

## A Dilemma: The Independence of Kyai and Islamic Boarding Schools in the Political Vortex of Policy

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### Abstract:

This study is aimed at exploring the independence of kiai as spiritual leaders in Islamic boarding schools in formulating policies in the field of education. In analyzing these policies, this research focuses on the development of teaching and the application of the “Single Principle of Pancasila” in Indonesian educational institutions, the dynamics of Islamic boarding schools policies that resulted in the birth of Law No. 18 of 2019, and the negative aspects of the politicization of religion that have an impact on education policy. This study adopts a qualitative approach through case studies in two Islamic boarding schools located in East Java as the subject of the study. Primary data is obtained through observation and interview activities, while secondary data is sourced from literature such as laws and regulations, scientific publications (journals), books, and other references. Data collection methods include observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation (document review). Data analysis is carried out with a qualitative approach through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion formulation. The findings of the study indicate that laws and regulations give power to Islamic boarding schools and kiai to build their institutions based on the needs of the community, traditional values, and the progress of the times. Although the autonomy of the kiai substantially affects the direction of the development of the Islamic boarding schools, this factor is not the only determinant of the characteristics of the Islamic boarding schools. The regulations emphasize the importance of implementing modern teaching methodologies, curriculum transformation, and facility development, and encourage kiai to abandon rigid and authoritarian approaches.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the study of policies in the field of education, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of educational institutions, especially those based on religion, and how they affect the implementation of education and the social demands of the community. Faith-based educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools make a great contribution and have long carried out vital and strategic functions in influencing political maps and policy

orientations in various parts of the world (Beyers, 2015; Darwanto et al., 2024; Fox, 2018; Theatre & Jenkins, 2019; Yusuf et al., 2023).

This innovation in the field of education focuses on the concept of rationality as an approach to advance *ijtihad* in dealing with current problems (Kustiawa et al., 2023). In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools are recognized as the most widespread religious education and coaching institutions in society and have a significant impact on various authorities in various sectors (Hudaefi & Heryani, 2019; Isbah, 2020). This condition occurs because, according to the opinions of Dhofier (1980) and Bruinessen (2008), Islamic boarding schools have a strong tradition of autonomy from the *kiai*/leaders in setting policies for the community. In addition, the curriculum structure of Islamic boarding schools also includes various disciplines, which are seen as able to accommodate various needs of society and solve problems in a pluralistic society (Azra & Afrianty, 2005; Rasidin et al., 2024).

According to the understanding of the wider community, Islamic boarding schools do not solely function as a place to teach Islam, but also as a socio-political entity or in Hefner's (2009, 2022) terminology is referred to as a socio-political movement that has a vital role for the survival of the community or has a meaningful impact on social life. However, in practice, this condition is often used for the benefit of mass mobilization by certain party groups/political elites considering the large influence that Islamic boarding schools/*kiai* has in front of the community, especially the middle and lower economic community (Budi, 2022).

Based on this explanation, this study focuses on the study of *kiai* autonomy, the development of Islamic boarding schools, and the politicization of Islamic boarding schools through the perspective of education policy analysis. This research examines and explores various problems of education policy related to Islamic boarding schools and their impact on management or regulation in the Islamic boarding schools environment, as well as exploring how Islamic boarding schools policies that develop today have helped shape the autonomy of *kiai* and political elites. In a more specific scope, this study analyzes education policy with a focus on the development of the teaching system and the application of the 'Single Principle of Pancasila' in Indonesian educational institutions, the dynamics of Islamic boarding school policies until the formation of Law No. 18 of 2019, as well as the negative aspects of the politicization of religion that have an impact on education policy.

## **METHOD**

This research applies a qualitative approach through case studies conducted at Islamic boarding schools located in East Java. The research involved two Islamic boarding schools as the object of the study. To maintain identity confidentiality, the two research objects are not revealed by their real names in this article, but use alias in the form of Islamic Boarding School A and Islamic Boarding School B. Based on the selected cases, the researcher identifies Islamic boarding schools that participate in political activities and provide input on policies from time to time, as well as Islamic boarding schools that choose to maintain their original characteristics by not participating in political activities.

The data of this study was obtained from two categories of sources, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through observation and interview activities. This study involved four informants who were evenly divided, with two people each from Islamic boarding schools A and Islamic boarding schools B. The selection of informants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique that represented various possibilities from various aspects that met the criteria to be the main sample of the study. The secondary data was obtained from various literature references including laws, scientific articles (journals), books, and other literature relevant to the research topic.

The data collection process was carried out using observation techniques, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation (document analysis). In document analysis, the method applied is an analysis of policy content with the main focus on Law No. 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools. To analyze the data, this study uses Miles et al.'s qualitative data analysis techniques which include data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawn.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Evolution of Teaching and Implementation of the “Single Principle of Pancasila” in Indonesian Educational Institutions**

The development of learning models and the curriculum to be taught is a crucial challenge in managing the meeting point between scientific science and religious knowledge that has non-scientific or dogmatic tendencies (Ansori et al., 2022; Mustofa et al., 2023). Another obstacle in the development of the teaching and learning process in the Islamic boarding schools environment is the learning method, which initially used a teacher-centered approach to become student-centered by involving various activities that encourage critical thinking skills (Abidin et al., 2022; Bin Tahir, 2017; Mustakim, 2021; Yahya, 2021).

The contribution of Islamic boarding schools to the development of educational institutions can be seen from the way Islamic boarding schools influence the idea of combining various disciplines in the curriculum structure and the implementation of the teaching and learning process (Abidin et al., 2022; Isbah, 2020; Muazza et al., 2018; Nurchandani & Ratnasari, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2024). In this context, Isbah (2020) stated that the development of every Islamic boarding schools regulation that has undergone changes from the phase of rejection, then partial recognition without providing an equivalent status with other secular educational institutions, until finally providing full recognition and even providing official support and validation, requires Islamic boarding schools to transform from conventional educational institutions that are characterized by student dominance, absolute kiai authority, The lack of development of critical thinking, as well as various other traditions, has become an open institution and encourages a learning process that prioritizes critical thinking skills. This concept needs to be in line with the principle of the “Single Principle of Pancasila” which contains various elements of diversity and fundamental values, so as to be able to accommodate individual rights in learning and teaching activities, spirituality as the foundation of the lives of all Indonesian people, and the unity of various interests (Fatah, 2021; Mariyono et al., 2023).

The implementation of the “Single Principle of Pancasila” in the Islamic boarding schools curriculum can be seen as a clear illustration of the application of this concept. The curriculum is developed through collaboration between various related parties, including policy makers in the field of education, academics, and experts in various disciplines. Through this collaboration, these stakeholders are able to design a curriculum that integrates national values and the philosophical foundations of Pancasila while maintaining religious characteristics and traditions that have been rooted in the Islamic boarding schools environment (Firdaus & Abdulkarim, 2022; Iswandi & Abdullah, 2020; Ningsihet al., 2023; Yahya, 2021).

In addition, the collaboration established between educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools and government and private entities is able to improve and develop aspects that need to be determined in the context of the formulation of Islamic boarding schools policies in the Islamic boarding schools environment. Such partnerships can provide a variety of training programs and other essential resources to support the policy implementation process and align it with Pancasila values or national principles (Shaturaev, 2021).

The establishment of inclusive educational institutions requires comprehensive cooperation with various stakeholders. Moreover, it is undeniable that Islamic boarding schools tend to be less enthusiastic in collaborating with the government, including in the aspect of formulating Islamic boarding schools policies, because the government needs to show concern for the existence of Islamic boarding schools. However, as time goes by, the government begins to pay attention to Islamic boarding schools and expects Islamic boarding schools to actively participate in various programs and cooperate with various parties for the advancement of their educational institutions.

### **History of the Struggle of Islamic Boarding School Policy and the Birth of Law No. 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools**

In the era before Indonesia’s independence, Islamic boarding schools faced a period filled with conflicts with the Dutch colonialists. In this situation, the ulama or kyai in the Islamic boarding schools play a role in providing religious basis and direction to their students to be involved in the movement against Western domination. These kyai affirmed the principles of justice, independence, and the struggle against all forms of tyranny practiced by the Dutch colonial government (Ridwan, 2020). Consequently, the focus of learning at that time was more directed towards the spirit of resistance or jihad in the face of various injustices applied by the colonial rulers. A clear example of this can be seen from the actions of Kyai Hasyim Asy’ari, who was the founding figure of the religious organization Nahdhatul Ulama, when he announced the call for jihad on November 10, 1945 (Bizawie, 2020).

During this period, there was an influential figure from the Dutch who helped color the development of Islam and the world of Islamic boarding schools, namely Snouck Hurgronje. He was a scholar who dedicated his life in Makkah and the Dutch East Indies to study the teachings of Islam and the Asian region, thus bringing a very significant influence on the transformation of the colonial strategy to the Indonesian people, especially Muslims who

were in a precarious situation due to resistance to the Dutch (Burhanudin, 2014; Hasan, 1995; McFate, 2019; Moersidin, Mumtaz, Salsabila, Hasan, Sholihaturrahmaniah, 2022; Peters, 2015; van Koningsveld, 2016). In this context, Burhanuddin (2014) stated that there were at least three strategies/policies implemented by Hurgronje to calm the Islam/Islamic Boarding School movement at that time, namely understanding the network of scholars of the archipelago, modifying and directing various aspects that have the potential to trigger conflicts towards constructive things, and establishing cooperation with the local community. On the other hand, Moersidin et al. (2022) classify Hurgronje's strategy in this regard by providing facilities and permits for religious activities that do not have the potential to oppose colonialism while prohibiting religious elements as political ideologies to fight against the state.

After Indonesia's independence, Islamic education policies, especially in the field of Islamic boarding schools, underwent fundamental changes. Islamic education policies in Indonesia show very diverse variations ranging from the Old Order era, the New Order, to the reform period. In summary, this journey began with the birth of the National Education System Law which became the foundation of the Indonesian education system, starting from the Old Order era through Law No. 4 of 1950 which stated that religious education was not considered an obligation by the state and government. The status of religious education changed to compulsory after the issuance of Law No. 2 of 1989, although it is still not a top priority and is still an imitation of the national education system. Only with the promulgation of Law No. 20 of 2003, religious education received an equal position and was fully integrated in the national education system. In terms of institutions, there has been an evolution from the status of not receiving government recognition (Law No. 4 of 1950), then partial recognition from the government (Law No. 2 of 1989), to finally obtaining full recognition and openness from the government through Law No. 20 of 2003 (Soebahar & Abd, 2009).

The validity of the existence of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia became increasingly assertive after the issuance of Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 which regulates Religious Education and Religious Education, and this position was further strengthened through Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools (Qomar, 2002). The enactment of Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools presents a form of recognition, affirmation, and support of facilities that must be provided by the government for Islamic boarding schools throughout Indonesia. A considerable beneficial impact on the progress of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia is also created from this regulation. In line with the opinions of Usman and Widyanto (2021), the positive benefits of these regulations are reflected in the government's obligation to allocate a special budget for Islamic Boarding Schools, both in the independence era and in the current period (DPR RI, 2019).

There are a series of important stages in the historical journey that have produced happy blessings for the progress of the Islamic boarding school world in the country. The initial stage began when a draft Law emerged through the stipulation of the Decree of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia Number: 7/DPR RI/II/2016-2017 which

regulates the National Legislation Program of the 2017 Priority Bill and the National Legislation Program of the 2015-2019 Amendment Bill. In the decree in question, especially in point 43, the position of Islamic boarding schools is listed as the Bill on Religious Education Institutions and Islamic Boarding Schools (bphn, 2016). However, in its development through various discussions at the level of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, the naming has been changed to the Islamic Boarding School and Religious Education Bill. Even then, this decision was stipulated as a bill proposed by the House of Representatives on October 16, 2018 (Erdianto, 2018).

Initially, the Draft Law on Islamic Boarding Schools and Religious Education was designed to regulate all types of religious education in Indonesia, including Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Catholic, Confucian, and Islamic religious education. However, when entering the final phase of ratification, the scope of the bill has narrowed so that it only focuses on the regulation of Islamic boarding schools. The initiative to submit this bill comes from certain elite groups of political parties, namely the United Development Party (PPP) Faction and the National Awakening Party (PKB) Faction (DPR RI, 2018; Usman & Widyanto, 2021).

### **The Dark Side of Religious Politicization and Its Policy Implications**

The phenomenon of politicization of religion occurs when religious institutions, organizations, or bodies abandon their independence and instead serve the agenda of a certain political elite or ruler in a community (Hadžić, 2020; Iveković, 2002; Ognjenovic & Jozelic, 2014). This concept is supported by various studies that state that such phenomena can have serious consequences for civil society freedom and public discourse, especially in the context of democratic systems (Brunello, 2014; Kellstedt & Green, 1993; Philpott, 2007). In this context, Brunello (2014) based on his research in the United States emphasized that the process of politicization of religion can threaten the principles of pluralism, give rise to intolerance, undermine societal norms and common interests, and will ultimately deprive a person of individual and intellectual freedom. Discussions on this issue have been the focus of attention among those who have fought for the separation of religious institutions and the state since the period before the American Revolution.

Although sometimes beneficial, conflicts between the religious and political realms arise because religion is based on religious values that are absolute and non-negotiable, while politics relies on negotiation to balance various existing needs and interests (Demerath, 2019; Halman & Pettersson, 2003; Hefner, 2010; Mueller, 2013). In addition, according to Demerath (2019), this condition will affect the dynamics of policy formulation, where religious leaders who tend to prioritize emotional aspects over professional attitudes for the benefit of their congregations and religious communities will be more aggressive in fighting for policy consensus that basically benefits their own groups. On the other hand, politicians show a more pragmatic attitude in responding to the idealism embraced by their political party elite.

In Indonesia, a similar phenomenon can also be observed, especially in the realm of Islam, where the holy book of the Qur'an which has sacred value is used as a tool for the political interests of certain groups (Danial & Husna, 2022; Makinuddin, 2021; Salda et al.,

2020). According to Makinuddin (2021), there are a number of negative impacts that arise from the politicization of the Quran, including: hindering women's leadership, blocking opportunities for non-Muslim leaders, and the use of symbolic power to create hegemony and domination by certain political elites, and so on.

One consequence is the inhibition of the ability of minority groups to convey and express their desires due to the dominance of the interests of the majority group in policy formulation (Lindsey & Butt, 2016; Nasution, 2016; Tampubolon, 2016; Tampubolon & Aziz, 2021). Tampubolon and Aziz (2021) explained that a number of policies have been influenced by the politicization of religion that has a negative impact on minority groups, including Law Number 1/PNPS/1965 and various other regulations such as the Regulation on the Establishment of Places of Worship (PBM). In the PBM, the provisions in articles 13, 14, 18 paragraph (3) create complex requirements to be implemented and become a significant obstacle for minority communities in building their places of worship.

In the context of Indonesian studies, religion has played a crucial role in configuring the political arena, including both parties with Islamic ideology and parties with a secular orientation (Arakaki, 2011; Picard & Madinier, 2011; Roberts, 2013; Steenbrink, 2015; Tandon, 2019). Tandon (2019) explained that political strategies that prioritize vote hunting have become the main approach and common practice for Indonesian political parties. A number of secular parties are slowly starting to shift away from their secular platforms and show responsiveness to religious issues for fear of hurting the feelings of constituents. On the other hand, various Islamic parties seek to integrate secular goals in order to build solid mass support. This condition shows that religious factors have a substantial influence on the dynamics of Indonesian political parties. The real manifestation that occurred in a short period of time can be seen in the 2019 General Election, where Prabowo and Jokowi's supporters were unable to avoid using religion as a political tool by raising the theme of conservative Islam and progressive Islam, which then divided society and triggered conflicts in a number of regions (Fahmi, 2020; Iswandi & Abdullah, 2020; Yudiantiasa, 2020).

### **Kyai's Independence in the Perspective of Policy Content Analysis**

The focus of the discussion in this section is to review the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019 to evaluate how far the interpretation of the independence of kiai in the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019 is. In addition, through a review of the intention, definition, and a number of steps proposed in the draft policy, this study will gain an understanding of the potential impact of the policy on the independence and authority of kiai in decision-making in educational institutions.

The discussion began with the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019, Chapter 1, related to general provisions that define Islamic Boarding Schools as institutions rooted in society and established by individuals, foundations, Islamic community organizations, and/or communities that aim to instill faith and piety in Allah SWT, form noble morals, and uphold the Islamic teachings of rahmatan lilalamin which is manifested in tawadu behavior, tolerance, balance, moderation, and noble values of the Indonesian nation through education, Islamic da'wah, example, and community empowerment within the framework of

the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Based on the concept of Islamic boarding schools, the ownership of Islamic boarding schools is not limited to a single individual. The character that characterizes a Islamic boarding schools can be formed from several Kyai figures, especially if the Islamic boarding schools was founded by a number of individuals or certain community communities. In the study of social identity theory, it has been explained that the formation of an identity, including an independent identity, requires a certain process (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Ashforth & Mael, 2004; M. Husnaini et al.). This condition will also strengthen the characteristics of the identity of the Islamic boarding schools and distinguish it from other Islamic boarding schools trains.

Every Islamic Boarding School institution is obliged to maintain the principle of independence as explicitly mandated in the Islamic Boarding School Law Number 18 of 2019. Article 2 clearly states that independence is the main foundation in the implementation of Islamic Boarding Schools, while Article 8 emphasizes the obligation to preserve the characteristics and privileges that represent the traditional values of Islamic Boarding Schools. Although the preservation of the tradition and identity of the Islamic Boarding School, especially the independence of the Kyai, is a necessity, there are several aspects that make the independence of the Kyai not absolute and authoritarian. This can be seen in the sections that regulate curriculum issues and Islamic Boarding School cooperation, which require Islamic Boarding Schools to comply with the provisions of the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019. This regulation encourages a Kyai to be more wise, open to the progress of the times, and not to be egocentric in the decision-making process.

In terms of institutions, Islamic Boarding School Law Number 18 of 2019 in articles 25 and 26 concerning quality assurance has expressly required Islamic boarding schools to run and develop a quality assurance system to maintain traditions, improve professionalism, and maintain the quality of Islamic boarding schools. This condition shows the existence of a small bias caused by Kyai's authority in the management of Islamic boarding schools. This quality assurance system is set by the Masyayikh Council; namely an independent institution that represents the Masyayikh Council in designing and establishing a quality assurance system for Islamic boarding schools education.

### **The Evolution of Teaching and Implementation of the “Single Principle of Pancasila” in the Perspective of Policy Content Analysis**

Based on the Islamic Boarding School Law no. 18 of 2019, article 3 paragraph 1, the transformation in the learning system in Islamic boarding schools has received significant emphasis, where the purpose of establishing Islamic boarding schools is directed to accommodate the needs of the community and improve social welfare in the era of rapid globalization and modernization. The impact of these developments has also affected the dynamics of Islamic politics, while the Islamic legal system in various Muslim countries, including Indonesia, has undergone a comprehensive modernization and evolution process (Kustiawan, Rasidin, Witro, & Jalaluddin, 2023).



In addition, Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019 article 13 paragraph 2 expressly states that the learning approach is not limited to traditional methods such as sorogan, bandongan, and memorization, but can apply various other learning methods. This provision shows that the regulation provides space for Islamic boarding schools to implement a student-focused learning approach by prioritizing the development of critical thinking skills over teacher-centered learning models (Abidin et al., 2022; Astuti et al., 2021; Kurniawati et al., 2020).

The discussion of the Islamic Boarding School curriculum includes an explanation that the Islamic Boarding School curriculum is allowed to integrate general or secular subjects. This provision is expressly regulated in the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019, article 18, paragraphs 1 and 3, which describes the youth education curriculum as a combination of the Islamic Boarding School curriculum with the general or secular education curriculum. Designing this kind of curriculum will have a meaningful influence on students' learning approaches in the classroom (Grant, 2010; Könings et al., 2014; Smith & Ragan, 2004; Stes, Coertjens, et al., 2010; Stes, Min-Leliveld, et al., 2010).

The urgency of transformation in the teaching approach is also strengthened by the legitimacy of the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019, article 19 paragraph 2, which emphasizes that Islamic boarding school graduates should be accepted in various sectors of work. This is based on the view that the demands of the contemporary world of work are always related to critical thinking skills, ICT competence, language skills, and so on (Geisinger, 2016; Ibna Seraj & Oteir, 2022; Kivunja, 2014; McPeck, 2016; National Research Council, 2012), which has significant differences with traditional Islamic boarding schools approaches and curricula.

Based on the results of the study, Islamic boarding schools A shows a stronger tendency to adapt to the progress of the times in learning and teaching activities, this is due to its characteristics that are more inclusive of various parties. Meanwhile, Islamic boarding schools B has a greater priority on the preservation of traditional values, including in its learning methodology.

Regarding the obligation of Islamic boarding schools to be in harmony with the principles of the "Single Principle of Pancasila," this is explicitly stated in the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019, article 6 paragraph 2 which emphasizes that Islamic boarding schools must be committed to implementing the values of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. In carrying out da'wah or conveying teachings, Islamic boarding schools are also required to be moderate based on the values of Pancasila. This is in line with the principle of religious moderation (Mundzir et al., 2023; Rusyana et al., 2023).

According to the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019, the harmonization between religious values and state or national values is an obligation that must be fulfilled. Islamic boarding schools are required to take an active role in state issues, especially in the religious field. Various political parties participated in the policy formulation process, including in the drafting of the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019. The involvement of this political party does not make the Islamic Boarding School and the Kyai

feel reluctant to communicate with them, considering that policy formulation, especially related to Islamic Boarding School, is a combination of state and religious interests.

This view is supported by a statement from Islamic boarding schools A which states:

“We apply three fundamental principles in the management of Islamic Boarding Schools, namely the principles of humanity, nationality, and religiosity. In Arabic terminology, these three principles are known as *insaniyah*, *wathaniyah*, and *Islamiyah*. Based on these aspects, it can be understood that we are not antagonistic to the government or political parties, but rather prioritize a collaborative attitude with the main goal of realizing humanitarian, national, and Islamic values.”

### **Analysis of Islamic Boarding School Policy on Kyai's Independence in the Alignment of Certain Political Elite**

This section describes the impact of Islamic boarding schools policies, especially those promoted or supported by certain political parties/elites such as PKB (National Awakening Party) and PPP (United Development Party), on the independence of *kiai* in choosing to support certain political elites. The discussion was divided into two parts: first, raising the view that the Islamic boarding schools policy does affect the independence of the *kiai* in determining their political support, which is symbolized by the “Yes” symbol. Second, it discusses the view that rejects the view that Islamic boarding schools policies can affect the independence of the *kiai* in determining their political affiliation, which is represented by the symbol “No”.

The “Yes” group consists of *Kyai* who support and agree with the importance of politics or believe that Islamic boarding schools policies have an effect on the progress of Islamic boarding schools and autonomy in their decision-making. They argue that the Islamic boarding schools policy fought for by the two parties/political elite can affect the independence of the Islamic boarding schools in determining support for certain political elites. Even if possible, the relationship should continue to be maintained across the leadership period of the president or regional head. The *kiai*'s approval of the influence of Islamic boarding schools policies on their independence is based on three main factors: suitability of interests, empowerment and development, and community involvement.

As understood, the idea of “alignment of interests” has its roots in various disciplines of organizational management. This idea indicates that when two entities have similar goals and aspirations, they are more likely to build cooperation and alliances (Gottschalg & Zollo, 2007; Lado et al., 1992; Nyberg et al., 2010). In a study conducted by Gottschalg and Zollo (Gottschalg & Zollo, 2007), it was stated that this alignment of interests has a vital role in the management of an institution in the midst of a competitive environment. This idea can be used as a tool for analyzing Islamic boarding schools policies within the framework of education policy. Through the application of this idea in the analysis of education policy, it can be evaluated how the alignment of interests affects Islamic boarding schools policies and their impact on the achievement of educational goals.

Regarding the relationship between Islamic boarding schools/*Kyai* and political parties such as PKB and PPP, if the two political parties are seen as able to accommodate the

aspirations of Kyai/Islamic boarding schools, including aspirations in the fields of religion, education, and social justice, then collaboration and even agreement will be built because they feel that their interests are represented. This view is in line with the statement of Kyai Islamic boarding schoolsA which states that:

“We, the elite of political parties who fight for Islamic boarding school policies and institutions, are intertwined with each other. The political elite who fight for Islamic boarding schools policies often consult, discuss, and ask for consideration about how these policies should be made, and we are openly willing to have those discussions because the results of their policies will also have an impact on how Islamic boarding schools policies are made. Simply put, the issue of funding in the Islamic Boarding School policy will affect how the Islamic Boarding School will be developed.”

The principle of alignment of interests is reflected in the way the Islamic boarding schools designs its curriculum system. The participation of various stakeholders is the main factor in the formation of a comprehensive curriculum that is able to accommodate the needs of the community (Firdaus & Abdulkarim, 2022). Through government assistance through regulations issued, the Islamic boarding schools curriculum system has developed with the presence of new educational institutions such as junior high and high school levels. The addition of natural science subjects also provides significant changes to Islamic boarding schools due to the emergence of new educational institutions. This condition reflects the concrete results of the implementation of Islamic boarding schools policies that integrate the interests of Islamic boarding schools with the needs of the community.

This condition is in line with the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019, article 16 paragraphs (1) and (2) which states “Islamic boarding schools carry out educational functions based on the peculiarities of each Islamic Boarding School, traditions, and educational curriculum. The function of Islamic Boarding School Education as referred to in paragraph (1) aims to form students who excel in filling independence and are able to face the development of the times.” In addition, article 18 paragraph (3) explains, “As referred to in paragraph (1), the curriculum of general education or secular education is regulated in ministerial regulations” (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

In the context of “empowerment and development”, it can be seen emphatically that while the function of Islamic boarding schools policies promoted by both parties aims to empower the community and stimulate infrastructure development, then considering the independence of kiai/Islamic boarding schools and siding with the political elite is a proportionate or balanced compensation, in line with the view of Ediagbonya (Ediagbonya, 2013) which states that empowerment and development are A very crucial aspect in the realm of education, especially related to economic issues. These two aspects are important factors in the problem of how to carry out transformation towards significant progress (Feste & Anderson, 1995).

For example, the regulation on Islamic Boarding Schools explicitly underlines the government’s commitment to allocate funds for each Islamic Boarding School to advance facilities and improve the quality of educators. This need is even more urgent considering the rapid pace of modernization that requires Islamic Boarding Schools to transform towards

progress. This policy is in line with the provisions of the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019, article 42, which states that “the central government and local governments support the implementation of the da’wah function of Islamic Boarding Schools through program cooperation, policy facilitation, and funding”. In addition, article 49 paragraph 1 emphasizes that the government is responsible for providing and managing the Islamic boarding school endowment fund, which is sourced from and part of the education endowment fund (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

An important aspect that is equivalent to compensation to kiai that can limit their autonomy in decision-making, especially regarding support for certain political groups, is “community participation”. In this regard, the power of relationships, networks, and community involvement has a vital role for policymakers and academics in the field of education (Ahmed & Palermo, 2010; Joosten et al., 2015). The same applies to political parties until they understand that grassroots mobilization has a crucial role in accommodating the people’s expectations (Cavaye, 2004; Head, 2007; Skidmore et al., 2006).

On the other hand, if the kiai participate in political interests during the policy formulation process, then the programs promoted by political parties will be in line with the expectations and needs of the community. In other words, the dialectical process that affects each other between certain political parties/elite groups and Kiai/Islamic boarding schools through Islamic boarding schools regulations is a natural and unavoidable phenomenon. However, in practice, Kyai/Islamic boarding schools do not feel that they have suffered losses from the interaction that occurs between them and certain political parties/elites. This condition is in accordance with the role of Islamic Boarding Schools based on Law No. 18 of 2019, article 43, that Islamic Boarding Schools carry out community empowerment functions to improve the welfare of Islamic boarding schools and the community (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Meanwhile, the group that refused had a different view. This is reflected in the statement from Islamic boarding schools B which states:

“Although there are two camps that advocate and fight for their interests in the realm of Islamic boarding schools policy, and although these policies have the potential to influence the tendency of Islamic boarding schools to support certain elites or political parties, Islamic boarding schools still maintain their independence and freedom in determining political stances, especially in the decision-making process that is closely related to the world of politics.”

This phenomenon occurs due to the reduction of Kyai’s independence to serve the interests of certain elite groups or political parties, which results in various bad consequences, including “maintenance of autonomy”, where the majority of Islamic Boarding Schools or Kyai have full and absolute authority in determining everything related to the development of Islamic Boarding Schools and their life choices. In fact, the characteristics or identity of the Islamic boarding schools are formed by the Kyai themselves. This problem is related to the issue of freedom of expression, determining the direction of life, and the attitude of supporting or not supporting certain political parties/elites in a democratic system (Bush, 2009; Kadir, 1999; Rich, 2015).

As an illustration, Kyai, who masters the field of fiqh, will create a fiqh-style Islamic boarding school, as well as Kyai, who is an expert in interpretation, will develop a Islamic boarding schools that focuses on the Qur'an, and Kyai, who has a firm character, will form a strict and disciplined Islamic boarding school culture. Thus, independence in all decisions concerning Kyai and Islamic Boarding Schools is absolute and difficult to negotiate with external parties. Furthermore, in their view, this has important significance because it is an identity. This view is in line with the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019, article 8 paragraph 2, and article 26 paragraph 2 regarding the function of the quality management system that is obliged to maintain the independence and characteristics of Islamic Boarding Schools (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Furthermore, this condition occurs due to the existence of "possible manipulation." Experts say that political groups/elites have a huge opportunity to exploit movements or institutions that have broad popular support. This possibility can be realized considering that political groups/elite groups have solid financial power and extensive networks to carry out various efforts to achieve their goals. This fact is clearly seen through a literature review of the way religion is politicized so that it has bad consequences for both parties, especially the scholars. Thus, relying on them is a risk. Although Islamic boarding schools generally have a relationship with Nahdlatul Ulama, this institution is very adaptive and flexible in responding to various problems and transformations of the era (Bush, 2009; Kadir, 1999; Khasanah, 2022; Saepulah et al., 2020). On the other hand, in order to prevent various negative impacts, including those caused by political parties, Islamic boarding schools have an internal quality control system built by the Masyaikh Council. This is in line with Law Number 18 of 2019, Chapter 27, concerning the Masyaikh Council (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Another equally important aspect is "views or doctrines regarding skepticism towards parties/politics"; A number of studies show that past experiences and views can have a meaningful influence on individual beliefs when faced with an event (Angstrom & Widen, 2016; Eliade & Adams, 1987; Geertz & Banton, 1966; Keane, 2008). When dealing with political programs (Armstrong, 2014; Grzymala-Busse, 2016; Wuthnow, 1991), religious experiences and beliefs (Islamic boarding schools) have a tendency to oppose and criticize the political program in question. A number of religious teachings affirm that Kyai or religious leaders who have close ties to politics or government tend to move away from purity in religious terms. Although this is not in line with Law Number 18 of 2019, Chapters 37-40 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools in the Da'wah Function, which explains that in carrying out interactions, especially related to da'wah and the spread of teachings, Islamic Boarding Schools are obliged to contain national values, love for the homeland, and include da'wah in the political realm (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

These three factors seem to be the main basis of thinking for a number of Kyai and Islamic boarding school institutions in taking a difficult stance to accept political interests, including involvement in agreements, collaboration, and even intervention from/with certain elites or political parties. They tend to maintain an independent and autonomous position in advancing their Islamic boarding school institutions. More than that, they do not

depend on any party. Therefore, in their view, although the policies of Islamic boarding schools promoted by certain elites or political parties have a significant influence on their progress today, it will not affect their loyalty to the elite or political party concerned. In other words, it may be just a matter of appreciation and gratitude for the efforts they have made.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that Law No. 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools provides flexibility for each Islamic boarding school institution and the Kyai to advance their educational institutions based on characteristics, traditional values, and community demands that are adapted to the progress of the modern era. Although the independence of a Kyai has a significant impact in shaping the character of the Islamic boarding schools and determining the direction of its development, it should be understood that the concept of Islamic boarding schools in essence does not belong to an individual, so the authority and independence of Kyai do not completely determine the identity of a Islamic boarding schools. This condition indicates that the transformation in the learning system, curriculum structure, and facilities mandated by the Islamic Boarding School Law No. 18 of 2019 is a necessity and shows that the Kyai must be flexible and not authoritarian in leading educational institutions.

In another aspect, two views emerged in responding to the dynamics that occurred due to the regulation of this Islamic boarding school. The first view agrees that Islamic boarding schools regulations can have an impact on Kyai's independence to accommodate the interests of certain political elite groups. This view is symbolized by the symbol "Yes" and is based on three main factors: harmony of interests, empowerment and development, and community participation. Meanwhile, the second view rejects the notion that Islamic boarding schools regulations can affect Kyai's independence to benefit certain political elites. This view is symbolized by "No" and is based on three arguments: the maintenance of autonomy, the potential for manipulation, and the belief or teaching of distrust of political parties.

This study suggests that Kyai should show greater wisdom and caution when responding to Islamic boarding school programs carried out by certain political parties, because this attitude will affect their choice in providing support to certain political elites. In addition, this condition will also indirectly influence the masses or mobilize vote support in political discourse in the general election arena. As we all know, Kyai's opinion in the culture of Indonesian society has a very strong influence on the decision-making process, including the election of leaders.

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