials. It also uses judicial, legislative, educational, and media channels to debate public policy.

The effectiveness of this role depends on critical distance. Access to officials can increase policy influence, but proximity can also discourage criticism. The literature portrays Muhammadiyah as capable of loyal criticism: supporting the constitutional state while evaluating government performance. The 2015 concept of *Dar al-'Ahd wa al-Shahadah* deepens this logic by treating Indonesia as a binding national agreement and a field of ethical responsibility, not as an external secular order from which Muslims should withdraw (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2015).

6. Member Participation and the Problem of Representation

The fifth theme concerns the distinction between organizational and individual action. Political *khittah* does not prohibit members from joining parties or contesting office. This protects citizenship rights and prevents institutional neutrality from becoming political disenfranchisement. At the same time, the public reputation of senior leaders makes the distinction difficult to maintain. When a prominent Muhammadiyah figure supports a candidate or party, audiences may interpret the choice as an organizational signal even when no formal endorsement exists.

Post-Reformasi research demonstrates that elites have diverse positions on Islamic parties, the Jakarta Charter, terrorism, and the relationship between Islam and the state (Al-Hamdi, 2013, 2015). Diversity is compatible with the *khittah*, but it creates a problem of representation. Who may speak for Muhammadiyah on political issues? Which statements constitute organizational decisions, and which are personal opinions? Without procedural clarity, individual political competition may spill into organizational structures.

Historical research further shows that the organization-party relationship has varied across time and locality. Suwarno (2020) documents close connections between Muhammadiyah and politics during the parliamentary-democracy period in Banyumas, whereas Pratama (2020) examines internal debate over Pancasila during the New Order. These cases demonstrate that the *khittah* is not a timeless wall. It is an adaptive institutional response interpreted in changing political environments.

7. Pluralism, Peacebuilding, and Global Civic Engagement

The sixth theme expands civic engagement beyond state-party relations. Biyanto (2020) identifies Muhammadiyah practices involving interfaith dialogue, educational inclusion, peace, and service in religiously diverse regions. Burhani (2011) also reveals tension between formal theological positions and practical interfaith relations. These studies show that civic engagement includes the management of difference and the protection of a shared public sphere.

Latief and Nashir (2020) document the international expansion of Muhammadiyah through humanitarian assistance, peace initiatives, and global networks. Such engagement strengthens the organization's domestic civic identity by presenting Islamic activism as public service rather than sectarian competition. International activity also provides alternative sources of legitimacy and expertise, reducing the political field to neither national elections nor relationships with Indonesian parties.

Pluralism and humanitarianism are nevertheless uneven practices rather than automatic consequences of organizational doctrine. The literature offers examples of inclusion but does not establish uniform implementation across every school, branch, or region. Official commitment and selected cases should therefore be distinguished from organization-wide outcomes.

Table 3. Thematic synthesis of political khittah and civic engagement

Theme	Core mechanism	Civic contribution	Principal tension
Institutional boundary	Formal non-affiliation with parties	Organizational autonomy	Boundary becomes ambiguous around prominent elites
Principled nonpartisanship	Public engagement without electoral ownership	Independent criticism and broad access	Neutrality may be perceived as hidden preference
Civic infrastructure	Education, health, welfare, philanthropy	Capability, trust, and associational participation	Bureaucratization and dependence on state resources
Moral and policy politics	Advocacy, public statements, policy input	Accountability and interest articulation	Elite access may weaken critical distance
Member-level politics	Individual party and electoral participation	Political pluralism and citizen rights	Partisan spillover into organizational structures
Pluralism and humanitarianism	Dialogue, inclusion, peacebuilding, relief	National cohesion and global civic identity	Uneven implementation across branches and institutions

Discussion

1. From Neutrality to Bounded Civic Engagement

The synthesis suggests that neutrality is an inadequate description of Muhammadiyah's political position. The organization is not neutral regarding justice, corruption, education, welfare, constitutional order, or public morality. It takes positions on these matters and attempts to influence government. What it rejects is institutional capture by a particular party. The more precise concept is bounded civic engagement.

Bounded civic engagement contains two elements. The first is a normative and organizational boundary: Muhammadiyah does not become a party, does not formally affiliate with one, and does not allow a party to monopolize its identity. The second is an open field of civic action: social service, advocacy, democratic education, interfaith cooperation, humanitarian engagement, and individual political participation. The boundary protects the field rather than closing it.

This interpretation explains an apparent contradiction. Muhammadiyah may be politically influential while formally nonpartisan. Influence derives from resources located outside electoral organization: public trust, institutions, expertise, membership networks, and moral authority. Nonpartisanship can therefore increase political capacity by allowing the organization to communicate with competing parties and criticize different governments.

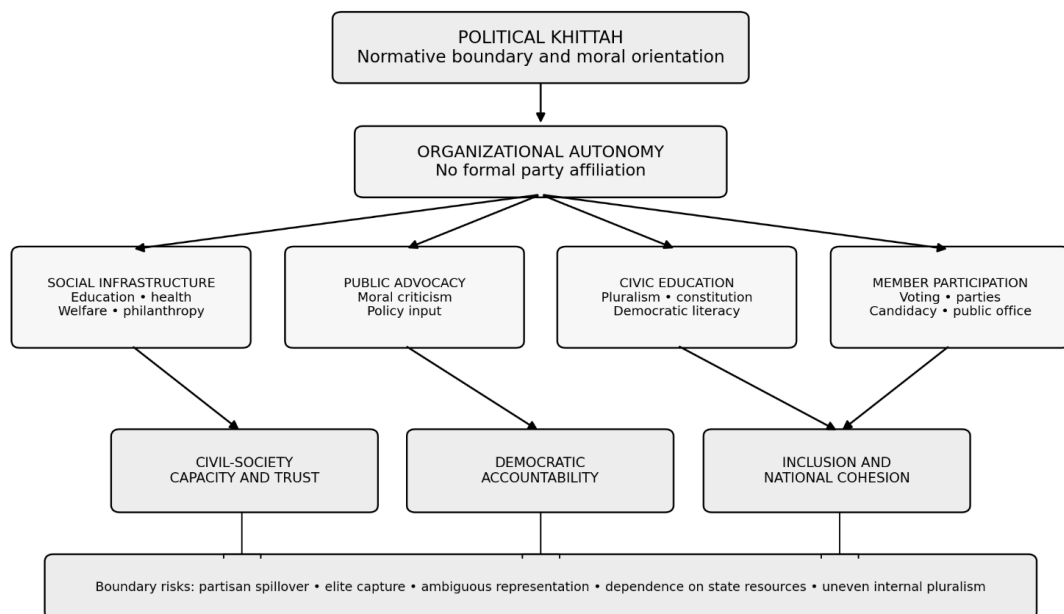


Figure 2. The bounded civic engagement model of Muhammadiyah

2. Actor Differentiation and Porous Boundaries

The model requires differentiation among actors. Muhammadiyah as a legal and organizational entity is not identical to the Central Board, individual leaders,

autonomous organizations, employees of Muhammadiyah institutions, or ordinary members. Each actor possesses different authority and different freedom to participate politically. The official organization is bound by collective decisions; individual members retain broad citizenship rights; leaders operate between these levels and carry greater representational risk.

Autonomous organizations and service institutions add further complexity. Youth, student, women's, professional, and humanitarian bodies may pursue advocacy that is political in substance without being partisan in form. Universities may host candidate dialogues or policy debates. Hospitals may advocate public-health policy. Philanthropic bodies may criticize poverty programmes. These activities expand civic participation but require procedures preventing institutional facilities from being appropriated for partisan competition.

Porous boundaries are not necessarily a defect. Complete separation between civil society and politics is impossible because public issues require interaction with the state. The problem arises when the direction of influence reverses: instead of civil society shaping policy, party competition begins to shape appointments, budgets, or internal legitimacy within the organization. *Khittah* should therefore be understood as a continuing governance practice, not only a historical document.

3. Democratic Contributions and Democratic Risks

Muhammadiyah's configuration contributes to democracy in several ways. Organizational independence diversifies power outside the state. Educational and welfare institutions expand the capabilities required for citizenship. Moral criticism increases public accountability. Internal political plurality reduces the likelihood that one party can claim religious monopoly. The *Pancasila* covenant formulation supports constitutional loyalty while retaining a religious basis for public ethics (Hefner, 2000; Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2015).

The same configuration carries risks. First, elite capture may occur when leaders use organizational prestige for personal electoral objectives. Second, partisan spillover may divide members and institutions. Third, ambiguous representation may confuse personal statements with official positions. Fourth, dependence on state grants, regulation, or access may reduce critical independence. Fifth, internal pluralism may be celebrated formally while dissenting or minority perspectives receive unequal space.

These risks do not negate civic contributions. They identify the institutional conditions necessary for those contributions to remain credible. Transparent decision-making, conflict-of-interest rules, equitable access for competing political actors, and separation between organizational resources and campaign activity are practical implications of the *khittah*.

4. Conceptual Propositions

The review generates four analytical propositions. They are not statistical hypotheses tested by the present study, but theoretically grounded statements for future comparative research.

Proposition 1. Organizational non-affiliation strengthens civic autonomy when it is accompanied by transparent rules distinguishing institutional decisions from the personal political choices of members and leaders.

Proposition 2. Muhammadiyah's political influence depends less on direct electoral mobilization than on the scale, credibility, and accessibility of its civic infrastructure and expert networks.

Proposition 3. Moral and policy advocacy remains democratically credible when access to the state is balanced by public criticism, internal deliberation, and safeguards against dependence on government resources.

Proposition 4. Political khittah produces inclusive civic engagement when organizational neutrality protects member pluralism rather than functioning as a means of suppressing legitimate political disagreement.

Table 4. Bounded civic engagement across organizational levels

Level	Legitimate engagement	Required safeguard
Muhammadiyah as organization	Public advocacy, policy recommendations, civic education, social service	No formal affiliation or exclusive endorsement
Central and regional leaders	Represent organizational decisions and communicate public concerns	Clear distinction between official and personal positions
Autonomous organizations	Youth, women, student, professional, and issue-based advocacy	Compliance with organizational mandate and non-use for party capture
Service institutions	Education, health, welfare, research, and public forums	Equal treatment, professional standards, and campaign neutrality
Individual members	Voting, party membership, candidacy, public office, campaign participation	No unauthorized use of Muhammadiyah name, assets, or authority
External political actors	Dialogue and cooperation on public interest	Equal access, transparency, and no organizational monopoly

Practical and Scholarly Implications

For organizational governance, the review indicates that khittah should be translated into operational standards. Statements about independence are insufficient without procedures regulating campaign activity in Muhammadiyah facilities, conflicts of interest, public endorsements, candidate forums, use of symbols, and the political conduct of office holders within the organization. The objective is not to remove members from politics but to preserve the distinction between citizenship and institutional authority.

For civic programmes, Muhammadiyah should evaluate political contribution through access, participation, and public benefit rather than through proximity to office holders. Universities, hospitals, philanthropic agencies, and community programmes are politically significant when they expand citizens' capabilities and provide channels for public voice. Their civic value should be assessed through inclusion, accountability, and the treatment of marginalized groups.

For scholarship, future research should avoid treating Muhammadiyah as a unitary political actor. Studies should specify whether evidence concerns a formal organizational decision, a leader's statement, a member's vote, an autonomous organization's programme, or an institution's practice. Comparative regional research is particularly necessary because political relationships vary across provinces and branches. Longitudinal studies could examine whether khittah rules are implemented consistently during elections and whether access to government affects the intensity of public criticism.

Limitations

The review has four principal limitations. First, the corpus is conceptually systematic but not bibliometrically exhaustive. Relevant internal documents, regional studies, unpublished theses, and media archives may not be represented. Second, official Muhammadiyah publications articulate formal norms and cannot establish uniform implementation across all organizational levels. Third, the literature is weighted toward national elites and prominent institutions, while ordinary members, local branches, women, youth, and beneficiaries of civic programmes receive less direct attention. Fourth, the temporal boundary excludes developments after 2020, including later electoral cycles and subsequent formulations of political engagement.

The review also relies on heterogeneous sources. Historical books, official documents, interviews with elites, and institutional case studies answer different questions. Their arguments were synthesized conceptually rather than treated as equivalent observations. Claims about democratic effects should therefore be understood as theoretically supported interpretations, not aggregate causal estimates.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual systematic review examined how Muhammadiyah's political khittah structures civic engagement in contemporary Indonesia. The evidence does not support an interpretation of khittah as political abstention. The guidelines separate Muhammadiyah's organizational identity from formal party affiliation while preserving a broad field of political and civic responsibility. This field includes education, health, welfare, philanthropy, moral criticism, policy advocacy, constitutional commitment, interfaith cooperation, humanitarian action, and individual participation in electoral politics.

The central contribution of the review is the concept of bounded civic engagement. The boundary protects Muhammadiyah from becoming an electoral vehicle and allows members to maintain political plurality. The engagement ensures that organizational independence does not become public indifference. Together, these elements produce principled nonpartisanship: active commitment to democratic and national life without exclusive attachment to one party.

The arrangement is productive but unstable. Prominent leaders may blur the difference between personal choice and official policy; electoral competition may spill into organizational institutions; and dependence on state access may weaken critical distance. The credibility of khittah therefore depends on continuous governance, transparency, and accountability. Its success should not be measured only by the absence of formal party affiliation, but by Muhammadiyah's capacity to remain independent, inclusive, and effective in advancing public justice.

REFERENCES

- Alfian. (1989). Muhammadiyah: The political behavior of a Muslim modernist organization under Dutch colonialism. Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Al-Hamdi, R. (2012). Dinamika Islam dan politik elit-elit Muhammadiyah periode 1998-2010. *Jurnal Studi Pemerintahan*, 3(1), 161-196. <https://doi.org/10.18196/jgp.2012.0009>
- Al-Hamdi, R. (2013). Islam and politics: Political attitudes of the elites in Muhammadiyah 1998-2010. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 3(2), 267-290. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v3i2.267-290>
- Al-Hamdi, R. (2015). The Jakarta Charter in post-Soeharto Indonesia: Political thoughts of the elites in Muhammadiyah. *Masyarakat Indonesia*, 41(1), 43-56. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmi.v41i1.560>
- Al-Hamdi, R. (2020). The origin of the political consciousness in Muhammadiyah: An epistemological analysis toward Indonesia's Muslim-reformist movement. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim Society*, 5(2), 187-206. <https://doi.org/10.22515/islimus.v5i2.2706>
- Argenti, G. (2017). Civil society dan politik moral Muhammadiyah. *Jurnal Politikom Indonesiana*, 2(2), 82. <https://doi.org/10.35706/jpi.v2i2.968>
- Biyanto. (2020). Promoting and practicing religious pluralism: Muhammadiyah experience. *Journal of Social Studies*, 16(2), 197-210. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jss.v16i2.34711>

- Burhani, A. N. (2011). Lakum dinukum wa-liya dini: The Muhammadiyah's stance towards interfaith relations. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 22(3), 329-342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2011.586512>
- Fuad, M. (2002). Civil society in Indonesia: The potential and limits of Muhammadiyah. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 17(2), 133-163. <https://doi.org/10.1355/SJ17-2A>
- Fuad, M. (2004). Islam, modernity and Muhammadiyah's educational programme. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 5(3), 400-414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464937042000288697>
- Hefner, R. W. (2000). *Civil Islam: Muslims and democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton University Press.
- Latief, H., & Nashir, H. (2020). Local dynamics and global engagements of the Islamic modernist movement in contemporary Indonesia: The case of Muhammadiyah (2000-2020). *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(2), 290-309. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420910514>
- Nakamura, M. (2012). *The crescent arises over the banyan tree: A study of the Muhammadiyah movement in a Central Javanese town, c. 1910s-2010 (2nd enlarged ed.)*. ISEAS Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814311861>
- Nashir, H. (2008). *Khittah Muhammadiyah tentang politik*. Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. (2010). *Manhaj gerakan Muhammadiyah: Ideologi, khittah, dan langkah*. Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. (2015). *Negara Pancasila sebagai Dar al-'Ahdi wa al-Syahadah*. Gramasurya.
- Pratama, A. Y. (2020). Muhammadiyah dalam bayang-bayang demokrasi: Studi tentang perdebatan Mukhtar Muhammadiyah ke-41 Surakarta. *Indonesian Journal of Muhammadiyah Studies*, 1(1), 47-61. <https://doi.org/10.62289/ijmus.v1i1.15>
- Suwarno. (2020). Relationship between Muhammadiyah and politics in parliament democracy period: A case study in Banyumas. *Indonesian Historical Studies*, 4(1), 12-22. <https://doi.org/10.14710/ihis.v4i1.6598>