



# Zainudin MZ's Contribution of Da'wah in Forming Political Awareness in Indonesia

Mastori\*<sup>1</sup>, Sunardi Bashri Iman<sup>2</sup>, Ahmad Falhan<sup>2</sup>, Asep Maskur<sup>3</sup>,  
Wahyu Misbach<sup>4</sup>, Zenal Arifin<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>As Syafi'iyah Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>STAI Dirosat Islamiyah Al-Hikmah, Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Institut Pembina Rohani Islam Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam PTDI, Jakarta, Indonesia

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## Abstract

This study examines the contribution of Zainudin MZ's da'wah in shaping the political awareness of the Indonesian people. Zainudin MZ, known as a 'da'I for a million people', is popular because of his strong and communicative rhetoric and his courage in bringing socio-political messages in his da'wah. This approach makes da'wah a means of social transformation that can foster political awareness of the people, especially in the context of the transition of the Indonesian government from the New Order era to the reformation. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature study method and analysis of Zainudin MZ's da'wah discourse in the form of lectures, books, and mass media documentation. The study results show that Zainudin MZ has contributed to integrating da'wah with social, political, and power issues. Consistently, he voices the values of justice, honesty, and concern for the ordinary people from the perspective of the da'wah language, which is easily understood by the wider community. His involvement in practical politics during the Reformation also shows a form of courage to make da'wah an instrument of structural change. Ultimately, he chose to return to the path of cultural da'wah because of his disappointment with less-than-ideal political practices. This finding strengthens the importance of the role of da'wah as a medium to shape the political awareness of society within the framework of Islamic teachings.

**Keywords:** contribution, political awareness, da'wah, preaching, Zainudin MZ

## Introduction

KH Zainudin MZ is a cleric from Betawi who is widely known as a preacher and is famous for his distinctive preaching rhetoric. His preaching greatly influenced Indonesian society, especially from the 1980s to the early 2000s (Rachmadhani, 2021). Due to his fame, the public nicknamed him 'da'i sejuta umat' (preacher of a million people). (A. A. Ahmad, 2011). This predicate is not just a symbol of popularity but is a substantive contribution to building political awareness of the people. This cannot be separated from the rhetoric of the

da'i is enchanting preaching, communicative language style, and his closeness to various levels of society. This condition is supported by his educational background and broad religious understanding. As a da'i born and raised in an Islamic boarding school, Zainudin can understand Islamic literature from Arabic sources.

However, what distinguishes him is his ability to translate complex theological messages into a crisp and easy-to-understand language for various levels of society. Thus, his preaching is famous among educated

\*Author Correspondence: Mastori, Email: mastori.fai@uia.ac.id



urban communities and ordinary people in rural areas. (A. K. Ahmad, 1994). In his preaching, Zainudin does not get caught up in classical Arabic terminology that confuses listeners. With his vast vocabulary, he can choose local vocabulary according to the place where he preaches, everyday metaphors, and refreshing, humorous interludes. In a political context, Zainudin has succeeded in deconstructing the elitist and frightening impression of state issues and making them into a discourse that is easy to understand and relevant to the broader community.

In addition, Zainudin actively joined political parties in the 70s and founded a political party during the reform era. At that time, the involvement of clerics in practical politics was still a matter of debate. In the general public's perception, politics is often identified as a dirty world, full of intrigue and far from moral values. (Rusianti, 2022). This view is based on the current political reality filled with corruption, lies, and slander. This view does not represent Islam at all because politics is an integral part of Islamic teachings, which is very important.

In terminology, Arabic politics comes from the word *siyasah*, which means to organize, manage and lead. Therefore, leadership is a significant mandate to manage people's affairs fairly, honestly, and oriented towards the benefit of the people (Che Pa dkk., 2010). In other words, politics is a noble instrument with righteous intentions and correct principles. These values are what Zainudin MZ seems to believe and fight for. For him, preaching should not stop at the mosque's pulpit but must also be present on the stage of power so that the values of preaching can be implemented in public policy. Politics is not a world that is unclean

and must be avoided, but rather a field of jihad that must be filled by people who are faithful, knowledgeable, and moral.

Zainudin MZ's involvement in politics is nothing new. In a lecture, he admitted that his involvement in politics preceded him as a preacher. However, it stopped when the single principle of Pancasila came into effect, forcing Islamic parties to be based on Pancasila. For him, there was no point in being in a party if its principles were not Islam. Therefore, Zainudin had been on hiatus from political parties since 1985 until the reformation rolled in 1998. The situation changed after the reformation movement hit Indonesia in 1998, marked by the fall of the New Order regime. Spaces for political freedom and expression were increasingly opened up, which resulted in the emergence of religious figures who had previously only been active in the preaching space, then began to involve themselves in national political games (Simorangkir, 2015). This condition has raised Zainudin MZ's spirit to take this opportunity seriously. For Zainudin, the pulpit is only one of the instruments of preaching, while the community that is the object of preaching lives in a complex social system bound by public policy. Therefore, Zainudin sees the importance of reaching strategic spaces, including the political stage, so Islamic values can contribute directly to decision-making and have a broad impact.

Zainudin's involvement in politics is a form of expansion of his preaching, which has given rise to new challenges related to the duality of the roles he plays, preacher and politician simultaneously (Anjani, 2019). On the one hand, Zainudin MZ is widely known as a charismatic and populist preacher. However, his involvement in politics makes him face

complex communication challenges because he has to deal with diverse audiences and interests. Moreover, political language differs from other languages because of its serious content (Astuti dkk., 2019). However, with his down-to-earth choice of words, he can launch social and political criticisms in every sermon elegantly and fluidly. Although Zainudin's involvement in politics is nothing new, it still raises doubts among the public regarding Zainudin MZ's ability to maintain the integrity of his sermon amidst the strong currents of power interests and how he can balance the moral-spiritual demands of sermons with the practical political reality full of intrigue and compromise. The next problem arises from the intense stigma of the public towards the world of politics, which is considered dirty and completely manipulated. If this stigma is not corrected, it will create an anti-political attitude in society (Samosir & Novitasari, 2022). In many of his lectures, he emphasized that his involvement in politics was part of a moral struggle to organize public policy in line with Islamic teachings. Such thinking is in line with the thinking of Islamic scholars, classical and contemporary, regarding politics and power (Diana dkk., 2018). However, this debate still leaves problematic space in the public's perception of the compatibility between preaching and politics.

Another relevant issue related to Zainudin's da'wah phenomenon is the change in audience segmentation and the adjustment of the content of the da'wah message. When Zainudin moved from the mosque's pulpit to the political stage, he faced an audience that was more diverse regarding ideology, interests, and perspectives. This certainly requires flexibility in the communication approach and narrative used. This change

can also give the impression that specific political interests have co-opted da'wah or even lost their spiritual-transcendent power. This is where the dilemma arises between maintaining the authenticity of the da'wah message and the need to adapt to a political audience that often demands strategic, symbolic, and compromising messages.

On the other hand, as a very popular preacher in the mass media, Zainudin MZ also faces the challenges of commodifying preaching and preaching capitalism (Wibowo, 2020). His sermons, which were widely distributed through radio, television, cassettes, and VCDs, made him known as a "dai for the masses," but at the same time, opened up space for da'wah to become a commodity that was marketed massively. In this situation, concerns arose that da'wah could lose its substance as a medium for awareness and guidance because it emphasized the entertainment and popularity aspects more.

Finally, an important issue in the public spotlight in Zainudin MZ's socio-preaching communication is the consistency between the content of his sermons and his political practices (Cecep Suryana dkk., 2024). The people have high hopes for clerics who enter the world of politics to become moral role models and bringers of change. So when a preacher like Zainudin enters the arena of power, the public critically assesses his speech and political steps. In this case, political communication and preaching communication are two areas that must be carefully combined so as not to create an ambivalent image. This is a big challenge in maintaining credibility and public trust.

Before this study was conducted, several studies highlighted the figure and preaching of KH Zainudin MZ. However, most of these

studies focused more on rhetoric, language style, and the substance of his preaching messages in a general religious and social context. For example, the research conducted by Agus Fatuh Widoyo examined Zainudin MZ's thoughts in the context of Islamic education, especially regarding the criteria for choosing a life partner. This study focuses more on moral and religious values in building an Islamic family, not on socio-political aspects. Meanwhile, Adrianto examines public opinion toward Zainudin MZ's preaching. This study illustrates that the public considers his preaching to be very communicative, full of meaning, and sharp in conveying social criticism. Although it touches on social issues, this study does not specifically discuss or trace the influence of Zainudin MZ's preaching on the people's political awareness.

Eka Anjani's research focuses more on the linguistic aspect, especially the language style used by Zainudin MZ in the *Isra' Mi'raj* sermon. In his study, he explains how this language style creates closeness between the preacher and the audience. However, this study remains in the realm of language and does not touch on his contribution to the people's political thinking. Bahrul Ulum conducted research that touches a little on the political aspect. He examined Zainudin MZ's political thinking from the perspective of *fiqh siyasah*. However, this study focuses more on his political role in political parties, thoughts on the criteria for leaders, and views on abstaining from voting. This study has not directly examined how his preaching shaped the political awareness of the wider community.

Unlike all previous studies, the research that will be conducted focuses on the contribution of Zainudin MZ's preaching

in shaping the political awareness of the community. This study will not only examine the content or method of his preaching but also try to trace the impact of the preaching on the mindset, attitudes, and political participation of Muslims. Thus, this study is here to fill the gap in previous studies while offering a more sociological and contextual approach to understanding the role of preaching in building political awareness.

This study aims to analyze the contribution of Zainudin MZ's preaching in shaping the political awareness of the Indonesian community, especially during the New Order era until the beginning of the Reformation. The primary focus lies on how political messages are conveyed in each of his preachings and the relevance of Zainudin MZ's preaching to the contemporary preaching phenomenon. The novelty of this research lies in the interdisciplinary approach that combines the science of preaching, political communication, and sociology to understand the important role of Zainudin MZ in shaping public awareness of their social and political rights.

Based on the background described above, the main problem in this study is formulated, namely how the contribution of KH Zainudin MZ's political thoughts and actions, especially related to the integration of *da'wah* and politics in Indonesia, is formulated. This problem is very relevant to study considering Zainudin MZ's strategic position as a public figure with broad influence, both in *da'wah* and politics and his ability to bridge the two domains through an adaptive and contextual *da'wah* approach. The study explores in depth how Zainudin MZ's political ideas and practices align with the vision of Islamic *da'wah* and how he responds to social,

cultural, and Islamic challenges in his efforts to implement Islamic values into public policy spaces.

## Research Method

The research method used in this article is a qualitative approach with a library research type. This approach was chosen because the primary focus of the research is on K.H.'s thoughts and contributions. Zainuddin MZ's da'wah is recorded in lectures, writings, media documentation, and various relevant scientific literature sources. This study aims to examine in depth the messages of Zainuddin MZ's da'wah, which contain ideological content and Islamic political values, and how these messages shape the political awareness of Muslims in Indonesia. The data sources used include Zainuddin MZ's audio, video, and transcript lectures; books and articles written by or about him; mass media documentation such as newspapers and magazines; and previous research results that support the analysis.

Data collection was carried out purposively by selecting da'wah materials that explicitly or implicitly contain political issues, such as justice, leadership, people's participation, and criticism of abuses of power. The collected data were then analyzed using the content analysis method. The steps in this analysis include data reduction, namely by filtering sermons that are relevant to political topics; categorizing data into specific themes such as social justice, reform, the role of the people in politics and ethics of leadership; interpretation of meaning to explore the ideological content in the messages of the preaching, and drawing conclusions about how Zainuddin MZ's preaching contributes to

shaping the political awareness of Indonesian Muslim society. Through this approach, the study is expected to systematically map Zainuddin MZ's preaching thoughts and show its relevance in the national socio-political realm.

## Result and Analysis

### Da'wah is an Instrument for Building Political Awareness

Da'wah has a critical position in Islam. For this reason, the Prophets were sent to carry out missionary missions to humanity, including the noble Prophet Muhammad. He started preaching from the city of Mecca to spread goodness, prevent evil, and face unjust societal norms (Sabir, 2018). The Prophet's preaching in Mecca not only taught monotheism and worship but also challenged the unequal social structure, the discriminatory norms of ignorance, and the injustice carried out by the Quraysh elite (Ramadhan, 2020). The Prophet firmly rejected the practice of economic injustice, arbitrariness towards enslaved people, and oppression of the weak.

The Prophet's call for human equality, justice, and social responsibility are forms of political advocacy that free humans from an unjust system. The words of the Messenger of Allah: 'There is no superiority over Arabs and non-Arabs and also red-skinned over blacks except because of piety' (Usman dkk., 2024). This shows that from the beginning, Islamic preaching was not apolitical. On the contrary, the Prophet showed his active role in improving the order of community life. Preaching can shape people's perspectives, values, and orientations towards their socio-political environment. In this case,

preaching can function as a medium for social transformation that leads to more active and critical political awareness and involvement (Muhyiddin, 2019).

Ideologically, Islam does not separate religion from socio-political life. The Qur'an and Sunnah provide many instructions on the importance of justice, trustworthiness, and responsibility in leadership (Hafniati, 2018). Verses such as QS. An-Nisa: 58-59 emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the trust of those entitled and obeying a just leader. Therefore, when da'wah raises issues such as oppressive leadership, corruption, or legal injustice, it is part of the da'wah amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, which is political in a substantive sense.

Preachers have a moral responsibility to voice the truth and fight for social justice, as inherited by the prophets. The risks are heavy but commensurate with the virtues that will be obtained, namely, getting the reward of a martyr. As the Messenger of Allah said, the primary purpose of jihad is to tell the truth before the oppressive ruler (Hanafiah & Saidah, 2021). Martyrdom is obtained not only through war, which Sharia permits but also through the struggle to uphold the truth through risky da'wah, namely in power, which is also a jihad of high standing. In addition, this hadith contains a deep and clear understanding that involvement in politics in the deeds of a Muslim, instead of being prohibited, actually gets very great virtue.

Da'wah, in building political awareness of the people, can be done through an educational and cultural approach. The meaning of the educational approach is that da'wah must contain elements of enlightenment regarding the rights and obligations in an existing political system. Furthermore, it is also compared with the Islamic political paradigm

in viewing the people and managing the country. These rights and obligations have been completely regulated in fiqh siyasah. Especially for young people, this Islamic political education is very much needed to increase awareness and implementation of Islamic politics in everyday life (Ida Inayatu Saadah, 2022).

Culturally, da'wah forms a religious political habitus, such as concern for others, honesty, and collective responsibility for various societal and state problems. Thus, da'wah is a catalyst for changing political culture from passive to active and productive based on Islamic teachings. From a communication perspective, da'wah can be analyzed using mass communication theories such as agenda setting and framing. If traced, this theory has emerged since 1922 (Hadi dkk., 2020). This theory states that media or communicators can influence audience perceptions by determining which issues are important to pay attention to and how these issues are framed. In this case, politics occupies the most important position as the primary means for applying Islamic teachings. The ancient ulama possessed this kind of political awareness, which was visible in their political activities and prayers. In a famous history, Fudhail bin Iyad once prayed, 'If I had an efficacious prayer, I would direct that prayer to the leader. (Al-Badr, t.t.).

It should be noted that political preaching differs from the politicization of preaching. Political preaching is an effort to make people aware of their responsibilities in national life. In contrast, the politicization of preaching is the use of religious pulpits for the interests of particular groups or parties exclusively. Using religion not for religion but for the interests of groups alone is a terrible

sight in the democracy that currently applies in various countries. Therefore, rejection of the politicization of religion needs to be done to glorify religion and present Islam as a value system that is genuinely applicable to the lives of Muslims (Faridah & Mathias, 2018). In building political awareness, preachers must uphold preaching ethics, namely honesty, wisdom, and justice.

Through preaching, people are encouraged not to be apathetic toward the socio-political conditions of a country and to understand their rights and obligations as citizens, such as justice, property protection, life, and honor (Amin & Sari, 2023). Political participation in question is not only in the form of voting during elections; even voting in elections should be considered according to sharia. It should also be used to monitor public policies, voice justice, and reject deviant political practices. This awareness grows slowly through collective awareness in religious study forums, public lectures, and sermons.

One important aspect of political da'wah is how preachers make people aware that involvement in public affairs is part of the responsibility of faith. The concept of *al-mas'uliyah* (responsibility) in Islam is limited to individual worship matters and includes collective dimensions—such as concern for social justice, protection of people's rights, and efforts to prevent evil in the system of power. Through da'wah, preachers can instill Islamic values in the people's political orientation so that they are not trapped in political pragmatism but move based on the principles of morality and sharia responsibility.

Da'wah can also be a means of moral control over leaders. In the history of Islam, scholars and preachers played a role as critical

partners of the rulers, not as tools of power. They remind the leaders if they deviate from the right path and invite the people to speak up when injustice occurs. This is by the rule that 'the worst scholars are those who go to the rulers (of worldly affairs) and the best umara' are those who go to the scholars' (Rahman & Yafie, 1997). Such preaching is not only about worship but also concerns advocacy of the values of justice, siding with the ordinary people, and rejecting all forms of abuse of authority by those in power. Therefore, preachers must understand the socio-political context of their society so that preaching messages are normative but applicable and contextual.

In a modern world filled with the flow of information and political propaganda, preaching also has a strategic role in educating the people so that they are not easily provoked or manipulated. The people need to understand the importance of political literacy, ethics in social media, and awareness of polarization that is often deliberately created for the interests of the elite. This polarization strengthened Indonesia's socio-political life in 2014-2019 (Mansyur, 2023). This is where the importance of preaching is that it teaches "what to do" and "why and how" people behave. Preaching material must strive to educate, not be agitated, strengthen critical thinking, and not just mass mobilization even though, in certain conditions, it is necessary. Thus, the people become active subjects in politics, not just easily directed objects.

Finally, preaching to build political awareness must not run alone without integration with educational strategies, economic empowerment, and community strengthening. Effective preaching is down-to-earth preaching—present amid the people's

problems and offering real solutions. This means preachers need to work with other elements in civil society, including academics, activists, and community leaders. This collaborative approach creates a strong and sustainable ecology of change. Such preaching invites people to heaven in the afterlife and presents a glimmer of justice and welfare in this world.

### **Zainudin MZ's Contribution of Da'wah in Shaping the Political Awareness of the People**

The history of da'wah in Indonesia shows that many ulama were actively involved in political and social struggles, both during the colonial period and after independence. Before independence, some Islamic figures made significant contributions to politics, such as H. Agus Salim, Omar Said Tjokro Aminoto, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, and so on. Their struggles showed that politics is not an exclusive area that can only be entered by secular nationalists. In fact, because of his political struggle, KH Hasyim Asy'ari was once imprisoned by the Dutch and became the leader of Masyumi, an Islamic-based political party (Drs. Lathiful Khuluk, 2000). Likewise, KH Ahmad Dahlan actively developed social activities, enlightening socio-cultural awareness and empowering the people (Mulkhan, 2003).

Meanwhile, after independence, especially in the 1970s until the beginning of the reformation, the name KH Zainudin MZ emerged, coloring Indonesia's da'wah and political scene. Although different from KH Hasyim KH Ahmad Dahlan and other figures, especially related to the structure of his organization, Zainudin had his unique political role and thoughts in responding to

issues of the community and public policy. He could simultaneously balance his position as a political party activist and *da'i* with his extraordinary da'wah language maneuvers and rhetoric. Although his partisanship towards a particular party had drawn criticism, his contribution to voicing the importance of Muslim involvement in politics cannot be ignored. His lectures became a source of inspiration for Muslims not to be apathetic towards state affairs. This thought has a strong theological basis, as the Prophet said: whoever does not pay attention to the affairs of the Muslims is not from them (Zawawi, 2015).

One of the criticisms was related to Zainudin MZ's massive role in preaching. The public does not know Zainudin except as a preacher, even though he once clarified that his involvement in politics came before becoming a preacher. Therefore, because of his involvement in politics, some of the public feels that Zainudin has 'descended' from pure preaching to politics full of intrigue. This cannot be separated from the secularist view that dominates society, either due to the conditioning of the rulers or the influence of secular and liberal thinkers. It can also be caused by the practice of democratic politics that does not have a strong theological and theoretical background, thus displaying severe damage. Likewise, when he left the United Development Party (PPP) and founded a new political party, he was accused of dividing the people, which was detrimental to the Islamic party. However, these criticisms are not based on theology but on the people's misunderstanding of politics and the momentary interests of the political elites he left behind. The party that criticized Zainudin's steps did not represent

the struggle of Islam as the jargon carried. "Parties identifying as Islamic parties often form coalitions or political cooperation with non-Islamic parties. This phenomenon tends to adapt to the dynamics of the political environment and the prevailing democratic system (Herdiansah, 2017). Political studies often categorize this attitude as a form of political pragmatism. This condition causes Islamic parties to experience a decline in votes due to the absence of ideological values that are sold permanently.

In Zainudin's hands, da'wah is used as an instrument for building political awareness of the people, which can touch the intellectual, spiritual, and socio-political dimensions of the people simultaneously. In the context of a diverse Indonesia, healthy political da'wah can strengthen the moral foundations of society, encourage quality political participation, produce ethical leadership, and uphold the Islamic system. Today's da'wah need to enrich themselves with socio-political knowledge in order to be able to convey religious messages that are contextual, relevant, and transformative. Thus, da'wah is a reminder of the afterlife and a driver of world improvement.

In general, Zainudin MZ's contribution to shaping the political awareness of the community is divided into two: first, Zainudin inherited a relevant da'wah methodology for *da'i* after him, especially in conveying criticism wisely, argumentatively, and constructively without ignoring Islamic teachings and state administration. This phenomenon shows his ability to mix political messages within the framework of da'wah. He can be categorized as a contemporary Indonesian *da'i* who has succeeded in integrating the delivery of religious messages and the formation

of political awareness of the community through a populist da'wah approach. The main characteristic of Zainuddin MZ's da'wah style lies in the use of political language that is communicative, humorous, and easy to understand by the general public (Adrianto & Sitorus, 2024). This makes his da'wah inclusive and reaches a broad audience, not limited to the upper middle class or educated people alone.

In da'wah communication, Zainudin MZ can transform complex messages—including socio-political ones—into down-to-earth and relatable narratives (Mastori dkk., 2022). This allows political messages, usually considered elitist and rigid, to become familiar to the ears of the lower middle class. With this approach, Zainudin cannot only act as a transmitter of religious teachings but also as a public educator who instills the values of social participation and awareness of the national political situation.

On various occasions of his da'wah, Zainudin often uses everyday life analogies, humorous anecdotes (Puspitasari, 2020), and actual examples in conveying socio-political criticism. For example, when criticizing corruptors with impressive rhetoric, Zainudin said that on the Day of Judgment, people would be resurrected from their graves with the faces of rats. According to him, what he quoted from the Hadith, the practice in the world is the practice of rats, namely liking to eat things appropriately stored. Analogizing corruptors with rats is a form of social criticism that is easy to understand and, at the same time, raises awareness for officials to avoid criminal acts of corruption. Through this approach, the audience feels not lectured but invited to a dialogue in a family atmosphere. Even though his preaching contains threats. This is one of

the advantages of Zainudin MZ's preaching method, which combines the depth of the message and the intimacy of communication. The concept of populism in his preaching is not just a rhetorical approach but an effective strategy to expand the reach of preaching to groups rarely touched by formal political discourse.

Second, Zainudin MZ, known as the 'a million people' *da'i*, strengthened the integralists or substantiality paradigm between political religion and *da'wah*. According to this theory, *da'wah* and power are not contradictory. Both play a role and strengthen each other in building a civilized human civilization. Even *da'wah* activities can easily be paralyzed when not implemented constitutionally (Effendi, 2002). Therefore, preaching the Prophet Muhammad was used to uphold monotheism, and the first Islamic society was to build power based on divine values. In this context, Zainudin is not only known for his captivating and communicative preaching rhetoric but also for the social and political issues he raises in every sermon. Zainudin views that preaching should not be limited to individual morality but must touch on a larger aspect, namely the socio-politics of the people. This view influences the preaching paradigm, from the *ubudiyah* spirituality and secularism to a more holistic and transformative approach.

Through his sermons delivered both in the mosque pulpit and through the mass media, Zainudin consistently highlights structural issues such as economic inequality, corruption, and leadership crises. He emphasizes the importance of the presence of a leader who is just, trustworthy, and has a bias towards the ordinary people. Zainudin MZ's preaching is normative, contextual, and responsive to the

developing socio-political realities. Preaching can reach a wider target with a responsive and innovative approach (Ali & Maksum, 2024). With the professionalism of his preaching, he succeeded in making preaching an instrument of public enlightenment and a tool of social control over power.

Furthermore, Zainudin's direct involvement in politics, including when he founded an Islamic-based political party, emphasized his commitment to integrating Islamic values and state political practices. He showed that preaching does not have to be in an antagonistic position toward politics but can contribute to improving the system and governance of government. With an ethical and constructive approach, Zainudin MZ laid an important foundation for subsequent preachers and preaching activists to view politics not as a dirty space that must be avoided but as a field of good deeds full of opportunities to uphold Islamic values in real terms.

Zainudin's contribution to neutralizing the public's view of dirty politics is insignificant. This cannot be separated from the weight of political dirt that floods the media almost daily. The public is always presented with political news that is cunning, pragmatic, corrupt, and justifies any means. Finally, when clerics considered 'clean' enter dirty politics, they will be dirty. Therefore, it is important to present a more comprehensive paradigm of *da'wah* politics that does not only focus on political actors but also the existing political system. Because the system is like a broom used to clean the floor. If the broom is dirty, it is impossible to use it to clean the floor (Sultan, 2013). If this political system is dirty, then efforts to clean the floor of power become difficult to implement

However, Zainudin's preaching plays a role in forming political awareness among the people, namely the awareness that social survival cannot be separated from the political system and policies. Through a straightforward but non-provocative delivery style, Zainudin succeeded in opening up the thinking space of the people to realize that being a good Muslim also means being active in fighting for the values of goodness in political life. This thought aligns with Imam Ghazali, who analogized religion and power to twins that cannot be separated (Haniatunnisa, 2021). The relationship between preaching and politics cannot be separated (Burlian, 2014). This paradigm seems to be reinforced by the figure of Zainudin MZ. Politics must go hand in hand with the objectives of da'wah, as exemplified by the Prophet when building da'wah through efforts to strengthen the politics of the Muslim community. With the guidance of revelation, the Prophet built the Medina community through a comprehensive approach by upholding the Islamic constitution (Mastori dkk., 2021).

Apart from Zainudin, Indonesian national figure M. Natsir believes that the state, as a temporary tool for implementing Islamic law in society, requires a formal legal approach (Musyarofah, 1970). Based on this paradigm, even though the flow of secularization is so strong in Indonesia, the idea of the close relationship between Islam and the state always seeks and finds its momentum. One of them is through the preaching brought by K.H. Zainuddin MZ.

Substantively, Zainudin contributed a lot in spreading the urgency of a just leader, which he translated as a leader who is not biased. According to him, the people need a just leader who will protect their people.

So that on the Day of Judgment, these just leaders will be protected by Allah SWT with His grace. The journey of time will lead to a society where politicians will have their masks unmasked, which are the defenders of the people and the sufferers of the people. The description of the preaching delivered by Zainudin contains a moral call for leaders to uphold justice because justice carried out consistently will benefit all people.

Meanwhile, Zainudin raised a spirit of optimism among the public that, over time, fair leadership will be present. The falsehoods displayed by politicians in an attempt to deceive the public will eventually be exposed, and the true character of each will be revealed. This message is also a warning for politicians to be honest and transparent with the people because every form of lie will eventually be revealed.

Third, inheriting the courage to criticize power. Courage is restraining the soul from the urge of fear (Uyuni & Muhibudin, 2020). This is a contribution in the form of an example that is very important for preachers. However, according to him, that courage must be accompanied by tactics and strategy. On the contrary, without calculation, courage becomes reckless (Zaenuddin, 2016). Courage requires knowledge and wisdom, as shown by a critical attitude in responding to the policies and injustices of the rulers. Therefore, wisdom is needed so that the critical attitude is not dangerous, as exemplified by Zainudin MZ.

The courage of Zainudin MZ in voicing his sharp criticisms of the rulers is a prominent aspect that distinguishes him from the existing preachers. Amid the harsh political atmosphere of the New Order, which was unfriendly to preachers, Zainudin remained a vocal and consistent figure in conveying the

truth even though he was at risk of receiving pressure, especially during the New Order. This cannot be separated from his two teachers, KH Idham Cholid and KH Syukron Makmun (Nurjaman, 2022). On various occasions in his preaching, he called on the rulers to carry out the mandate of leadership fairly and responsibly. In fact, at that time, social, political, and military conditioning to support the power of the New Order was very strong. Education at that time was aimed at perpetuating the power of the New Order (Loppies, 2023). Because of that, not a few activists and critical people have to deal with the authorities. Not a few of them even become victims of kidnapping (Aini & Hadi, 2025).

There are several reasons why Zainudin MZ's preaching and criticism remain safe amidst the ferocity of the New Order. According to Herdyanto, even though Zainudin's preaching is critical of power, it is delivered in a friendly and entertaining manner (Azis, t.t.). In addition, the substance of Zainudin's preaching does not directly attack the government but instead focuses on social and community issues, although these issues are related to power.

From the perspective of rhetorical communication theory initiated by Aristotle, Zainudin uses the *ethos* (ethics/credibility), *pathos* (emotion), and *logos* (logic) approaches (Kamaruddin, 2017). *Ethos* is evident from his self-image as a credible and respected cleric by society and the authorities. He uses *pathos* with humor and down-to-earth language to touch the audience's emotions. At the same time, *logos* can be understood from the logic of his lectures based on Islamic values and social reality. This approach makes his preaching messages seem not subversive but solution-

oriented and constructive, so they can be accepted even in an authoritarian regime like the New Order.

In addition to being critical, Zainudin's courage is evident in his decision to jump straight into politics in the 1970s. In fact, according to him, at that time, Golkar (functional groups, the ruling party) was at its fiercest. Meanwhile, the party he defended at that time was the United Development Party. Saying goodbye to campaigning for PPP meant saying goodbye to Death. Amid this pressure, Zainudin remained firm on his party's idealism.

After experiencing the hustle and bustle of the political world, he realized that political parties in a democracy are not representative of upholding the principles of Islamic teachings that are believed in and preached. His continuity in the political world ended after he had a conflict with the PPP, which he had defended for twenty years by establishing the PPP Reformasi and changing into PBR (Partai Bintang Reformasi). Zainudin saw that even though it had the symbol and was based on Islam, the Islamic party did not fully uphold Islamic principles and was no different from the nationalist-secular party. Therefore, in 2006, Zainudin relinquished his political position and returned to the preaching world (Saputra, 2019). He channeled his political thought contributions no longer through pragmatic political parties but in various preaching forums among the people.

## Conclusion

This study confirms that K.H. Zainudin MZ is a preacher with a complex career. His deep understanding of Islam and superior rhetorical capacity enable his sermons to reach all levels of society, educated and lay, ordinary people, and politicians. The community's popularity and acceptance of his preaching reflect his preaching communication skills, which are contextual, communicative, and relevant to social reality.

Another prominent aspect of Zainudin MZ is his courage in criticizing policies and strategic socio-political issues through a communicative preaching approach. This attitude shows his principle that politics is an important instrument in realizing the values of Islamic teachings in society and government. In this context, Zainudin's contribution lies in his courage to raise sensitive and structural issues and in his efforts to strengthen the relationship between preaching and politics as entities that complement each other in building civilization.

In the early phase of his da'wah career, Zainudin believed that politics had a central role in supporting the effectiveness of da'wah, which was reflected in his involvement in practical democratic politics as an effort to integrate Islamic teachings into public policy. However, over time and experience, he realized that the existing political system was not entirely in line with the idealism of da'wah. This disappointment prompted him to withdraw from the political stage and blend in with da'wah activities in society. His political thoughts were no longer conveyed through formal institutional channels but were more articulated informally through interactions and discourses among the

people. Nevertheless, his contribution to strengthening the integralist paradigm between da'wah and politics remains an important legacy that paves the way for the next generation to see politics as a space for actualizing Islamic values constructively and transformatively.

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