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بِوَسِيلَتِنَا مِنْكُمْ لَتَرْحَبُنَا جَنَّةً

**MUSLIM POLITICAL ELITE AND THE REVIVAL
OF THE LEFT IN INDONESIAN POLITICS,
1996-2001**

BY

AHMAD SUHELMI

**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA**

2005

**MUSLIM POLITICAL ELITE AND THE REVIVAL
OF THE LEFT IN INDONESIAN POLITICS,
1996-2001**

AHMAD SUHELMI

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**KULLIYAH OF ISLAMIC REVEALED
KNOWLEDGE
AND HUMAN SCIENCES
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA**

2005

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the responses of Muslim political elite to the revival of Left politics and discourse in post-Soeharto Indonesian politics. Its focus is on the confrontation of the Muslim political elite toward the issue of the reemergence of the Left during the period 1996-2001. Such theoretical approaches on elite as the ones propounded by Mosca, Pareto and C. Wright Mills are examined as a framework for analysis. The explanatory power of the analysis is improved further by identifying the factors that were conducive to Muslim political elite responses such as politics of stigmatization of the Left by the New Order establishment, Muslim historical traumatic experience with the Communist revolts in the past and the nature of Indonesian political elite.

The data for this study were mainly derived from the usual major sources of non-survey data such as the press reports, standard biographical publications for Indonesian Muslim political elite and government sources of aggregate data. The results of semi-structured interviews with several Leftist political activists, elite of Muslim political parties and mass organizations, authors and political observers are widely used in this study. The archival researches and written works of Muslim political elite are also used in this study.

The study reveals that the alleged reemergence of the Left is indicated by the birth of the People's

Democratic Party (Partai Rakyat Demokratik, PRD), the ex-President Abdurrahman Wahid's efforts to revoke MPRS Decree No. XXV/1966 in 2001 and the overflow of Marxist, Leninist and Socialist books as well as the writings by former PKI political prisoners from 1996 to 2001. An examination of the views of the members of Muslim political elite shows polarized perceptions in responding to the issue of the reemergence of the Left. Those who view that Communists and their ideologies are dangerous and would potentially jeopardize the life of the nation, responded that the Left are basically driven by the interweaving of theological, historical and political factors. The other is those who view that there is a common denominator between Islam and Communism at the practical level on such issues as poverty, justice and egalitarianism. The argument of the latter group revolves around the issue of human rights, with emphasis on the commonality between the two and the need for reconciliation.

The issue of the Left is a complex matter when dealing with specific issues alleged to be the indicators of the reemergence of the Left. These are exemplified by the cases of the emergence of PRD, alleged to be the reincarnation of the PKI, the efforts of ex-President Wahid to revoke MPRS Decree No. XXV/1966 in 2001 and the burning of the Leftist books by the Anti-Communist Alliance (AAK). Furthermore, these issues emerged within different socio-political atmospheres, during New Order regime in which political freedom was relatively limited and post New Order era that allowed freedom of expression to a very great extent.

APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis of Ahmad Suhelmi has been examined and approved by the following:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Ahmad Suhelmi

Date

Signature

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**MUSLIM POLITICAL ELITE AND THE REVIVAL OF THE
LEFT IN INDONESIAN POLITICS, 1996-2001**

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The thesis is dedicated to my late beloved parents, Siti Rochaenah binti Haji Abu, H. Ahmad Udje bin Aseh, and to my wife, sons and daughter, Ike Ulfiaty, Fikry, Ghiffar and Azkia.

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Writing the thesis, however, is also an exciting experience for it motivated me to persist in broadening my intellectual horizon and increase my knowledge in political science in general, and the politics of Islam in its relationship to the Left in Indonesian politics in particular. The research has also encouraged me to know more about the un-cordial nature of relations between “Islam movement” and the Left. My interest in this subject has begun since my student days at the University of Indonesia in the early 1980’s and at Monash University, 1991-1993. Since then, I have been writing articles and books on the topic of Islam and the Left. I was impressed by the struggle of the Indonesian Leftists since the colonial period till the demise of the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) in the mid-1960’s. I was equally impressed and excited by the responses of the Muslims to the ideology of the Left, especially the way they treated Marxism, Socialism, Communism and the like.

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TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

Letters of the Alphabet

Initial	Medial	Final	Alone	Romanization
ا	ا	ا	ا	a
ب	ب	ب	ب	b
ت	ت	ت	ت	t
ث	ث	ث	ث	th
ج	ج	ج	ج	j
ح	ح	ح	ح	ĥ
خ	خ	خ	خ	kh
د	د	د	د	d
ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ	dh
ر	ر	ر	ر	r
ز	ز	ز	ز	z
س	س	س	س	s
ش	ش	ش	ش	sh
ص	ص	ص	ص	ĥ
ض	ض	ض	ض	ĥ
ط	ط	ط	ط	ĥ
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	Ḍ
ع	ع	ع	ع	Ñ (ayn)
غ	غ	غ	غ	gh
ف	ف	ف	ف	f
ق	ق	ق	ق	q
ك	ك	ك	ك	k
ل	ل	ل	ل	l
م	م	م	م	m
ن	ن	ن	ن	n
ه	ه	ه, ه	ه, ه	h
و	و	و	و	w
ي	ي	ي	ي	y

Vowels and Diphtongs

□	a	□	É	□	Ê
□	u	□	á	□	aw'
□	I	□	Ë	□	ay

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Aliansi Anti Komunis</i> , The Anti-Communist Alliance	AAK	
<i>Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia</i> , Indonesian Armed Forces		ABRI
<i>Angkatan Muda Pembaharuan Indonesia</i> , Young Generation of Indonesian Reformers		AMPI
<i>Barisan Serba Guna</i> , Multipurpose Front	BANSER	
<i>Badan Komunikasi Pemuda dan Remaja Masjid Islam</i> , Youth Communication Body Mosque of Islam	BKPRMI	
<i>Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia</i> , Investigation Committee for Preparation of Indonesian Independence	BPUPKI	
<i>Barisan Tani Indonesia</i> , Indonesian Peasant Association	BTI	
<i>Central Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia</i> , Centre for Indonesian Student Movement		CGMI
<i>Center for Strategic and International Studies</i> .	CSIS	
<i>Darul Islam</i> , Islamic State	DI	
<i>Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia</i> , Islamic Da'wah Council of Indonesia		DDII
<i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat</i> , House of People's Representatives		DPR
<i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah</i> , Regional Council of Representatives.	DPRD	
<i>Forum Masyarakat Taqwa</i> , Forum for Brotherhood Among Religious Believers.		FORMAT
<i>Forum Kota</i> , City Forum.	FORKOT	
<i>Front Pembela Islam</i> , Defender of Islamic Front.	FPI	
<i>Fron Pembela Islam Surakarta</i> , Defender of Islamic Front of Surakarta		FPIS
<i>Front Persatuan Nasional</i> , National United Front	FPN	
<i>Gerakan Anti Komunis Banten</i> , Banten Anti Communist Movement		GAKB
<i>Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Negara</i> , the Broad Outlines of the National Direction		GBHAN
<i>Gerakan September Tiga Puluh</i> , September 30 Movement	GESTAPU	
<i>Golongan Karya</i> , Functional Group	GOLKAR	
<i>Gerakan Pemuda Anshor</i> , NU's Youth Organization	GPA	
<i>Gerakan Pembela Islam</i> , Islamic Youth Movement	GPI	
<i>Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam</i> , Association of Muslim Students		HMI
<i>Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia</i> , Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals		ICMI
<i>Industri Pesawat Terbang Nurtanio</i> , National Aircraft Industry		IPTN
<i>Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeninging</i> , Social Democratic Association in East Indies		ISDV
<i>Jaringan Kesenian Rakyat</i> , People's Arts Network	JAKKER	
<i>Komite Solidaritas untuk Dunia Islam</i> , Solidarity Committee of the Muslim World		KISDI
<i>Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia</i> , Action Command of Indonesian Students		KMMI
<i>Komando Pasukan Khusus</i> , Special Army Command	KOPASUS	
<i>Kesatuan Aksi Pemuda Pelajar Indonesia</i> , Action Command of Indonesian Youths and Pupils		KPII
<i>Lembaga Kesenian Rakyat</i> , People's Art Institute	LEKRA	

<i>Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia</i> , Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims		MASYUMI
<i>Muslimin Indonesia</i> , Indonesian Muslims	MI	
<i>Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia</i> , Council of Indonesia Islamic Fighters		MMI
<i>Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia</i> , Supreme Islamic Mission	MIAI	
<i>Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat</i> , People's Consultative Assembly		MPR
<i>Majelis Ulama' Indonesia</i> , Council of Indonesian Ulama	MUI	
<i>Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia</i> , The Unitary Republic of Indonesia		NKRI
<i>Nahdlatul Ulama</i> , The Awakening of Ulama	NU	
<i>Partai Muslimin Indonesia</i> , Party of Indonesian Muslims	PARMUSI	
<i>Partai Amanat National</i> , National Mandatory Party	PAN	
<i>Partai Bulan Bintang</i> , Crescent Star Party	PBB	
<i>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia</i> , Indonesian Democratic Party	PDI	
<i>Pembela Islam untuk Tanah Air</i> , Islamic Movement for the Homeland		PINTAR
<i>Pelajar Islam Indonesia</i> , Indonesian Muslim Students	PII	
<i>Partai Keadilan</i> , Justice Party	PK	
<i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i> , Indonesian Communist Party	PKI	
<i>Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa</i> , National Awakening Party	PKB	
<i>Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia</i> , Movement of Indonesian Muslim Students		PMII
<i>Partai Nasional Indonesia</i> , Indonesian Nationalist Party	PNI	
<i>Pegawai Negri Sipil</i> , Civil Servant.	PNS	
<i>Polisi Republik Indonesia</i> , Indonesian Republic Police	POLRI	
<i>Partai Rakyat Demokratik</i> , Democratic People's Party	PRD	
<i>Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia</i> , Revolutionary Government of the Republic Indonesia		PRRI
<i>Persatuan Pergerakan Buruh Indonesia</i> , Union of Indonesian Workers' Movement		PPBI
<i>Partai Persatuan Pembangunan</i> , United Development Party	PPP	
<i>Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar Golongan</i> , Ethnic, Religious and Racial Relations		SARA
<i>Serikat Buruh Muslim Indonesia</i> , Labor Union Muslim Indonesian	SARBUMUSI	
SAW Sallahu 'Alaihi wassalam, Peace be upon Him		
<i>Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij</i> , Social Democratic Workers Party		SDAP
<i>Serikat Islam</i> , Islamic Union	SI	
<i>Social Democratische Partij</i> , Dutch Social Democratic Party		SDI
<i>Surat Izin Usaha Persuratkabaran</i> , Written Authorization for Press Enterprise		SIUP
<i>Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi</i> , Solidarity of Indonesian Students for Democracy		SMID
<i>Serikat Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia</i> , Labor Union of Indonesia		SOBSI
<i>Solidaritas Perjuangan Rakyat Indonesia Untuk Maubere</i> , Solidarity of Indonesian People's Struggle for Maubere		SPRIM
<i>Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia</i> , Association of Indonesian Workers		SPSI
<i>Sarekat Tani Nasional</i> , National Farmers Association	STN	
<i>Sarekat Tani National Indonesia</i> , National Indonesian Peasant Union		STNI

SWT *SubhÉnahu wa ta'Éla*, To Whom be ascribed all Perfection and
Majesty
Tentara Nasional Indonesia, Indonesian National Army TNI
Undang-Undang Dasar 1945, the 1945 Constitution UUD 1945
Undang-Undang Dasar Sementara 1950, The 1950 Provisional UUDS 1950
Constitution

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“The Party has been rebuilt, well, 31 years buried, butchered, humiliated, exterminated, outlawed, detained, controlled, betrayed, hit, scared, loved, remembered, reminisced, wished, ... and now rebuilt. Oh, Lord, give our struggle blessing. Isn’t your promise true to elevate the poor, so that they lead the world some day? ”¹

(Dita Indah Sari, PRD activist)

Leftist politics in Indonesia has a chequered political history. Since the abortive coup of the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI), on 30 September 1965, the organized Left lost all its influence in Indonesian political life.² The New Order regime that came to power and supported by the military treated the Left as a grave and treacherous threat to the nation and to political stability.³ As a result, for more than three decades of New Order rule, the Leftist movement and its

¹ Original: “*Partai sudah berdiri, well, 31 tahun terkubur, dibantai, dihina, dibunuh, dilarang, ditahan, diawasi, dikhianati, dipukul. Ditakuti, dicintai, diingat, dikenang, ditunggu, diingini, ... dan sekarang dibangun lagi. Tuhan, berkatilah perjuangan kami. Bukankah janji-Mu adalah mengangkat orang-orang miskin, agar suatu hari nanti mereka menjadi pemimpin dunia ?*” Dita Indah Sari’s diary. Quoted in *Gatra*, 31 August 1996.

² Alfian insists that the abortive coup of the Communists in 1965 extinguished two important political forces in Indonesian politics: President Soekarno and the PKI. Alfian is probably correct because since the time PKI was banned, its top leaders and hundreds of thousands of its members were executed or imprisoned. PKI members and its sympathizers were massacred in Java, Sumatra, Bali and other parts of Indonesia. John Hughes believes the number of victims reached about 200,000. Adam Malik, former vice president of Indonesia, said the figure was about 160,000. Others have said it was 400,000. Therefore, it is impossible to imagine a leftist revival after the tragedy. See, Alfian, *Pemikiran dan Perubahan Politik Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1981), 29; John Hughes, *Indonesia Upheaval* (New York: Mc Kay Publisher, 1967); B.J Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

³ To maintain political stability, the New Order successfully excluded all ideological rivals. The most serious rivals were the so-called “*Ekstrim Kiri*” (“The Extreme Left”) referring to the Marxist-Communists and other radical leftists, and “*Ekstrim Kanan*” (“The Extreme Right”), meaning “fundamentalist” and “radical” Muslims. To the New Order regime, political stability was the most important prerequisite for national economic recovery following the economic malaise of the mid-1960’s that preceded the birth of the New Order. See Herbert Feith, “Soeharto’s Search for a Political Format”, *Indonesia*, Vol. 6 (October, 1968), 88-105.

political discourse were suppressed.⁴ This ended only when the Soeharto regime collapsed on May 21, 1998.⁵

The purpose of this study is to examine the responses of the Indonesian Muslim “political elite” to the phenomenon of the Leftist revival in Indonesian politics during 1996-2001. In particular, this study analyzes three central issues in present day Indonesian politics: firstly, the responses of the Muslim political elites to the issues of Communism and the PKI in an analysis of their ideas on the ideology of Communism, PKI as well as the emergence of PRD (*Partai Rakyat Demokratik*, People’s Democratic Party) and its political activities; secondly, responses of the Muslim “political elites” to President Abdurrahman Wahid’s idea of revoking the MPRS decree No. XXV/ 1966 which regulated the outlawing of Communism and the banning of the PKI; and thirdly, responses of several radical Islamic political groups incorporated within the *Aliansi Anti-Komunis* (AAK, The Anti-Communist Alliance) to the publishing of the “Leftist” books during Wahid’s presidential term.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The birth of PRD in April 1996 signaled an attempt at reviving leftist politics in Indonesia. It was a group of young students led by Budiman Sujatmiko who openly declared the establishment of this party in Jakarta. PRD is, as claimed by its founders, a radical and revolutionary party with a strong Marxist-Socialist orientation.⁶ Soon,

⁴ To some observers, like Arief Budiman, Olle Tornquist, Anders Uhlin and Herbert Feith, the New Order regime was oppressive. See for example, Arief Budiman, ed., *State and Civil Society in Indonesia* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 1991).

⁵ For a detailed account of Soeharto’s fall, see Bilveer Singh, *Succession Politics in Indonesia The 1998 Presidential Elections and the Fall of Soeharto* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000), 77-98.

⁶ It is clearly stated in *Manifesto Partai Rakyat Demokratik* (Manifesto of Democratic People’s Party) that PRD ideologically draws inspiration from Democratic Socialism, Marxism and other revolutionary-progressive ideologies. However, Budiman rejects the claim that PRD is a communist party or affiliated to the banned PKI. This point will be discussed in detail in the second chapter.

other radical left groups such as *Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi* (SMID, Indonesian Students in Solidarity with Democracy), *Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia* (PPBI, Indonesian Center for Labor Struggle), *Sarekat Tani Nasional* (STN, National Farmers Association), *Jaringan Kesenian Rakyat* (JAKKER, People's Arts Network) became affiliated to the PRD. From the beginning, the main political target of the party was to overthrow the Soeharto-dominated capitalist system through a socialist revolution.⁷

PRD entered a critical stage following large scale urban riots in Jakarta on Saturday July 27, 1996.⁸ It was a violent mass action where many people died and a number of cars, buses and government buildings were burned down.⁹ The army and police were called in to restore law and order in the country. The government blamed the PRD, a group with a strong Marxist-Communist orientation, for the riot.¹⁰ From then, PRD was considered "an enemy of the state." The leaders of PRD as well as its members were detained and imprisoned. Some of them were kidnapped by the army's special unit, *Komando Pasukan Khusus* (Special Army Command, Kopassus).¹¹ The party was banned by the government. It is surprising to note, however, that the PRD still survived and, more importantly, the PRD played a noteworthy role in the overthrow of the New Order regime.

Consult *Manifesto PRD* (Manifesto of PRD) and see interview with Budiman Sudjatmiko, *Gatra*, August 10, 1996.

⁷ See interview with Dita Indah Sari, one leading figure of PRD, *Gatra*, August 31, 1996. In Budiman's view, the New Order had to be overthrown because this regime had created poverty, a huge gap between 'the haves' and 'the have nots', was oppressive to the people and manipulated historical facts. See, F.X Rudy Gunawan, *Budiman Sudjatmiko Menolak Tunduk: Catatan Anak Muda Menentang Tirani* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 1999).

⁸ In Indonesia, the riot is popularly called "*Peristiwa Sabtu Kelabu*" July 27, 1996. The essential origins of the riots was due to the violent takeover by hired thugs of the minority PDI party headquarters which remained loyal to its ousted leader Megawati Soekarnoputri.

⁹ See *Gatra*, August 10, 1996.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ The kidnapped members of PRD include, among others, Pius Lustrilanang, Reza Patria, Faishol Reza, and Wiji Thukul.

The “sudden” collapse of Soeharto’s New Order regime¹² brought about a “new era” in Indonesian political life. It was an era characterized by political liberalization. The army, the most dominant political force in Indonesian politics during Soeharto’s regime (1966-1998), was gradually forced to acquiesce formally to civilian supremacy.¹³ The media, previously under strict government control, was able to express free editorial views and establish new outlets and publications with no effective permit processing delay. There has also been growing political consciousness among the masses to participate in political affairs. This is indicated by the emergence of more than one hundred political parties during 1998-1999. The country also held a democratic general election in 1999.¹⁴ PRD, as one of the political forces, exploited this changing political situation and took part in the general elections which meant that PRD had been formally recognized as a legitimate party in Indonesian politics. Internally, the party was divided over how to respond to the opportunity provided by the 1999 elections. Some thought their participation would offer “legitimacy” to this President Habibie era election; others thought that they should attempt to enter with the expectation that they would be excluded and then could claim the process illegitimate while others thought it best to seize the opportunity to participate. In the end a combination of the second and third groups dominated the view. For some, being accepted as full participants to the elections was

¹² The collapse was the worst economic collapse in any country in the world since WW II (as seen in an 80% collapse in currency value in 6 months, inflation heading potentially towards 100%, economic contraction of 14%) combined with the abject failure of the regime to respond in any meaningful way to this crisis and an obvious absence of any workable constitutional mechanisms to bring about a peaceful change of leadership.

¹³ This was especially the case when Abdurrahman Wahid came to power in October 1999.

¹⁴ It is generally held that only two General Elections in Indonesia’s history have been democratic, those of 1955 and 1999. General elections carried out during the New Order period (1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992 and 1997) were not democratic because they were under strict government control, and mostly dominated by *Golongan Karya* (Functional Group), a government party. See Herbert Feith, *The Election of 1955* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1971); R. William Liddle, ed., *Partisipasi dan Partai Politik di Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1987).