THE ROLE OF THE POLITICAL ISLAMIC FORCE IN POST-SUHARTO INDONESIA

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to assess the role of political Islam in post-Suharto Indonesia. Therefore, the study discusses the historical and political development of Islam from the pre-independence era until the presidential election of 1999. The scope of this paper mainly focuses on the question of why Islam is unable to be the first electoral and political force, although the majority of the population are Muslims? The paper argues that political Islam was born divided politically and intellectually. On one hand, most of the Indonesian Muslims are nominal Muslims who are not interested to channel their political aspirations through Islam. On the other hand, the split between the traditionalists and the modernists has weakened the position of Islam in Indonesia. The paper argues that Muslims have refrained from raising the issue of an Islamic state in the post-Suharto era, not because of the emergence of the substantive Islam, but because of the supremacy of the secular nationalists and the weakness of the Muslims. The paper argues that as long as political Islam is developing and becoming stronger, the Muslims will raise the issue again. The paper concludes that political Islam is not an obstacle for democratization in Indonesia.
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