

Perspective on Fatima Mernissi's Position of Thought on Indonesian Women's Leadership in the 21st Century

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Abstract

There is no denying that the tradition of hadith thought is at the center of global debate. Of course, varied discourses will always arise in presenting the existence of hadith according to the context, including in the leadership of Indonesian women. The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of Mernissi's position and influence on the leadership thinking of Indonesian women in the 21st century. The method used is a type of literature research. The results showed that: 1) The origin of Fatima Mernissi's thought lies in her criticism of misogynistic hadiths that forbid women to be equal to men in being leaders. According to him, the hadith is not true because it has long been proven that women are able to compete fully, e.g. Aisha. 2) In the Indonesian context, Mernissi's idea is used as the basis of public figures that are always imitated by Indonesian women. Since Megawati became the first female president, many women have joined the government in the 21st century, including Sri Mulyani, Tri Rismaharini, and Khofifah. The data also showed an increase in women in parliament from 9% (2001-2004) to 20.5% (2019-2024).

Keywords: *Leadership, Mernissi, Indonesia, 21st Century.*

Introduction

Fatima Mernissi is known as one of the female warriors in the world in making women equal to men. One of them is related to

women's leadership in Islam. Where in her thinking, many existing hadiths make it more difficult for women to be leaders and prioritize



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men. One of them is a Saheeh Hadith in *Sahih Bukhari* such as:

"It will not be fortunate for a person to leave their affairs to a woman"

Responding to Missogyny's hadith, Fatima Mernissi explained that the hadith is neither appropriate nor suitable for use, especially today. According to Fatima, men and women both have the right to be leaders including in the government during the mandate as well as important female roles in the past such as Aisha, Queen Bilqis etc. In addition, Mernissi also emphasized that the position of women in political matters is equal to men, so women can become leaders.¹

But in reality on the ground, the pros and cons related to women's leadership are endless. Experts, scientists to scholars continue to occur by looking at the development of the future times. According to Muhammad Al-Bahi, equality between women and men is not only limited to traditions and customs, but must achieve broader insights, such as cabinet politics, diplomatic representation, and formal juridical decisions.² So it is not surprising, Indonesia as a democratic country with women leaders also has few special rules since Megawati became a leader, namely the foundation of Law No. 12 Year 2003 as a basis for the involvement and

role of women in the world of politics and government of Indonesia which must reach 30%. Therefore, this study tries to see the extent of Fatima Mernissi's views and influences in terms of women's leadership in 21st Century Indonesia, because she sees that her thoughts have become the subject of international discussion and pioneers of major feminism such as Qasim Amin and become gender learning materials in various Indonesian higher education such as: State Islamic University Malang, and State Islamic University Jakarta, with the aim that Indonesian women are also heavily involved in politics and leadership.

There are similar studies from this research study as follows: 1) The study of the analysis of Fatima Mernissi's thoughts on the Hadiths of Missogyny by Anisatun Muthi'ah shows that Mernissi disagrees about women being prohibited in many ways both politically, economically, socially and religiously so that women can be like men in all fields,³ 2) The Study of Fatima Mernissi's Thoughts on Islamic Education Gender Perspective by Siti Yumnah which shows that in Islam according to Mernissi there is nothing that prohibits it definitely through verses of the Quran, while the hadith that prohibits it is not a generally recognized hadith because it is opposed to

¹ Fatima Mernissi, *Wanita Di Dalam Islam*, 1st edn (Bandung: Pustaka, 1994).

² Muhammad Al-Bahi, *Langkah Wanita Islam Masakini* (Jakarta: Gema Insan Press, 1995).

³ Anisatun Muthi'ah, 'Analisis Pemikiran Fatima Mernissi Tentang Hadis-Hadis Missogini', *Djia' Al-Afkar*, 2.2 (2014), 70–90.

making women the most important part or leaders like Queen Bilqis, and Aisha,⁴ 3) Elya Munfarida's Study of Women in Tafsir Fatima Mernissi shows that in her interpretation she seeks to integrate Islamic tradition with Western thought, especially with regard to feminist theory. According to him, Islam considers the existence of women to have an equal position both in the religious and social fields, based on the universal value of human equality found in many religious texts,⁵ 4) Women Before God by M. Rusydi in the results using the study of interpretation explained that there is no difference between women and men from everything except related to devotion to God, so that in social, economic, political and other matters women are considered equal to men even though they have certain limits to avoid slander,⁶ 5) Distortion of Misogonist Hadith and Gender Equality in the Perspective of Fatimah Mernissi by Jamaluddin shows that the understanding of hadith must be specific, in which Islamic science ignores, the elements of the conditions for receiving hadith and the

conditions for doing ijihad never mention gender factors but only refer to religious, moral, and intellectual factors. Thus, in the period after the Companions there appeared female figures who were experts in the field of hidith, jurists, or even mufti,⁷ 6) Skepticism in Fatima Mernissi's Feminist Hermeneutics Qaem's work shows that skepticism and excessive criticism of Fatima Mernissi are revealed because of the absence of recognition that false hadith can arise because of the narrator's fault without any element of intentionality. Fatima Mernissi's skepticism is also shown when she quotes data from scholarly books by inserting some words that distort meaning and give a negative view to stories that are considered false,⁸ 7) Feminism in the Qur'an (Analysis of the Interpretation of Fatima Mernissi Surat An-Nisa Verse 34) by Hafid and Fitri shows that God essentially created man with the same purpose, which is to worship Him. So far, Allah with His power bestows certain benefits on both men and women with appropriate portions for both,⁹ 8) The study of Indonesian Women's Political

⁴ Siti Yumnah, 'Pemikiran Fatima Mernissi Tentang Pendidikan', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 10.1 (2021), 24–41 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>.

⁵ Elya Munfarida, 'Perempuan Dalam Tafsir Fatima Mernissi', *Maghza*, 1.2 (2016), 21 <<https://doi.org/10.24090/mza.v1i2.2016.pp21-34>>.

⁶ M. Rusydi, 'Perempuan Di Hadapan Tuhan (Pemikiran Feminisme Fatima Mernissi)', *An-Nisa*, 7 (2012), 73–86.

⁷ Jamaluddin, 'Distorsi Hadits Misogonis Dan Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Perspektif Fatimah Mernissi', *Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman*, 20.2 (2009), 110–21.

⁸ Qaem Aulassyahied, 'Skeptisisme Dalam Hermeneutika Feminis', 8.2 (2016), 185–200 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v8i2.754>>.

⁹ Hafid Nur and others, 'FEMINISME DALAM AL-QUR'AN (Analisis Penafsiran Fatima Mernissi Surat An-Nisa Ayat 34)', *Al Muhajidz: Jurnal*

Participation in Parliament and its Relevance to Ulama's views by Neni shows that political parties must make systematic efforts to prepare for the fulfillment of women's quotas. The views of scholars on women's political positions are very much in line with women's political participation in parliament, both supporting and hindering,¹⁰ and 9) Women's Representation in Parliament 2019 Election Results: Challenges, and Opportunities Umagpi's work in the results shows that basically women have contributed in facing future problems by conveying all ideas from all their scientific fields.¹¹

From this, in detail it can be grouped into three, namely: 1) Fatima Mernissi's thought that focuses on someone's work 2) Fatima Mernissi's thought in the world of Education and Islam 3) Women's views in the Indonesian political parliament. Untouched and undiscussed research is related to the influence of Fatima Mernissi's thoughts on leadership in 21st Century Indonesia. So with this, the latest value of this study is to see the extent to which Fatima Mernissi influences women in Indonesia and also see how far these thoughts have an impact on politics in Indonesia in the 21st Century by seeing and

mentioning these figures according to data from women who serve in the Indonesian Cabinet. The purpose of this writing is three things including: knowing all forms of Fatima Mernissi's thoughts in politics, especially women's leadership, seeing the influence of Fatima Mernissi's thoughts in encouraging the work of a woman in Indonesia to enter the world of government and leadership, and also knowing all forms of implementation of her thoughts that have been applied by Indonesian women in the 21st century and these female figures.

Method

The object studied was the influence of Fatima Mernissi's thoughts on women's leadership in 21st Century Indonesia. This research uses the type of library research or librarian research.¹² The reason for this selection is because in this study we tried to explore descriptive meaning through literature data related to the problem of meaning contained in various data sources. The approach used is a historical descriptive approach, namely by trying to relate variables, data, and existing facts related to the 21st

Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir, 1.2 (2021), 96–107 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.57163/almuhafidz.v1i2.17>>.

¹⁰ Neni Nuraeni, 'Partisipasi Politik Wanita Indonesia Di Parlemen Dan Relevansinya Dengan Pandangan Ulama Tentang Peran Wanita Dalam Politik', *ADLIYA: Jurnal Hukum Dan Kemanusiaan*, 11.1

(2019), 119–36 <<https://doi.org/10.15575/adliya.v11i1.4855>>.

¹¹ Juniar Laraswanda Umagapi, 'Tantangan Dan Peluang Women's Representation In The 2019 Parliament Election', *Kajian*, 2020, 19–34 <<https://doi.org/10.22212>>.

¹² Mestika Zed, *Metodologi Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2018).

Century with the thoughts of Fatima Mernissi.¹³

Primary data sources Women And Islam: A Historical and Theological Enguiry and the website of the Indonesian Cabinet.¹⁴ The secondary data used are books, journals and all reference things that support writing. This collection technique comes from documentation which is divided into two things, namely the main one includes Mernissi's thought book and the website of the Indonesian Cabinet, and additionally is the website and books, or journals that support. The analytical method that will be used descriptive-analytical method is to try to describe the construction of Fatima Mernissi's theory of thought, then analyze it critically, and look for the roots of the figure's thoughts until later associated with their influence on women leaders in 21st century Indonesia.¹⁵ This data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model which includes: Data collection, data reduction, data presentation, managing and analyzing data and drawing conclusions. The following is an overview of research data analysis:

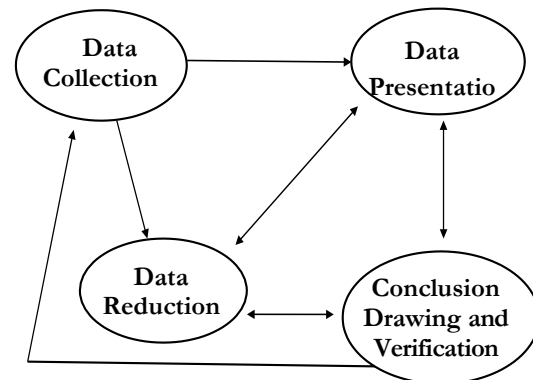


Figure 1. Research Data Analysis

While there are six research steps including: determining the figure, namely Fatima Mernissi, determining the formal object, namely women's leadership, collecting data both from Mernissi's thoughts and women's work in Kabiner RI, identifying formulation problems, to the source, conducting analysis by collecting and sorting data both from Mernissi's thoughts, women in the Indonesian cabinet and drawing conclusions.

Discussion

Biography of Fatima Mernissi

Mernissi is a Professor of sociology at Muhammad V Rabat University. She was born in the Northern Moroccan city of Fez in 1940 and died on November 30, 2015. Mernissi comes from a middle-class family and lives in harem culture. The harem is a separate part of

¹³ Wahyu Wibowo, *Cara Menulis Artikel Ilmiah* (Jakarta: Buku Kompas, 2011).

¹⁴ Mernissi.

¹⁵ Sugiyono, *Metodologi Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan Re&D.* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2021).

the house exclusively for women. Her education began at the Qur'anic school, then junior high school at the National School and high school at an all-girls school (an institution funded by the French Government). And in adolescence, Mernissi was active in the movement against French Colonialism, to seize National independence.¹⁶

Furthermore, he continued his studies at Muhammad V Rabat University with a field of Sociology and Politics. Mernissi briefly worked in Paris as a journalist. Furthermore, Mernissi continued in the United States for doctoral education, so in 1973 he received a Ph.D in Sociology from Brandeis University. After that, Mernissi worked at the Department of Sociology of Muhammad V University in Rabat, Morocco. Mernissi has also been a VIP guest as a visiting professor at Harvard University and the University of California as a thinker of Muslim feminism in the Arab world. Mernissi is also famous in various countries both his homeland and abroad, especially France.¹⁷ In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Mernissi conducted sociological research for UNESCO, ILO and Moroccan authorities. In 1981-1995, he developed his career as a senior researcher at IURS. In 2003, Mernissi was awarded the Prince of Asturias Award.¹⁸

¹⁶ Siti Zubaidah and M Ag, *Pemikiran Fatima Mernissi Tentang Kedudukan Perempuan Dalam Islam*, 1st edn (Medan: CV. Widya Puspita, 2018), 19-20.

¹⁷ Zubaidah and Ag, 20.

Because of Mernissi's fame as a scientist, it is not surprising that she worked a lot in writings related to women, thus making the work famous and widely translated in any language such as: Indonesian, English, Dutch, Japanese etc. Although her early language was mostly French Among some of her works that are phenomenal in the world include: *The Veil and the Male Elite* (1987), *Beyond The Veil Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (1975), *Islam and Democracy: Fear of The Modern World* (1992), *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (1993), *Women in Islam: In Historical Theological Enquiry* (1991), and *Dreams of Trespass Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (1994).

Fatima Mernissi's Thoughts on Women's Leadership

1. Women and Men Have Equal Rights in Leadership

Mernissi's thoughts on women's equality are based on the Qur'an, Hadith, and the thoughts of Muslim figures. According to Mernissi, egalitarian messages are not values imported from the West, because equality or equality is actually the main teachings in Islam.¹⁹ Mernissi began her study of women's equality by stating that men and women are biologically different, so that their intellectual and spiritual levels are equal or equal.²⁰

¹⁸ Elya Munfarida, 'Perempuan Dalam Tafsir Fatima Mernissi', 1.40 (2016), 24.

¹⁹ Mernissi.

²⁰ Suteja Wira and others, 'Partisipasi Politik Kaum Perempuan Berdasarkan Pandangan Fatima

Mernissi also mentioned um Salamah's political question to the Prophet about the meanings of revelation "*how come,*" she asked the Prophet "*Why are only men mentioned in the Qur'an, while we are not?*". Then Allah replied by sending down a revelation in Sura al-Ahzab Verse 35. God clearly refers to the two sexes as equal, and it is not the gender that determines their reward, but their faith and obedience to God.²¹

In addition, Fatima Mernissi also criticized the hadith related to this. Popular hadiths that are used as a reason to exclude women from politics, are:

لن يفلح قوم ولو أمرهم امرأة

"A person who leave their affairs to a woman will not obtain welfare",
(*Sahih Bukhari*).

According to Yusuf al-Qaradhawi, the hadith was Shahih, so it was agreed to be accepted by scholars and no one had denounced it at that time. Therefore, Fatima Mernissi criticized the hadith in terms of sanad. He found that (1) Abu Bakrah as the narrator of this hadith is difficult to trace regarding his family tree, especially his father, is unclear so that it can be said to be "*cut off*", considering that he was originally a slave who was later freed and joined the struggle with the

Muslims.²² (2) Abu Bakrah was also sentenced to qazaf, because in the time of the caliph Umar ibn Khattab he could not prove the charge of his adultery with al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah. Mernissi commented that in Imam Maliki's opinion, Abu Bakrah should have been removed because the requirement of a source of Hadith is not enough to be contemporary with the Messenger of Allah, but morals are the main criteria.²³ (3) And judging from the historical context, why Abu Bakrah published the hadith after knowing Aisha suffered a war defeat, when the hadith was about 25 years ago.²⁴

2. Women Can Compete in Public Space

During the time of Prophet Sulayman (AS), Sulayman once ordered Queen Balqis to convert to Islam by reciting the shahada, and also told her to eliminate her stubbornness and arrogance so that the Queen immediately held a meeting and deliberation with the royal officials:

"He (*Balqis*) said, 'O dignitaries! Give me consideration in my cause (*this*). I never decide a matter before you are in (*my*) assembly.' They answered, 'We have tremendous strength and courage (*to fight*), but the decision is yours; then consider what you will command' (Q.S. an-Naml: 32-33).

Mernissi Dan Yusuf Qardhawi, *Ayy-Syari 'Ab*, 21.1 (2019), 111.

²¹ Mernissi, 149-150.

²² Mernissi, 66.

²³ Zubaidah and Ag.

²⁴ M. Rusydi, 'Perempuan Di Hadapan Tuhan', *An-Nisa*, 7 (2012), 81.

And finally Queen Balqis decided to renounce her idolatry by embracing the religion brought by Prophet Solomon:

"He (Balqis) said, "O my Lord, indeed, I have done evil to myself and I surrender with Solomon to Allah the Lord of hosts" (Q.S. an-Naml: 40).

Mernissi asserted that the Qur'an has explained the figure of Queen Balqis as the ruler of Saba who was famous for guiding her justly about her power by telling her people to follow the teachings of Prophet Sulayman (AS). Therefore, this illustrates that women also have a positive and good impression when they become the Head of State they lead.²⁵ And from this it becomes clear that women are able to take an active role in politics in a country and can also carry out the mandate as well as possible.

In the book *The Veil and the Male Elite*, Mernissi describes the figure of Siti Khadija (Wife of the Prophet Saw) who is famous for being a highly intellectual, active, and capable woman in various ways so that she can compete with active and intellectual men. In addition, Khadija was also known as a high thinker in the political and domestic public spheres, so that she was not only the wife and advisor of the Prophet but also successful as a famous person in the field of commerce in her time.²⁶ Another popular woman was Aisha,

the wife of the Prophet who was so famous for her intelligence that she became one of the main references related to the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and her great courage and influence could lead a male-dominated army against the forces of Caliph Ali ibn abi Talib.²⁷

In addition, Mernissi also revealed several examples of Muslim women or women who participated in the world of government politics and became just and active people as heads of government or queens such as: Shajarat at Dur (Cairo), Kutlugh Khatun (Mongol Dynasty), Radiyah (Delhi), Sultana Khaatim (Central Asia), and Padishah (Mongol Dynasty). While there are also those who play a role behind it or are said to be supporters in the government who are equal to important officials in making political decisions such as: Mother of al-Hadi, Khayzuran wife of Caliph al Mahdi, and Harun al-Rashid (Daulah banu Abbasiyah).²⁸

Fatima Mernissi's Thoughts in the context of 21st Century Indonesian Women Leaders

In Indonesia, the progress of women in entering the government parliament has begun to be very visible. This began when the first female president in Indonesia, Megawati Soekarno Putri, was born. In her leadership,

²⁵ Zubaidah and Ag, 85.

²⁶ Siti Yumnah, 'PEMIKIRAN FATIMA MERNISSI TENTANG PENDIDIKAN', 10.01 (2021), 35-36.

²⁷ Zubaidah and Ag, 87.

²⁸ Anisatun Muthi'ah, 'Analisis Pemikiran Fatima Mernissi Tentang Hadis-Hadis Missogini Oleh: Anisatun Muthi'ah', *Diya' Al-Afkar*, 2.2 (2014), 82.

apart from the pros and cons of policies that occur in it, the most prominent thing for women is the beginning of women entering the government bureaucracy.

In the 21st century or precisely during the first Indonesian female president, at least some famous figures who also showed their work after there was the female president. This figure entered a lot after president Megawati was replaced with Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono who was known as the United Indonesia Cabinet. Popular names to date such as: Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Mari Elka Pangestu, Armida Alisjahbana, Puan Maharani, Ida Fauziyah, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, Tri Rismaharini. Where they are one of the women who are most widely known by the public as female figures who must be exemplified in the world of government.

Meanwhile, based on data from the entire parliament, if calculated from 2001-2024, as Juniar did research in his work, women are increasing in government.²⁹ This is evidenced by an increase from 9% (2001-2004) to 20.5% (2019-2024). This increase proves that the work of women in the Cabinet field has been increasingly visible. The following details the position of women and men in the 21st century in the Indonesian

government. The following is the explanation in the table below:

Table 1. 21st Century Indonesian Cabinet

Parliament		
Year	Woman	Man
2001 – 2004	46 (9%)	454 (91%)
2004 – 2009	65 (11.6%)	435 (87%)
2009 – 2014	101 (18%)	459 (82%)
2014 – 2019	97 (17,3%)	463 (82,7%)
2019 - 2024	118 (20,5%)	457 (79,5%)

However, even though the above has had a tremendous increase, it is still not able to meet the representation of women that has been stipulated by law. The law stipulates women's representation of at least 30% in parliament, as stated in law No. 12 article 65 paragraph (1) of 2003, Law No. 10 of 2008, Law No. 8 of 2012, and other laws. However, even though there has been an arrangement for women's representation in parliament through the Election Law above, the 30% requirement for women's representation in parliament has not been achieved until the 2021-2024 period.³⁰

From this, historically this is actually not far from the thoughts of Fatima Mernissi who became one of the female public figures in fighting for justice together. This is because her work and criticism, especially related to women's leadership which is prohibited as hadith, become something different. Mernissi through her studies and thoughts believes that

²⁹ Umagapi.

³⁰ Nuraeni.

women are allowed to be leaders as long as it has been done fairly. Not only that, because this thought also encouraged Mernissi as a known figure in the Islamic treasury that pushed for women's freedom from western secular encouragement against women.

In addition, in her idea, Fatima Mernissi also emphasized that the Messenger of Allah with the figure of Aisha is actually not only related to romantic, but as a form of a female figure who takes part in everything. As a figure of Aisha who has been famous for her courage and influential figure in leading a large army against the troops of the group of Caliph Ali bin abi Talib. The war known as the camel war with dramatic high caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people. Fatima Mernissi in her quote referring to Sa'id al-Afghani mentioned that in the Camel War as the most accurate and conservative estimates had killed as many as 15,000 people within a few hours. Where the important thing here is not the question of war between Islam and her death, but the figure of Aisyah who showed herself to Muslims, that she can be a capable and active woman and have a big role in politics. Because if it is not a great influence, then it is impossible for a man who is much he can lead well. Where from the story, Fatima Mernissi encouraged, women follow the figure of Aisyah so that with this women can place themselves in the government both economic, social and political fields in various countries. This voice is what helps encourage changes in

the mindset of women, especially Muslim women who are not always in the house, but can also do many things outside while still keeping themselves well awake. This is one of the several figures that make Fatima Mernissi occupy the position of inspiring women in taking part in government for women in the world, including in Indonesia which has a majority of Islam.

The relationship between Fatima Mernissi and 21st century women's leadership as above shows once again that women in Indonesia have followed the role of Aisyah and several previous women who participated in the world of government. And this is what drives Fatima Mernissi's position in her thinking has a lot of influence in terms of leadership in 21st Century Indonesia. Indeed, there is no clear data regarding the influence that Fatima mernissi displays in Indonesia, but we know that women warriors in Indonesia, also follow in the footsteps of women's thoughts in the government to exist and appear as followed by some female figures in Indonesia. For example, Prof. Mufidah, who said in his lecture that:

"women in addition to the family, can also take part in the government so that the available quota related to women, which is 30%, can be met. So not only men play a role, but women too" (12/04/2023).

Conclusion

Therefore, it can be concluded that 1) Fatima Mernissi's thoughts regarding women being allowed to do many things outside including politics and government stem from her criticism of the prohibition of women in the misogyny hadith narrated by Abu Bakrah. According to him, even though the hadith is not appropriate for several reasons, so that women are allowed to be equal with men in competing for government activities including occupying parliaments in various regions. This also refers to the wife of the Prophet Aisha and several female leaders who were able to give their best in their positions. 2) Fatima Mernissi's position in 21st century women's leadership is as a public figure thinker modeled by women. And because of this, through her thoughts and works, especially related to ancient Islamic women who provide an overview to play an active role in all fields, this thought is what encourages Muslim women, including in Indonesia, to begin to actively and intensively occupy important positions in the government parliament. So from the beginning of the 21st century to 2001 to 2024 this continues to rise from 9% to 20.5%. Some examples of these women are: Khofifah Indar Parawansa, Megawati Soekarno Putri, Tri Rismaharini, Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Puan Maharani, Ida Fauziyah, etc.

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