

# ISLAMIC PARTIES, THE 1955 ELECTIONS, AND CENTER-REGIONAL RELATIONS: THE WEST SUMATRAN EXPERIENCE

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## Abstract

This article examines the role of Islamic parties in West Sumatra concerning central-regional relations before and after the 1955 General Election, specifically during the 1950s. The historical study reveals that political landscape in Central Sumatra after the 1955 General Elections was non-linear. Central Sematra was dominated by Islamic parties, especially Masyumi Party, in contrast to the national election results, which were won by secular parties, especially the PNI. This discrepancy significantly impacted the escalation of conflict between the region and the central political authorities. This central-regional conflict culminated in the PRRI rebellion between 1958 and 1961 which was not only contributed to the decline of Islamic parties but also reshaped the historical narrative concerning the role of the Minangkabau ethnic group in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Islamic Parties, The 1955 Election, West Sumatra

## Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji peran partai-partai Islam di Sumatera Barat terkait hubungan pusat-daerah sebelum dan setelah Pemilihan Umum 1955, khususnya selama tahun 1950-an. Studi penelitian sejarah ini mengungkapkan bahwa lanskap politik di Sumatera Tengah setelah Pemilihan Umum 1955 bersifat non-linear. Wilayah tersebut didominasi oleh partai-partai Islam, terutama Partai Masyumi, sebuah situasi yang berbeda dari hasil pemilihan umum nasional, yang dimenangkan oleh partai-partai sekuler, terutama PNI. Diskrepansi ini secara signifikan mempengaruhi eskalasi konflik antara daerah dan otoritas politik pusat. Konflik pusat-daerah ini memuncak dalam pemberontakan PRRI antara tahun 1958 dan 1961 yang tidak hanya berkontribusi pada penurunan partai-partai Islam tetapi juga membentuk ulang narasi sejarah mengenai peran kelompok etnis Minangkabau di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Partai-partai Islam, Pemilu 1955, Sumatera Barat

## Background

In the 1950s, Islamic parties thrived in West Sumatra and Central Sumatra (West Sumatra, Jambi, and Riau) as a whole. Islamic-oriented politics dominated the political stage in these regions. In the 1955 General Election, the first national election in the history of Indonesia, Masyumi emerged as the winner in West Sumatra, obtaining 49 percent of the votes, followed by Perti Party (Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah) at the second place with 28 percent of the votes. Meanwhile, PKI (Indonesian Communist Party)

was at the third rank with 6.7 percent of the votes. NU and other non-religious parties received very few votes in this region.<sup>1</sup>

However, at the national level, PNI (Indonesian National Party) emerged as the winner by obtaining 22.3 percent of the votes, followed by Masyumi at the second place with 20.9 percent of the votes, NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) at the third place with 18.4 percent of the votes,

<sup>1</sup> Ichlasul Amal, *Regional and Central Government in Indonesian Politics: West Sumatra and South Sulawesi 1949-1979* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1982).

and PKI was at the fourth place with 16.4 percent of the votes.<sup>2</sup> In terms of seat acquisition, both in the House of Representatives (DPR) and the Constituent Assembly, the accumulation of seats by nationalist parties also surpassed that Islamic parties. In the Constituent Assembly, for example, the group of nationalist parties obtained 284 seats, while the group of Islamic parties secured only 230 seats.<sup>3</sup>

The defeat of the Islamic party, particularly Masyumi, at the national level disappointed a significant portion of the society and the political elite of West Sumatra, which was one of the main bases of this modernist Islamic party. Previously, Masyumi played an important role and even led the government several times at the central level, namely under the Cabinets of Mohammad Natsir (1950-1951), Soekiman Wirdjosandjojo (1951-1952), and Burhanuddin Harahap (1955-1956). History records that the difference in the political landscape post-election between the national level and West Sumatra, as the core region of Central Sumatra, added complexity to various political issues that had already emerged, particularly concerning the relationship of this region with the political authorities at the center.

RZ Leirissa in his book *PRRI Permesta: Strategi Membangun Indonesia Tanpa Komunis* (1991) states that the poor relations between the central government and the regions, particularly West Sumatra, leading to the emergence of PRRI, were an accumulation of various disappointments regarding the economic and political policies of the central government, including President Sukarno's attitude towards communists.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Audrey Kahin in her book *From Rebellion to Integration: West Sumatra and Indonesian Politics* (2005) also states that the proclamation of the PRRI as a rival government centered in West Sumatra at the end of the 1950s

was the accumulation of various national issues that had persisted for years prior. At that time, the loyalty to religion (Islam) mixed with regional dissatisfaction, while the political authorities in the center did not provide a satisfactory response, had exacerbated the conflict between the center and the West Sumatra region.<sup>5</sup>

This writing refers to a number of narratives that have been presented by previous researchers, both classical works and recent research findings. One of the most prominent classical works is Deliar Noer's book, "Islamic Parties on the National Stage: Stories and Analysis of Political Developments in Indonesia 1945-1965" (2000). This work comprehensively outlines the rise and fall of four Islamic parties during the two decades following independence.<sup>6</sup> Another classic work, although not focused on Islamic parties and Islamic politics in the 1950s, is certainly Herbert Feith's work, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955* (1957). Feith's study is the first comprehensive review of the 1955 elections. Feith's discussion begins with the conditions that formed the backdrop for the elections, the campaign period, the voting process, and an analysis of the election results, both nationally and by province. From his exposition, it was evident that Islamic parties, particularly Masyumi, performed better outside of Java, such as in Central Sumatra, South Sumatra, and South Sulawesi.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, recent works include Romi Mardimier's "Partai Masyumi: Antara Godaan Demokrasi dan Islam Integral" (2013) deeply discussed the historical struggle of the Masyumi Party from its inception in 1945, the 1950s period, the dissolution of the party in 1960, to the post-Masyumi period, particularly during the New Order era.<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Rijal Fadli (2020), in his research entitled "Perjuangan Partai Politik Islam

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesian Project, 1957), p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> AB Nasution, *Aspirasi Pemerintahan Konstitusional Di Indonesia: Studi Sosio-Legal Atas Konstituante 1956-1959* (Jakarta: Grafiti Pers, 1995)..

<sup>4</sup> RZ Leirissa, *PRRI Permesta: Strategi Membangun Indonesia Tanpa Komunis* (Jakarta: Grafiti Pers, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Audrey Kahin, *Dari Pemberontakan Ke Integrasi: Sumatera Barat Dan Politik Indonesia 1926-1998* (Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Deliar Noer, *Partai Islam Di Pentas Nasional, 1945-1965*, Cet. 1 (Grafitipers, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*.

<sup>8</sup> Remy Madinier, *Partai Masyumi: Antara Godaan Demokrasi & Islam Integral* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2013).

pada Masa Demokrasi Terpimpin: Masyumi Tumbang, NU Melenggang, PSII Bimbang,” also discussed one form of the struggle of Islamic parties when establishing the foundation of the state in the 1950s, resulting in one of the most important Islamic parties, Masyumi, being forced to be "overthrown."<sup>9</sup> Miqdad Syukril Iman (2023) created a narrative titled “Analysis of Islamic Political Parties from Pre to Post-Independence 1910-1960: A Formalist Islamic Study” which also “reiterated” the discussion of the role and emergence of Islamic political parties in Indonesia, starting from the movement period, the pre-independence era, to the post-independence period.<sup>10</sup>

For the context of West Sumatra, there has not yet been a comprehensive study regarding the role of Islamic parties as dominant political contenders in this region. Some studies only provide a general overview of the political history of West Sumatra, which also briefly discusses the 1955 elections. One such article is by Syafrizal, titled “The Participation of Local Politics in West Sumatra: A Context of Indonesian Democracy Dynamic” (2009), a study that broadly discussed the political participation of the people of West Sumatra in the history of democracy from the 1950s to the early reform era.<sup>11</sup>

This article focuses on the role and activities of Islamic parties in West Sumatra in the context of the dynamics of central-regional relations in the 1950s. The discussion begins by highlighting the political sociology roots of the Minangkabau people, the ethnic group inhabiting West Sumatra, since before independence, the emergence of

political parties at the beginning of independence, the role of Islamic parties in the 1955 elections, and the turning point for Islamic parties that also marked the political decline of the Minangkabau people on the national stage.

This study was based on the historical method consisting of four stages: heuristics (collection of sources/data), criticism, interpretation, and historiography.<sup>12</sup> In the search and excavation of sources, the author indeed prioritizes secondary sources, but certain parts within it contain types of historical information that have long been "buried." Among these authoritative references are the works of Ichlasul Amal,<sup>13</sup> Mestika Zed,<sup>14</sup> Gusti Asnan,<sup>15</sup> Kamardi Rais,<sup>16</sup> and Audrey Kahin.<sup>17</sup>

After the materials had been collected, source criticism was conducted. Source criticism includes internal and external criticism. External criticism begins by distinguishing between valid sources and less valid sources. Internal criticism is carried out by re-examining the existing sources. In the interpretation stage, interpretation and analysis are conducted by seeking a logical relationship between the research issues and the available data or information. The final stage is the writing of the overall research results.

### ***Islam and Politics of Minangkabau People***

West Sumatra is one of the provinces in the Republic of Indonesia. This region, located in the central-western part of Sumatra Island, is the homeland of the Minangkabau people, an ethnic group considered to have played an important

<sup>9</sup> MR Fadli, “Pergumulan Partai Politik Islam Pada Masa Demokrasi Terpimpin: Masyumi Tumbang, NU Melenggang, PSII Bimbang,” *Juspi* 4, no. 1 (2020), <https://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/juspi/article/view/7927>.

<sup>10</sup> MS Iman, “Analisis Partai Politik Islam Pra Hingga Pasca Kemerdekaan 1910-1960: Sebuah Kajian Islam Formalis,” *Tanjak* 3, no. 1 (2023), <https://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/tanjak/article/view/18181>.

<sup>11</sup> Syafrizal Syafrizal, “The Participation of Local Politic in West Sumatra: A Context of Indonesian Democracy Dynamic,” *TAWARIKH* 1, no. 1 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.2121/tawarikh.v1i1.370>.

<sup>12</sup> Helius Syamsuddin, *Metodologi Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2007), p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Amal, *Regional and Central*.

<sup>14</sup> Mestika Zed, Edy Utama, and Hasril Chaniago, *Sumatera Barat Di Panggung Sejarah 1945-1995* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Gusti Asnan, *Memikir Ulang Regionalisme: Sumatera Barat Tabun 1950-An* (Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Kamardi Rais Dt Simulie, *Mesin Ketik Tua: Paparan, Ulasan Dan Komentar Seorang Jurnalis Tua* (Padang: PPIM, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Kahin, *Dari Pemberontakan*.

role in several episodes of modern Indonesian history.<sup>18</sup>

The involvement of many prominent figures from Minangkabau in the historical narrative of Indonesia, from the colonial era to the birth of Guided Democracy, is inseparable from the influence of modern education that emerged and developed in the region since the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century.<sup>19</sup> Both, secular and Islamic modern education have produced an educated elite layer that became the pioneers of progress movements in Minangkabau. They were not only critical of colonialism but also of traditionalism.

It is not surprising that Minangkabau has become one of the centers for the development of various patterns of thought, political currents, and ideologies that played a significant role in the anti-colonial movement, such as Islam, nationalism, socialism, democracy, and even communism. Interestingly, various political currents and ideologies from outside that entered this region—from Java, Europe, and the Middle East—had a strong influence in West Sumatra, but these influences took on Minangkabau characteristics when absorbed into the society.<sup>20</sup>

Among the various ideological spectrums, Islam has become the most influential ideology in the Minangkabau region. The intensive Islamization in this area since the previous century has made Islam a determining factor in various aspects of community life. At the height of the anti-colonial movement in the 1930s, Islam emerged not only as a social force but also as a political one.<sup>21</sup> Permi (Indonesian Muslim Union), for example, was the largest party in Minangkabau at that time. This modernist Islamic party with a radical character was founded in Padang Panjang

by alumni of the Sumatera Thawalib Boarding School, who were previously members of the Muhammadiyah organization. They were Islamic activists influenced by the Islamic nationalism movement in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt.<sup>22</sup>

Figures of nationalist and socialist organizations in this region also possessed a political perspective closely linked to Islam, customs, and the egalitarian character of the local community. Minangkabau figures were active in the New Indonesian National Education Organization (PNI Baru) and the Indonesian People's Party (PARI), for example, were regarded as having successfully instilled a strong influence in their hometowns due to the ability of local leaders to align nationalist and socialist ideas with the deeply rooted teachings of religion and customs in this area.<sup>23</sup>

During the Japanese occupation, political groups in West Sumatra had to undergo a policy of accommodation towards the Japanese military government, which was concerned with its war agenda. Japan itself from the outset understood the important role of Islam in Minangkabau society. Japanese officials emphasized the importance of close cooperation between their military administration and Islamic groups in the region. Japan even honored several Islamic figures from West Sumatra, such as Sulaiman Ar-Rasuli (Ulama “Kaum Tua”/Chairman of the Islamic Education Union), AR Sutan Mansur (Muhammadiyah scholar), Ibrahim Musa (Chairman of Sumatera Thawalib), Muhammad Yunus (young scholar of “Kaum Muda”), and Siradjuddin Abbas (young generation of “Kaum Tua”).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Jeffrey Hadler, *Sengketa Tiada Putus: Matriarkat, Reformisme Islam, Dan Kolonialisme Di Minangkabau*, Cet. 1 (Freedom institute, 2010), p. xxv.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth E. Graves, *Asal-Usul Elite Minangkabau Modern: Respons Terhadap Kolonial Belanda Abad XIX/XX* (Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2007), p.xi-xiii.

<sup>20</sup> Kahin, *Dari Pemberontakan..* p. 97.

<sup>21</sup> Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Modern Islam Di Indonesia 1900-1942* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1996), hal. 61.

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<sup>22</sup> Taufik Abdullah, *Sekolah & Politik: Pergerakan Kaum Muda Di Sumatra Barat 1927-1933* (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2018), p.165-168.

<sup>23</sup> Kahin, *Dari Pemberontakan*, p. 99.

<sup>24</sup> Amal, *Regional and Central*.p.18.

### **Islamic Parties Post-Independence**

Post-independence, following the Vice President's Decree in November 1945 regarding the formation of political parties, various political parties with different political streams and ideologies emerged<sup>25</sup> Some of the political parties were a metamorphosis of political parties and organizations established before independence, included those in West Sumatra. Several political parties even had their center in Minangkabau, such as Perti, Local Islamic PKI, and MTKAM (High Council of Customary Institutions of Minangkabau). Other political parties were branches of political parties that had already been established in Java, such as Masyumi, PSII (Indonesian Islamic Union Party), PSI (Indonesian Socialist Party), PNI (Indonesian National Party), PKI (Indonesian Communist Party), and others.<sup>26</sup>

In this region, Islamic parties were more popular and influential, especially Masyumi. In Minangkabau, Masyumi is the continuation of MIT (Majelis Islam Tinggi). MIT was established during the Japanese occupation and was led by Sheikh Djamil Djambek, a reformist cleric. Perti also once joined MIT.<sup>27</sup> During the colonial period, MIT only operated in the socio-religious field; however, after independence, this organization transformed into the political party Masyumi.

Since its establishment, Masyumi has shown greater political dominance and influence compared to other political parties in the region. Many village leaders in Minangkabau came from this modernist Islamic party. In fact, 90 percent of the village heads elected during the Revolution in West Sumatra were notably from Masyumi.<sup>28</sup>

The dominance of Masyumi continued in the 1950s. During this period, West Sumatra was the core region of Central Sumatra, a province that

was formed at the end of the Revolutionary period. In the Central Sumatra Regional People's Representative Council (DPRST), for example, the number of legislators from Masyumi was 4 people. One of them, namely Ilyas Jacoub, even became the chairman of the DPRST.<sup>29</sup> The appointment of Masyumi figure from Java, Ruslan Mulyohardjo, as the Governor of Central Sumatra, replacing M. Nasroen (a career bureaucrat) at the end of 1950 (although this appointment was initially protested by many other local elements) also demonstrated the strong influence of Masyumi. When the DPRST was dissolved by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1951, as it was deemed to be rebelling against the central government, Masyumi in this region defended the policies of Jakarta. Masyumi, which was leading the government at the central level, clearly had a significant influence on the political landscape in Central Sumatra, which was also dominated by Masyumi.<sup>30</sup>

In various districts, the strength of Masyumi is even more dominant. Out of 174 members of the Temporary Regional People's Representative Council (DPRDS) of West Sumatra, the representatives from Masyumi were the most numerous, totaling 88 individuals. The details are as follows: in Pasaman 6 individuals (out of a total of 24); 50 Kota 15 individuals (total of 24); Tanah Datar 14 individuals (total of 23); Solok 12 individuals (total of 15); Agam 9 individuals (total of 21); Sawahlunto/Sijunjung 6 individuals (total of 21); Padang Pariaman 14 individuals (total of 25) and Pesisir Selatan/Kerinci 12 individuals (total of 21).<sup>31</sup>

The political strength of Masyumi was also reflected in the representatives of community organizations affiliated with Masyumi, such as GPII (Indonesian Islamic Youth Movement), Muhammadiyah, and Aisyiah (the women's wing of Muhammadiyah). These three social

<sup>25</sup> Mohammad Hatta, *Untuk Negeriku: Sebuah Otobiografi* Jilid I (Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2011), p. 115-116.

<sup>26</sup> Kahin, *Dari Pemberontakan...*, p. 182-183.

<sup>27</sup> Noer, *Partai Islam*, p.78.

<sup>28</sup> Audrey Kahin, *Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Sumatera Barat Dalam Revolusi Nasional Indonesia 1945-1950* (Padang: MSI Sumatra Barat, 2000).

<sup>29</sup> *Propinsi Sumatera Tengah* (Jakarta: Departemen Penerangan, 1953).

<sup>30</sup> Zed, Utama, and Chaniago, *Sumatera Barat Di Panggung...*, p. 123-124 & 134.

<sup>31</sup> Asnan, *Memikir Ulang*, p. 77-78.

organizations had a significant number of legislative members across various districts. The estimated total number of Masyumi party representatives in various districts was 171 individuals, which was more than half of the total number of members of the district DPRD throughout West Sumatra.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to Masyumi, Perti was a traditional Islamic party. Based on its historical origins, Perti began as a social organization established in 1930 in response to the Islamic reform movement of the young group, particularly Muhammadiyah. It is not surprising that Perti was regarded as the NU version from Sumatra.<sup>33</sup> During the Japanese era, Perti joined MIT. However, with the emergence of parties after the Proclamation of Independence, the Perti organization transformed into the Perti Islamic party led by Sirajuddin Abbas, the son of Sheikh Abbas, one of the founders of the Perti social organization.<sup>34</sup>

The political force that also showed off before the 1955 elections in Minangkabau was the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). At the provincial level, especially before the elections, the PKI also had considerable power in the DPRST. The reason this party, like Masyumi, also had four representatives in that political body remains unknown. In several regencies, this party also had certain influence. In various debates, PKI was often supported by other parties, such as Murba (Musyawarah Rakyat Banyak), PSI (Indonesian Socialist Party), and PAR (People's Customary Party).<sup>35</sup> When PKI attempted to remove Governor Ruslan from his position because he was considered no longer accepted by the people of West Sumatra, the communist party's maneuver received support from other non-religious parties.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Firts Election***

The 1955 election was one of the most significant political events in Indonesia post-revolution. This democratic festivity had been planned since the early days of the Republic's establishment; however, the political thoughts and policies leading to the implementation of these elections began to intensify in the early 1950s. After undergoing a maturation process during the government of Ali Sastroamijoyo I (PNI), this national-scale political agenda could only be executed during the cabinet of Burhanuddin Harahap (Masyumi). The 1955 elections were not only to determine the members of the DPR (Parliament) but also the members of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>37</sup>

For citizens who were more politically aware, this election was expected to be a solution to various national and state issues at that time, particularly in addressing the gap between the great expectations created by the revolution and the political realities that occurred. The cabinets that hold power alternately during the Parliamentary Democracy era were deemed unsuccessful. All political processes in the first half of that decade were considered unable to present inspiring leadership. Many parties, including the military, complained about the political elite and political parties that were merely in conflict.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the situation prior to the election, particularly regarding the legitimacy of representatives of the people, is also considered to be weak. Before the election, the basis for determining representatives of the people was merely like "a matter of estimation." The number of legislators from the parties in the Interim House of Representatives (DPR-S) was based on the level of public support for the political parties.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*.p.49-51.

<sup>34</sup> Noer, *Partai Islam*.p. 80.

<sup>35</sup> Asnan, *Memikir Ulang*.p. 77-79.

<sup>36</sup> Kahin, *Dari Pemberontakan*.p.269-270.

<sup>37</sup> Alfitra Salamn, "Pemilihan Umum Dalam Perspektif Sejarah: Pengalaman 1955," in *Menggugat Pemilu Orde Baru* (Jakarta: YOI, 1998).

<sup>38</sup> Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*.p. xii & 8.

<sup>39</sup> Salamn, "Pemilihan Umum."

One of the crucial stages in the 1955 election process is the campaign. The election campaign period lasted quite a long time. The election campaign period can even be counted from April 1953, when the Election Law was enacted. The open campaign model began in May 1954, when the official symbols of the participating political parties were established.<sup>40</sup> One form of electoral campaigning is grand meetings. Various issues become the themes of competition among parties. The dichotomous narrative between Islam versus nationalists, for example, even leads to political and social division. Sukarno's statement regarding the idea of an "Islamic state" would encourage the spirit of disintegration from Eastern Indonesia, for instance, and received strong condemnation from figures of Masyumi, but the President's warning garnered support from PNI, PKI, and other secular parties.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Elections and Islamic Parties in West Sumatra***

As in many other regions, the people and political elite of West Sumatra warmly welcomed the 1955 elections.<sup>42</sup> They regarded the elections as an *alek nagari* (village party) that must be celebrated and supported to ensure a smooth, successful process and to become part of the solution to various national and regional problems at that time.

The atmosphere of political competition at the national level spread to West Sumatra, a region that became the primary base for Islamic parties. The political narratives characterized by mutual attacks between Islamic parties and secular parties, particularly the PKI, also colored the 1955 election campaigns in this area. However, the political dynamics in West Sumatra also displayed its local competitive character, particularly the rivalry between two Islamic parties: Masyumi and Perti.

During the campaign process, Masyumi emerged as the dominant force in this region.

Masyumi's campaigns in Central Sumatra brought in figures from its central leadership, such as Mohammad Natsir, Sukiman Wiryoanjoyo, Yusuf Wibisono, Mohammad Roem, and ZA Ahmad.<sup>43</sup> Perti, in its campaign, also gathered crowds, although not as intensively as Masyumi. Perti even perceived Masyumi as aggressively entering traditional Islamic mass bases. Unlike Masyumi, Perti did not extensively use newspapers, magazines, or brochures as political campaign media.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, during their campaigns in this area, the Islamic parties also utilized the pulpit of mosques.

The voting for the election of members of the People's Representative Council (DPR) was held on September 29, 1955. This democratic event was attended by more than 100 election participants, consisting of political parties, organizations, and individuals to fill 257 seats in the House of Representatives. Approximately 38 million citizens participated in the voting. In Central Sumatra, for this DPR member election, there were 44 electoral participants. Meanwhile, for the election of members of the Constituent Assembly, there were 38 participants from political parties, social organizations, and individuals.<sup>45</sup> The military also participated in the voting. Generally, the voting process was conducted safely, although the country was facing several armed separatist movements, such as DI/TII (Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia) led by Kartosuwirjo in West Java.<sup>46</sup>

At the national level, the results of the 1955 elections revealed the big four political parties. The Indonesian National Party (PNI) emerged as the leader with 22.3 percent of the votes. Masyumi followed at the second place with 20.9 percent of the votes. However, both of these largest parties obtained 57 seats in the DPR. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was at the third place

<sup>43</sup> Asnan, *Memikir Ulang*, p.77.

<sup>44</sup> Edi Fakhri, "Partai Islam Perti: Studi Tingkah Laku Politik Elit Partai Hubungannya Dengan Idiologi Politik 1950-1969" (Padang, Fakultas Sastra Universitas Andalas, 1995), p. 55.

<sup>45</sup> Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*.

<sup>46</sup> Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*, p.57 & 62.

<sup>40</sup> Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*, p.10.

<sup>41</sup> Nasution, *Aspirasi Pemerintahan*, p.30-31.

<sup>42</sup> Zed, Utama, and Chaniago, *Sumatera Barat Di Pangung*, p.129.

with 18.4 percent of the votes, securing 45 seats, and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was at the fourth place with 16.4 percent of the votes or 39 seats in the DPR. The emergence of NU and PKI as the third and fourth winners with a considerable number of seats was regarded as a surprise that altered the national political landscape.<sup>47</sup> In line with the ranking of the top four parties, the results of the 1955 elections narrowed down – adopting the categories of Feith and Castles (1988) – to four major groups of political thought in Indonesia: nationalism, modernist Islam, traditional Islam, and communism.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike the national election results won by the PNI, the election results in Central Sumatra, as previously suspected, showed the dominance of Islamic parties. In this region, Masyumi emerged as the frontrunner. Approximately 49 percent of voters cast their votes for this modernist Islamic party. Perti came in second with about 28 percent of the votes. The PKI occupied the third position with around 6.5 percent of the votes. The PNI and NU, which performed strongly in Java, each only received 0.7 percent of the votes in this region.<sup>49</sup>

The emergence of Perti at the second position practically displaced the PKI, which before the election was quite influential in this region.<sup>50</sup> Another surprise was the small voice of PSI. In fact, this socialist-democratic party has been quite influential in Minangkabau since the revolutionary era; there were quite a number of local officials affiliated with the party led by Sutan Sjahrir.

**Table 1.** Results of the 1955 Election in West Sumatra (Major Parties\_Percentage of Votes).

No	Cities/ Districts	PNI	Masyumi	NU	PKI	Perti
1	Bukittinggi	1,5	68,9	0,7	3,1	8,1
2	Padang	1,1	53,4	0,3	5,3	15,6
3	Tanah Datar	0,6	59,8	0,2	8,1	18,2
4	Agam	0,5	52,5	0,3	4,8	26,0
5	Pasaman	2,4	38,7	1,4	1,7	50,3
6	50 Kota	0,9	56,6	2,0	6,2	28,8
7	Solok	0,4	58,2	0,5	4,0	20,1
8	Pd Pariaman	0,1	34,5	0,1	0,6	28,2
9	Pessel /Kerinci	1,2	46,6	0,8	7,5	33,6
10	Sijunjung	0,3	37,6	0,7	6,7	30,1
	Total	0,7	48,9	0,7	6,5	27,8

**Source:** Amal, *Regional..* (1982), hal. 57.

The distribution of votes shows that the majority of districts and cities in West Sumatra were dominated by Masyumi. Masyumi successfully gathered over 50 percent of the votes in six regions: Agam, 50 Kota, Tanah Datar, Solok, Padang, and Bukittinggi. Masyumi also remained superior in Pesisir Selatan/Kerinci, Sawahlunto/Sijunjung, and Padang Pariaman. Perti only excelled in Pasaman, with 50.3 percent of the votes, surpassing Masyumi, which came at the second with 38.7 percent of the votes. Perti's victory in Pasaman and its significant vote shared in several other districts indicated a strong influence of Perti among traditional Muslim adherents. The PKI, as the third winner, only received a relatively significant number of votes in Padang Pariaman (10.6 percent), Tanah Datar (8.1 percent), and Pesisir Selatan/Kerinci (7.5 percent).<sup>51</sup>

As a result of the election, there were 11 representatives from Central Sumatra sitting in the DPR, namely Masyumi (5 people), Perti (4 person), PKI (1 person), and PPTI (1 person). The presence of members of the central legislature to represent the Central Sumatra region had formed a relatively different local elite structure compared to the period before the election.

<sup>47</sup> Salamn, "Pemilihan Umum", p. 44.

<sup>48</sup> Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, *Pemikiran Politik Indonesia 1945-1965* (LP3ES, 1988), p.liii.

<sup>49</sup> Amal, *Regional and Central.* p. 57.

<sup>50</sup> Asnan, *Memikir Ulang.* p. 77-79.

<sup>51</sup> Amal, *Regional and Central..*, p. 57.



**Table 2.** Elected Members of Parliament from Central Sumatra

No	Name	Party Origin
1	Mansur Daud Dt Palimo Kayo	Masyumi
2	Dr. H. Ali Akbar	Masyumi
3	M.O. Bafadhal	Masyumi
4	Rahmah El Yunusyah	Masyumi
5	Zainal Abidin Ahmad	Masyumi
6	Sirajuddin Abbas	Perti
7	H. Rusli Abdul Wahid	Perti
8	Ma'arif Marjani	Perti
9	Tengku Sidi Mardjohan	Perti
10	Bachtaruddin	PKI
11	Syekh H Jalaluddin	PPTI

**Source:** Kamardi Dt P Simulie (2005)

For the DPR seat obtained by PPTI, as the last seat from the Central Sumatra electoral district, initially, the number of votes for this *tarekat* party was lower than the number of votes for PII (Indonesian Islamic Party) led by Darwis Djambak. However, in the determination of the council seats, PPTI was declared superior to PII Darwis Djambak because this *tarekat* party received additional votes from the merger of votes from several smaller parties that shared its views (stembus accord).<sup>52</sup>

The election to select members of the Constituent Assembly in December 1955 again demonstrated the superiority of the PNI over Masyumi at the national level. For the electoral district of Central Sumatra, similar to the election for members of the DPR, Masyumi achieved significant success in the election for members of the Constituent Assembly. Out of 22 seats in the Constituent Assembly for the Central Sumatra electoral district, Masyumi secured 11 seats, followed by Perti (5 seats), PKI (2 seats), PSII (1 seat), NU (1 seat), PPTI (1 seat), and PSI (1 seat).

**Table 3.** Members of the Constituent Assembly from Central Sumatra

No	Name	Origin Party
1	Syekh Ibrahim Musa Parabek	Masyumi
2	Ahmad Rasyid St Mansur	Masyumi
3	Ruslan Muljohardjo	Masyumi
4	H. Iljas Jacoub	Masyumi
5	Zainal Abidin Ahmad	Masyumi
6	Duski Samad	Masyumi
7	Rangkayo Ratna Sari	Masyumi
8	H. Malik Ahmad	Masyumi
9	Zamzami Kimin	Masyumi
10	Moh Djaa'far bin Abdul Djalil	Masyumi
11	Muchtar Husni	Masyumi
12	Syekh Sulaiman Ar Rasuli	Perti
13	H. Mansur Dt Nagari Basa	Perti
14	Umi H.Syamsiah Abbas	Perti
15	Tengku Bay Mahmud	Perti
16	H. Umar Bakri	Perti
17	Noersoehoed	PKI
18	Anwar Kadir	PKI
19	H. Syarkawi	NU
20	Dr. Syekh H. Djalaluddin	PPTI
21	H. Zainal	PSII
22	Sutan Syahrir	PSI

**Source:** Kamardi Dt P Simulie (2005)

The elected members of the Constituent Assembly from Central Sumatra were mostly figures who resided and active in the region, such as Sheikh Ibrahim Musa, Duski Samad, Malik Ahmad, and Sheikh Sulaiman Ar Rasuli. Two of the members of the Constituent Assembly from Central Sumatra were women, namely Rangkayo Ratna Sari (Masyumi) and Umi Syamsiah Abbas (Perti). Former Prime Minister Sutan Sjahrir also represented Central Sumatra from PSI. These figures subsequently represented the region in the sessions of the Constituent Assembly post-election until the dissolution of the institution by President Sukarno in July 1959.

<sup>52</sup> Dt Simulie, *Mesik Ketik Tua*, p. 270-271.

### ***Post-Election and Central-Regional Relations***

The results of the democratic party were disappointing for most Muslims outside of Java, including West Sumatra. The Masyumi Party did not emerge as the largest party at the national level. In fact, prior to the election, Masyumi was one of the two most influential parties at the central level. The exit of NU in 1952 was considered one of the factors contributing to Masyumi's failure to win the election. NU even defeated Masyumi in Central Java and East Java.<sup>53</sup>

Post-election, the Muslim community in this region was also concerned that the role of Islamic politics, in which many Minang people were involved, would diminish, while secular politics would become increasingly dominant.<sup>54</sup> Previously, Islamic parties and Minang figures significantly influenced national politics. Before the elections, Masyumi was even able to match, if not surpass, the strength of the PNI, the largest secular nationalist party. Masyumi had even led the government several times, namely the Natsir Cabinet (1950-1951), Sukiman (1951-1952), and Burhanuddin Harahap (1955-1956).

With the victory of the PNI, the new Cabinet was led by PNI cadre, Ali Sastroamijoyo, who replaced Burhanuddin Harahap from Masyumi. This coalition Cabinet included Masyumi, NU, PSII, and Perti; however, various political differences, particularly between the PNI and Masyumi, rendered the government unstable. Initially, President Soekarno wanted the PKI to join Ali's Cabinet, but this was rejected by Masyumi. Unlike Masyumi, the stance of other Islamic parties towards the PKI was less firm. Perti, for example, even agreed to the PKI's entry into the Cabinet, but Masyumi had to be excluded from it. The reason was that the two parties would not be compatible together in one government.<sup>55</sup>

The election results, instead of resolving the political issues that had arisen since previous times, have instead further heated and confused

the political situation. The opposition to the political authorities in the center had even grown stronger, as religious loyalty (Islam) merged with local dissatisfaction. The differences and ideological conflicts among political streams had also sharpened. In West Sumatra, Masyumi was not only engaged in confrontation with the PKI, the largest secular party in the region, but also, as was the case before the elections, with Perti.

At the same time, unrest among military and former military personnel in the regions had also intensified, including in Central Sumatra. Former soldiers from the ex-Banteng Division even formed the Banteng Council in 1956, led by Lieutenant Colonel Ahmad Husein. They not only proposed improvements for the nation, including demands for regional autonomy and anti-communism, but also took over local governance. The emergence of the Banteng Council was followed by other councils in North Sumatra (Gajah Council), South Sumatra (Garuda Council), and Sulawesi (Manguni Council).<sup>56</sup>

In Jakarta, Hatta, who was depicted as becoming increasingly frustrated due to the limitations of his power as vice president, began to threaten to resign. This only heightened anxiety in the regions, particularly in Central Sumatra, not only because the region would lose its representative in the center, but also because it would diminish the potential for improving the lives of the people, especially outside of Java. From West Sumatra, critical voices against the political authorities in the center, perceived as corrupt and intentionally focused only on developing Java and Javanese interests at the expense of the regions and the people of Central Sumatra, grew louder.<sup>57</sup>

History later showed that Hatta resigned from the position of Vice President on December 2, 1956. Ali's cabinet itself was also unable to function effectively. There were too many differences of opinion within the government coalition, particularly between the PNI and

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<sup>53</sup> Madinier, *Partai Masyumi*. p. 201.

<sup>54</sup> Kahin, *Dari Pemberontakan*, p. 271.

<sup>55</sup> Noer, *Partai Islam*, p. 146.

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<sup>56</sup> Leirissa, *PRRI Permesta*.p.4.

<sup>57</sup> Kahin, *Dari Pemberontakan*. p. 272.

Masyumi. Masyumi even eventually withdrew from the Cabinet. When a similar move was followed by several other parties, the course of governance and the national political situation became increasingly uncertain. Ali's cabinet ultimately submitted its mandate to President Sukarno in early 1957. History records that from that moment on, Sukarno began to hold "control" over national politics with all its consequences.

In fact, as experienced before the elections, while Masyumi played an important role in Jakarta, and while Vice President Hatta at least symbolically represented outside Java in the central government, the people in West Sumatra still held hope. However, that hope seemed to dissipate in 1956, and the situation continued to deteriorate in the following months. The climax was the proclamation of the PRRI in Padang in February 1958, a declaration of a rival government led by Lieutenant Colonel Ahmad Husein. The movement, which involved several national figures from Masyumi and PSI, was not only harshly suppressed by the central government but also led to the dissolution of both parties in 1960.

## Conclusion

The description above indicates that the differences in the national political landscape and that of West Sumatra before and after the 1955 elections had influenced the dynamics of the relationship between the political authorities at the center and the region of West Sumatra during the 1950s. Prior to the elections, the relationship between the central government and Central Sumatra was also tense; however, that conflict was relatively manageable because the influential elites in this region and the ruling elites at the center came from the same faction or political party, namely Masyumi. The issues concerning the relationship between the region and the central government were even relatively easier to bridge, as some of the ruling elites at the center were also figures from Minangkabau.

The democratic event of 1955 resulted in a different political landscape between the central level and Central Sumatra. Nationally, the PNI emerged as the winner, with Masyumi at the second place. NU took the third place, and surprisingly, Masyumi's adversary, the PKI, followed at the fourth place. Masyumi's failure to win the national elections diminished the political influence of this modernist Islamic party. Conversely, Masyumi's significant victory in West Sumatra actually strengthened the spirit of regional opposition against the political authorities at the center.

The issue is that the development towards this conflict failed to be bridged due to the absence of key figures who could act as "intermediaries" between West Sumatra and the central government. The resignation of Vice President Hatta and the widespread support from figures and the community of West Sumatra for the Bull Council movement made the political developments in West Sumatra difficult to reverse. The peak was the proclamation of PRRI in 1958, a protest movement against the political rulers in Jakarta by establishing a rival government that was then brutally crushed by the military forces from Java.

The suppression of the PRRI and the dissolution of Masyumi (and PSI) due to the involvement of its figures in the rebellion not only marked a turning point for the Minang ethnic group but also for the role of Islamic parties in the subsequent periods.

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