



Analysis of Paradigm Shift Toward The Transformation of Nahdlatul Ulama's Political Orientation

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Article History	Abstract
Received April 09, 2023	<p><i>This article discusses the process of paradigm shift of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)'s national politics orientation. Considering Thomas S. Kuhn's paradigm shift concept, particularly the revolutionary stages, there was a separation of the national political transformation period in NU. A paradigm shift which opens awareness in understanding the science does only happens in established objectivity. The product of ijthad, due to the deposition of knowledge, always has natural subjectivity with what they believe as the truth. Thus, innovative movements in finding alternative linear formulations that can always form dialogue with the times must always be carried out. Through literary work, this article illustrates that demarcation boundaries of the occurrence of NU's national political shift characterized by the pre-normal phase, normal phase, anomaly-crisis phase, and new-normal phase. Utilizing Kuhn's perspective as tool of analysis, this study finds out that there are a few stages of paradigm shift experienced by NU. NU's struggles marked the pre-normal phase as an embryo before finally becoming an organization. The birth and development of NU marked the intermediate phase as a socio-political-religious organization on the track of the struggle. The anomaly-crisis phase occurred when NU metamorphosed into a political party, involved in interests, and strayed from its goals. The new-normal phase was marked by NU's return to Khittah in 1926, which meant returning to a social-religious-based organization. NU has returned to the struggle to fill and maintain independence through national politics in this phase.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Nahdlatul Ulama; National Politics; Paradigm; Ahlussunnah wal jama'ah</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The 27th Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Muktamar (congress) which took place in Situbondo in 1984 was a turning point in the history of NU. It was marked as the moment of NU's returning to its initial orientation, the

Khittah of 1926. According to Ulum (2002), Khittah in this case can be defined as the basic establishment line, the struggle and the personality of Nahdlatul Ulama, personally and institutionally (Abdullah 2011). This return means that NU declared itself to be institutionally out of the arena of practical



politics and no longer active as a political party. NU focuses on social activities, education, health, and others based on its original orientation (Arifin, Mahfudh, Sofwan et al. 1989).

The decision to return to *Khittah of 1926*, in many ways, not only led NU to leave the practical political arena, but also, on a broader scale, the *Khittah of 1926* has implications for the dominance of socio-cultural activities and the proliferation of intellectual discourse among its younger generation. This situation also arouses their awareness to understand new social facts and phenomena critically-transformatively. The progressiveness of their intellectual discourse is, in turn, able to transcend and marginalize the traditionalist paradigm of Mazhabiyah (Djohan 2010, Ida 2004, Rumadi 2008).

During its involvement in social and religious activities based on the aim of returning to the *Khittah of 1926*, NU was still unofficially being participated in practical politics through the participation of its members as part of political parties and became figures from NU in political arena. Those figures fought for the aspirations and interests of NU members pragmatically in the sense that they strive as much as possible to get political concessions from the parties with whom they interact, so that the religious and social interests that concern NU can be accommodated (Arifin et al. 1989).

NU's return to the 1926 *Khittah* is equivalent to what Thomas S. Kuhn calls "a shifting paradigm" which is the process of shifting perceptions and perspectives regarding a particular scientific object from old views to new views, or from old truths to new truths (Hedesan and Tandler 2017, Parker 2018, Sahbana 2022). This turning point is related to the dynamics of NU's political orientation that is very interesting to analyse. On the one hand, its tradition requires stability, but on the other hand, its political views are dynamic (Jamil 2007). This can be observed from the epistemological roots of the political paradigm shift that caused its orientation to

change. 'How it can happen,' 'What causes it,' and 'What ultimate goals are desired' are epistemological and axiological questions that need to be answered through research work.

This research aims to highlight what are the cause of NU's changing orientation as an institution from politics-oriented to be its original way of movement based on *Khittah of 1926*. Also, this research wants to discuss on how this paradigm shift being analysed through the perspective of Thomas Kuhn's shifting paradigm.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There were some studies about Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) that relate to *Khittah 1926*. *Khittah of 1926* has been an interesting topic for the scholars since it was a remarkable occasion in the history of NU. Most of them are elaborated from the perspective of politics. It is because the turning back to *Khittah* event was really influenced on how NU plays its role institutionally in political arena.

Masyhuri (2016) studied how NU develops its paradigm on the politics of liberation. This historical approach study was strongly connected to the development of NU's movements in a few things like growing the numbers of educational institution, strengthening its religious position and power, and increasing its frequency of social and economic movements without being interfered by political interests (Masyhuri 2016).

Hambali Rasidi (1999) in his study entitled "A Study of Thought about NU's Political Movement Patterns after Turning Back to *Khittah 1926*". Rasidi stated that NU's political and movement orientation has been an interesting point to highlight by the scholars. Some of them said that NU would not be involved in any kind of political movement (both practical ideological) after turning back to *Khittah*. While others stated that perhaps NU would still be involved ideologically in the political arena, not practical politics (Rasidi 1999).

Muhammad Khaerul Hadi elaborated

that NU was born as a socio-religious organization and ever being involved too close to the political arena. This study tried to explore the motives of NU's decision to go back to *Khittah 1926*. He concluded that this decision was relevant to overcome problems that appeared inside NU (Hadi 2018).

Another historical-approach study was about NU's political paradigm after turning back to *Khittah 1926* and analyzed from Islamic science view by Zainuri (2021). He stated that NU's political view is strongly influenced by *fiqh siyasah* and used for the fight against colonialism. It is closely related to social and public orientation (Zainuri 2021).

There are also studies from researchers outside Indonesia, namely Bush (2018). His research showed that the third generation, most of NU's founders' descendants, criticized NU's political security participation as unbalanced with its social and cultural goals. They highlight four fundamental issues (1) NU based all policy on political interests; (2) NU's long tenure as a political party had resulted in severe ethical and moral deterioration; (3) the ulama no longer occupied a supreme position within NU; and (4) because it diverted resources and energy to party politics, NU no longer had a strong grasp on the fields that had formerly been its primary domain—religious education, social development, and others (Bush 2018).

In relation to the changing paradigm research, as this study is talking about shifting paradigm, there were two studies conducted that quite close to our topic. The first is an article by Ishomuddin and Abidah. It was stated in the article that NU's involvement in practical politics field was criticized by some of NU's community. They considered that practical politics was not the only solution to support to what people wanted. This criticism led to the struggle to the turning back to *Khittah 1926*. Ishomuddin and Abidah brought the topic using qualitative approach and collected the data by observing and interviewing (Abidah and Ishomuddin 2019). This study is relevant to our topic since it talked

about how the paradigm changed but limited to the elaboration of NU's paradigm changing from subjective reality. Whereas our study is trying to analyze the changing paradigm process philosophically from Thomas Kuhn's perspective.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Transformation: A Paradigm Shift

Paradigm discussions in this study centres on Thomas Kuhn's thought. Scientific paradigms combine theoretical principles with worldviews. In his magnum opus "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions," Kuhn defines paradigm as a society's entire set of beliefs, values, techniques, and behaviors. Second, paradigms indicate concrete puzzle solving, which can be used as a model to solve every day scientific puzzles (Kuhn 1996).

However, in essence, Kuhn defines *paradigm* as shared by scientific community members, and the scientific community is people with a shared paradigm consensus (Kuhn 1996). Paradigms are "an overall system of beliefs, attitudes, and practices shared across the scientific community." Paradigms as worldviews promote moral development and continuity. In this case, perspective is the same as worldview, which is a way of seeing reality that includes a belief system about the human self, reality, and existence (Nurkhalis 2012).

Alparslan Açıkgenc says worldview underpins all human behavior, including scientific activity. Worldviews usually have five conceptual frameworks: science, the cosmos, humans, life, and morality (Acikgenc 1996). Paradigms that are conceptualized as worldviews are influenced by rules that are considered authentic by humans, considered authentic by reality, and considered authentic by other entities (Nurkhalis 2012).

Kuhn said science develops in a revolutionary way, not cumulative-evolutionary, as proposed by positivism or falsification, as Popper said. According to him, science develops non-cumulative through

certain stages, through scientific revolutions due to paradigm shifts (Ulya and Abid 2015). Hierarchically, the stages of science development, according to Kuhn, can be summarized as follows (Jena 2012):

First is the pre-paradigm phase. This phase is referred to as a phase in which science is still immature and relatively unorganized. This phase takes quite a long time, and the main feature of this phase is characterized by total disputes and continuous debates about fundamental issues so that there is no resolution regarding research based on expertise (Chalmers 1983).

In addition to the lack of resolution, scholarly research based on this particular expertise was conducted without any particular direction or purpose. The emergence of competing and mutually negating schools of thought, as well as differences in conception around the fundamental problems of the discipline and what criteria should be used to evaluate theories, are other features of the pre-paradigm phase. In addition, the pre-paradigm phase is also characterized by the absence of serious and systematic efforts to evaluate various theories (Jena 2012). Nothing can be considered science; knowledge still needs to be answered, and something meaningful has yet to be discovered (Nurkhalis 2012).

Second, the typical science phase. To become a science, disciplines must reach a consensus under a particular paradigm's auspices. Among the various sciences that developed in the pre-paradigm phase, one school of thought or theory will emerge that dominates other theoretical or scientific disciplines. Other schools or schools of thought are oriented towards and recognize the superiority of the dominant school or school of thought. It is considered dominant because it promises more accurate problem-solving and a more advanced future of research, so it is more dominant than its competitors (Jena 2012).

Third, the anomaly and crisis phase. This phase is also called the emergence of extraordinary science. In this phase, science, both in the example of scientific practice

(exemplar) and disciplinary matrices, can no longer be relied upon in solving emerging problems. Moreover, the emergence of crucial and unsolvable problems makes scientists were confused and created a crisis in the scientific community (Jena 2012). They also began to question the prevailing paradigm so far.

Fourth, the phase of the emergence of a new paradigm. Amid competition in times of anomaly and crisis, one school of thought that emerges will be able to overcome the problems of science, which can then generalize and promise a better future of scientific research. It is at this point that extraordinary science returns to normal science. Kuhn called this round a 'non-cumulative developmental episode in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by a new, conflicting (more compatible) paradigm' (Kuhn 1996). It is considered non-cumulative because science will continuously transform, not improvise with various evolutions (Nurkhalis 2012).

A *scientific revolution* is a phase in which science undergoes a paradigm shift due to the supremacy of novelty in scientific discovery. Thus, no paradigm is perfect and free from anomalies; consequently, science must contain a way to break out of one paradigm into another better paradigm, which is the revolution's function (Nurkhalis 2012). This paradigm revolution consists of two types: major and minor. Significant revolutions are like the shift from geocentric to heliocentric, while minor revolutions are like the discovery of X-rays or oxygen. However, both have the same structure to give rise to a new paradigm that successfully overcomes anomalies in times of crisis (Marcum 2005).

The Early History of Nahdlatul Ulama

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was born on January 31, 1926 AD, coinciding with 16 Rajab 1344 H in Kertopaten, Surabaya. An organization founded by the Ulama which literally means 'the awakening of the Ulama' or '*kebangkitan para ulama*' (Anam 2010). In the beginning, the gathering of prominent Ulama in Kertopaten, Surabaya, at the house of KH.

Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, an *ulama*, activist, and intellectual supported this impression (Jamil 2007).

History recorded, Nahdlatul Ulama is one of the organizations that became the founding fathers and contributed to the establishment of the Indonesian state (Usman 2018).

This organization has a moral and political interest in upholding Pancasila as a national ideology and unity in diversity (*bhineka tunggal ika*), a crucial foundation for living together amid Indonesia's diverse cultures, faiths, and ethnic groupings (Davidson 2001). One of these endeavors is to educate the citizens to love their country or *Hubbul Wathon* (Hidayatullah 2012, Nurhajarini 2018). as well as taking preventive and corrective actions against radical Islamic groups, scripturalists, intolerant, and even Shiites who are considered a threat to the state (Kayane 2020).

According to Istiyani & Wibowo (2020) Nahdlatul Ulama religious views are guided by *manhaj fikrah nahdhiyah* (the Nahdlatul Ulama method of reasoning) which has been used by Nahdlatul Ulama in answering religious and plural Indonesian society issues with the following characteristics with *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *Islahiyah* (improvement), *Tathawwuniyah* (Dynamic), and *Manhajiyah* (Methodology). Which is based on the four guiding principles: (1) *ruh al-tadayun* (the spirit of religion that is understood, studied, and practiced); (2) *ruh al-Wathaniyah* (the spirit of love for the motherland); (3) *ruh al- -Ta'addudiyah* (the spirit of respecting differences); and (4) *ruh al-Insaniyah* (the spirit of humanity) (Gunaji 2009).

RESEARCH METHOD

This literature study employed qualitative approach in the process of data collection and data analysis. For collecting data, authors use document analysis method. The data sources are texts like books related to

the discussion of Nahdlatul Ulama and Khittah of 1926, also some journal articles. Documents like journal articles, books or perhaps personal notes could be the sources of data (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Mason 2002). In this study, the documents used were limited to books, journal articles, and NU's congress results related to the topic of Nahdlatul Ulama's political orientation.

From these data sources, researchers examined and interpreted the information related to the changing orientation of NU's political view, especially about Khittah of 1926. After collecting the data, researchers analyzed using interpretive methods to understand the process of paradigm shift of political orientation in Nahdlatul Ulama.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Kuhn's view could be contextualized to NU's national political development. This was divided into a four-phase revolution. First, researchers compare the pre-paradigm phase to the emergence of NU in response to Islamic group turmoil, Indonesian situations, and global conditions. After the Indonesian independence, NU and other organizations have matured culturally and Islamically, similar to the average science phase. Unlike its early spirit, which was initiated by theological discourse of defense of other groups, which caused conflict, everything goes according to its portion.

The anomaly and crisis phase resembles NU's direction and goal-orientation chaos. An Islamic mass-based organization for Ulama to serve rural communities and traditionalist Muslims became involved in politics.

The Upheaval of Nahdlatul Ulama's National Politics

NU protected traditional Islamic society's cultural-theological assets and freed the homeland from Dutch colonialism (Muhammad 2010). Thus, establishing NU for the Indonesian nation and Muslims, especially as a traditional base, is a must. The author

believes mapping NU's changing national political direction by period is urgent. This is crucial to distinguishing NU's national political paradigm shift as a result of its contact with the domestic political constellation, social conditions, and theological doctrine.

The upheaval of NU's national politics has five phases if observed historically:

First, The Pioneering Phase; Promoting Independence Politics (1926-1952). Since NU was founded on January 31, 1926, its founders have focused on socializing NU to the community. NU socialized well with the community. Because NU has a broad *Pesantren* network beyond Java also network based on the connections between Kiai. The *silaturrahim* network mobilises established Kiai networking.

Martin noted that NU's early pioneering period until 1942 was characterized by an unusually rapid increase in followers and geographical expansion. NU members were not systematically registered. Estimates of their numbers also fluctuated greatly. By the mid-1930s, around 400 Kiai were existing members of the NU and the total number of followers was estimated at 67,000 (Van Bruinessen 1994). This proposition is evidenced by every NU Mukhtar which experiences rapid growth from year to year. Under the authority and charisma of Hadhratus Syaikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and the gentle touch of KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, NU managed to develop organizational wings in almost all regions of Nusantara (Anam 2010). Even Aboebakar Atjeh said, at the end of the Dutch colonialism period, the number of NU organization branches throughout the archipelago had reached 120 branches (Jamil 2007).

Apart from the charisma of *Hadhratus Shaykh*, there were strategic steps taken by the scholars when expanding the organization. Right at the time of the third NU Congress, NU formed '*Lajnatun Nashihin*', a kind of propaganda commission with a special mission to attract public sympathy for NU as well as a call to establish branches in their respective regions, especially in Java and Madura. In this

case, '*Lajnatun Nashihin*' consisted of 9 members, namely: KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, KH. Bishri Syamsuri, KH. R. Asnawi Kudus, KH. Ma'shum, KH. Mas Alwi, KH. Musta'in, KH. Wahab Chasbullah, KH. Abdul Halim and the progressive young figure KH. Abdullah Ubaid. This commission proved successful in mobilizing community solidarity to become NU members (Anam 2010).

The Kiai also promoted NU as an Islamic organization with the *ahlussunnah wal-jamaah* principle through economic, social, educational, and Islamic preaching programmes. The Kiai increased the educational area and branches of KH. Wahab Chasbullah's two madrasas, '*Nahdlatul Wathan*' and '*Tashwirul Afkar*'. NU published several mass media to make NU content accessible during this pioneering period. '*Swara Nahdlatul Oelama*', '*Oetoesan*', and '*Berita*' were popular magazines at the time (Jamil 2007). Since NU's establishment, the Ulama have recognized mass media's role in *da'wah* beyond the podium.

In the societal field, to strengthen relations with NU residents, the Kiai held regular meetings every Friday at all levels, from the center to the branches. While in the economic field, in order to advance the economy of NU residents, a one-stop cooperative was established. In 1929, '*Cooperatie Kaum Muslimin*' was established in Surabaya, a business association pioneered by KH. Abdul Halim.

When NU was able to show itself as a strong community organization that spread across various islands of the Nusantara archipelago, the next important program was to establish communication and consolidation with NU's external parties, both from among Islamic organizations such as Sarekat Islam, Muhammadiyah and Persis, as well as with those who identified themselves as nationalist groups.

As a manifestation of their sincere intention to reconnect with fellow Islamic organizations that had experienced estrangement, on September 18-21, 1937, two

NU figures named KH. Achmad Dahlan (different from Ahmad Dahlan the founder of Muhammadiyah) and KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah together with KH. Mas Mansur (Muhammadiyah) and Wondoamiseno (PSII) spearheaded the establishment of the Indonesian Islamic Assembly A'la or *Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia* (MIAI) whose formation was held at *Pesantren* Kebon dalem, Surabaya, where KH. Achmad Dahlan lived (Jamil 2007).

KH. Hasyim Asy'ari was crucial to MIAI's founding. Before the MIAI, Kiai Hasyim urged Muslims to unite against "outside" threats to Islam. KH Achmad Dahlan and KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, MIAI initiators, followed the call. Many Islamic organizations joined the MIAI quickly. Muhammadiyah, Al-Irsyad, PSII, Al-Khairiyah Surabaya, Persis, Jong Islamiten Bond, Persatuan Ulama Majalengka, Hidayatul Islamiyah Banyuwangi, and others joined.

At that time, MIAI was an important union of Islamic organizations that advanced Islam and controlled the government. MIAI's socio-political work extended internationally. KH. Abdul Wahid Hasyim, who later became Plenary Council Chairman, led MIAI to great success. This period was also encouraging for NU. NU autonomous bodies addressed NU citizens and NU issues. The education focused Ma'arif NU Institution was founded in 1938. In the same year, the 'Nahdlatol Ulama section Moeslimat (NOM)' (now NU Muslimat) was founded to address women's issues.

Another issue that was also important for NU before independence was determining candidates for national leadership. At the 15th NU Congress in 1940 in Surabaya, a secret meeting was held which was only attended by 11 NU leaders and chaired by KH. Mahfudh Siddiq (Chairman of NU Tanfidziah). The results of the meeting decided to elect Ir. Soekarno as president and Drs. Mohammad Hatta as vice president, these two figures were considered the right figures to lead the Indonesian nation after independence (Jamil 2007).

NU had many problems after the Dutch

returned home and Japan took over in March 1942. During the Japanese era, Nahdlatul Ulama, which was often controlled by the Dutch, became the object of mobilization by the Japanese (Hidayatullah 2012). However, Japan also employs oppressive measures against Nahdlatul Ulama, prohibiting the teaching of any foreign languages in schools, including Arabic, and requiring everyone to bow in the direction of the imperial palace to honor Japanese emperor (Umam 2014).

During this time, NU leaders like KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Mahfudh Shiddiq were imprisoned for mobilizing mass forces to fight 'old brothers' during this time. Japan's carelessness in imprisoning NU leaders turned sympathetic NU citizens antipathetic. They formed Hizbullah and Sabilillah, a jihad army led by NU figures like KH Wahib Wahab, KH Saefuddin Zuhri, KH Masjkur, and others (Fadli and Miftahuddin 2019).

On the other hand, NU's leading young figure, KH Wahid Hasyim, was constantly in contact with nationalist leaders to urge the Japanese military government to immediately realize the promise of independence that had been spoken. The struggle bore sweet fruit, the dramatic moment occurred on April 29, 1945, with the formation of the Indonesian Independence Preparation Investigation Board (BPUPKI) or in Japanese called '*Dokuritsu Zyunbi Tyoosakai*' which consisted of 62 members. KH Wahid Hasyim himself participated in formulating the State Constitution including in the 'group of nine' who later put his signature in the Jakarta Charter (Jamil 2007).

NU indirectly formed the Indonesian Muslim Shura Council (Masyumi) in October 1943 to unite Muslims across organizations during the Japanese occupation for mobilize the support (Rahman 2017; Siregar 2008). MIAI was dissolved when Masyumi became an Islamic federation. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari became Masyumi's leader. NU, Islamic organizations, and nationalist leaders participated in socio-political activities towards independence through Masyumi.

During the Japanese occupation era, NU activities focused on religion and nation independence, but during the revolutionary period (1945-1949), they focused on independence. Thus, when the Allied forces (NICA) were about to replace the Japanese, NU immediately gathered its Java-Madura consuls to decide its position. On October 21–22, 1945, NU Headquarters in Bubutan, Surabaya hosted the meeting. KH Hasyim Asy'ari's meeting produced a "*Jihad Resolution*" that required all Muslim citizens to fight the invaders to defend independence. The Jihad Resolution then inspired Bung Tomo to raise the war on November 10, 1945, which is currently commemorated as Heroes' Day (Ahmad 2022, Heriyanto 2017, Makinudin 2018, Saputra 2019).

Another important event that occurred within NU after independence was the organization's departure from Masyumi. The statement of leaving Masyumi was decided during the 18th NU Congress in Jakarta in May 1950. In addition to this decision, the Council also appointed KH Wahab Chasbullah as Rais Am (no longer Rais Akbar) after the death of KH Hasyim Asy'ari in 1947 (Jamil 2007). But according to Madinier (2015) even though NU, which is known as a meeting point for traditionalists, has left, a few small traditionalist and NU Cadres itself organizations remained within the party's ranks (Madinier 2015).

This was the end of NU's journey as a socio-religious-based Islamic organization before it was transformed into a political party in 1952 (Mukminin and Sumarno 2015). The background of the cause will be explained in the next section (Anwar 2020, Barton, Yilmaz and Morieson 2021, Hidayat 2022, Madinier and Feillard 2014).

Second, Institutional Conversion Phase; New Path of Electoral Politics (1952-1983). NU's history as a socio-religious Islamic organization promoting independence and fighting colonialism ended in 1952. NU became a political party at the April 1952 NU Congress in Palembang. According to many NU

chroniclers, NU left the Masyumi party because it did not accept NU's ideas and suggestions. NU officials also felt 'bullied' by non-NU Masyumi elites, particularly modernists and western-educated ones. NU's political work should be considered as a rural Islamic organization.

This fact is also reinforced by a number of data that reveal that there is a stereotypical attitude of Masyumi's political elite towards NU. As Bruinessen explains, after independence, the NU's role in political life was reduced to the Religious Affairs Department after previously playing a role in the struggle to maintain independence. This was painful for NU, which felt it deserved more because of its active role during the revolution. However, NU leaders were deemed not to have the skills and education level to qualify to become Ministers in other Departments (Van Bruinessen 1994). NU leaders were simply considered -to borrow Feith's term- 'mass mobilizers', not 'administrators'. Moreover, Hizbullah ranks who had fought in the revolution were more likely to be deactivated in the early 1950s than those incorporated into regular army units.

In 1951, the Department of Religious Affairs, which at the time was the only governmental body that claimed to be the seat of NU power, was also forced to be acquired by the hegemony of the Masyumi elite. KH Wahid Hasyim, who had served as Minister of State during the revolutionary period, was involved in horizontal conflict with Mohammad Natsir, a reformist politician with deep religious knowledge and a Persis figure from West Sumatra.

This situation was further aggravated by serious problems concerning the transportation of Hajj funds, KH. Wahid Hasyim, the minister in charge at the time, was accused of not taking care of it properly or something worse than that. Not only the opposition, but even members of his own party, the Natsir faction of Masyumi, asked KH. Wahid Hasyim to resign, although the Sukiman faction, a Javanese modernist, continued to support him. KH. Wahid Hasyim, not wanting

to be a source of conflict within Masyumi, declared that he did not want to be a minister anymore (Van Bruinessen 1994).

The Masyumi elites rejected KH Wahab Chasbullah's request to keep NU in charge of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which capped these issues. Especially the Natsir faction, which had always opposed it. The board gave it to Wilopo, the new Prime Minister, to choose a replacement for KH. Wahid Hasyim. Wilopo then selected Muhammadiyah Minister of Religion Faqih Usman. Two days later, PBNU left Masyumi. NU confirmed its Masyumi departure at the Mukhtar in Palembang that month. NU became a political party months later (Van Bruinessen 1994). From Bruinessen's work and Deliar Noer's "Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia 1900-1942," NU's withdrawal from Masyumi is more comprehensive and makes NU feel more hurt by Masyumi leaders' insults.

NU's withdrawal from Masyumi was partly due to its loss of its Ministry of Religious Affairs position, both ideologically and pragmatically. The NU's mass support, which had helped win independence, was disproportionate to its votes for Masyumi. The NU left Masyumi and became an independent political party for these reasons.

The NU has fully embraced 'power politics' since becoming a political party. NU leaders at all levels still think of practical politics, even though New Order policies limit political parties. The 'power politics' period had two phases: NU's independence (1952-1971) and its support of PPP (1971-1983). NU's transformation from a socio-religious organization to a political party inevitably led to various assumptions and prejudices, such as that NU was too opportunistic and only interested in power, or that NU's cadres were political flexible (Jamil 2007).

NU's frequent incorporation into Bung Karno's government also weakened Masyumi. NU follows Sunni political doctrine that political activity must be close to the ruler. NU's political flexibility shows this. NU joined the NASAKOM coalition-led Ali

Sostroamidjojo Cabinet in July 1953. NU was Minister of Religion, Agriculture, and Deputy Prime Minister (Noor 1994).

NU developed political power. In 1955, the NU party went from 8 seats in parliament to 45 seats with 18.4% of all valid votes. Politically, NU and the Soekarno regime were close. They defended each other during political power struggles. The 1954 Alim Ulama Conference in Cipanas defended Soekarno. The conference under Minister of Religious Affairs KH. Masjkur appointed Soekarno and the government as 'Waliyul Amri adh-Dharuri Bisy-Syaukah' to defend the government's legitimacy when a number of Islamic mass organizations under Masyumi's authority and influence delegitimized Soekarno politically because it was not in accordance with Islam's leadership mechanism. Muslims must obey Soekarno because he was the legitimate head of state (Van Bruinessen 2004).

NU and Soekarno's closeness continued. After the 1955 election, several regions demanded decentralization due to dissatisfaction with the central government, the PKI's growing influence, and the rise of mystical practices that made Islamic parties uneasy. Not to mention the endless state-foundation debate. This shaped the young republic's politics. President Soekarno's July 5, 1959, Presidential Decree dissolved Parliament (*Majelis Konstitunte*) due to political realities.

KH. Idham Cholid (Chairman of Tanfidziyah NU) and KH. Saefuddin Zuhri (Secretary General of PBNU)-easily gave Soekarno permission to dissolve Parliament after the Constituent Assembly was dissolved. In 1960, NU explicitly accepted Pancasila as the sole state principle when all political parties were required to amend their articles of association (Sitompul 1989).

NU frequently participated in Soekarno's cabinet formation as a political reward. Soekarno often defended it during NU-modernist disputes. Before and after independence, Soekarno fought to make NU the state's center. Before the New Order under General Soeharto overthrew Soekarno, NU and

him were polarized and mutually beneficial. The New Order's ability to simplify political parties eventually overwhelmed NU. In 1971, NU had to merge with PPP and become a vote bank.

NU's fusion into PPP has repeated history. The United Development Party or Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) includes Parmusi, NU, Perti, PSII, and other Islamic political parties. NU plays a major role in the PPP, but not in the executive. NU was limited in parliament. Since then, the party division has returned. The modernist group's John Naro, an Indonesian Muslim, became PPP leader. Since then, NU elites across the party have been expelled. Naro also worked to keep NU legislative candidates out of parliament. The NU felt 'bullied' again.

Naro submitted PPP candidates to the government on October 27, 1981. 29 NU candidates were at the bottom of the list, making election unlikely in favor for NU. KH. Saefuddin Zuhri (former Minister of Religious Affairs), Kiai Masjkur (Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives), Aminudin Aziz (former Ambassador and Minister), KH. Yusuf Hasyim (son of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari), H.M. Zamroni, H.M. Syah Manaf, Rahmat Mulyomiseno, Hasyim Latief, and others were removed from politics (Feillard 2008).

In addition, the New Order government also favored 'reformers' over 'traditionalists' as coalition partners. This was evidenced by the appointment of Mukti Ali as Minister of Religious Affairs and not from NU. At this stage, NU's political opponents were not only modernist groups within the PPP, but also the New Order government. NU's resistance to the New Order regime was demonstrated by several oppositional political stances, including: 1) NU opposed the 1980 Election Law which was highly discriminatory and prohibited Islamic-based parties from using Islamic symbols, such as the Kaaba image on the PPP flag; 2) NU opposed the upgrading of the Guidelines for the Cultivation and Practice of Pancasila or P4; 3) NU even rejected the 'Father of Development' title conferred on

President Soeharto (Jamil 2007).

After NU was really feeling 'frustrated', in the 1982 election the idea of returning to *Khittah* 1926 began to emerge. The idea came to mind after NU sailed without a captain after the death of KH. Bisri Syansuri as Rais Aam PBNU. An important figure in the Back to *Khittah* 1926 movement was KH. Achmad Siddiq, an intellectual Kiai from Jember. In a book entitled '*Khittah Nahdliyah*', KH. Achmad Siddiq wrote the considerations behind the idea of returning to the 1926 *Khittah*, including: 1) the increasing distance (time) between the founding generation and its successors; 2) the expansion of the field of struggle and the number of fields handled; 3) the increasingly diverse circles that join NU with different backgrounds and cultures; and 4) the decreasing role and number of founding generation Ulama in the NU structural leadership (Siddiq 1979).

Restoring NU Ulama supremacy is another reason for returning to the 1926 *Khittah*, along with moral-spiritual decline in NU leaders. Since NU became a political party, its goals have been distorted to seek power hegemony in dishonorable ways. NU elites are power-hungry. The lawsuit targeted NU elites for 'commercializing' NU into politics. For this reason, the 1926 *Khittah* was revived at the 1984 Kiai As'ad Islamic Boarding School at the 27th NU Congress in Situbondo

However, NU's transformation from a socio-religious organization to a political party contradicts the noble struggle for what was originally aspired. The arrival of non-Ulama is the main reason to return to *Khittah* of 1926. The NU's love, care, and honor have stolen the struggle's ideals. However, the goal is to build a sympathetic self-image. The organization decided to return NU to the Ulama and Muslim ummah *ahlussunnah wal jama'ah* because of this.

Third, Normalization Phase; Return to *Khittah* of 1926 (1984–1998) NU reconciled with the New Order regime and established a new leadership elite at the 1983 National Deliberation in Situbondo and 1984 Situbondo

Congress. NU changed in 1984. NU returned to *Khittah* of 1926 that year, leaving the practical political zone. NU politicians and Kiai could join any party. In that year, NU returned home to become jam'iyah diniyah, focusing on social-community issues and NU citizens' basic needs like education, economy, da'wah, and more.

Along with NU's return to *Khittah* of 1926, the organization's logo, the "Tali Jagat," changed unexpectedly. Social-intellectual activities are abundant among NU's younger generation (Bruinessen 2004). At least two groups had prepared the groundwork for redirecting NU clerics. One group of senior East Java clerics wanted to reaffirm their leadership role in NU and emphasize its religious nature. The group of KH Yusuf Hasyim (son of KH Hasyim Asy'ari) also opposed dividing NU and PPP.

Young NU clerics wanted NU to be more relevant to its supporters' economic, social, and religious needs (syu'un ijtimayah). This second group won the battle to reestablish NU's "Original *Khittah*," which its founders agreed included education (*ma'arif*), social welfare (*mabarrat*), religious propagation (*dakwah*), and economy (*muamalah*) (Van Bruinessen 2004). KH Achmad Siddiq's group was supported by several clerics and young NU intellectual activists, including KH Sahal Mahfudz, Muchit Muzadi, Musthafa Bisri, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), Fahmi Saefuddin, Rozi Munir, and Masdar Farid Mas'udi.

The efforts made by NU Intellectual Ulama to return to *Khittah* 1926 are not without reason. When NU became a political party in 1952, NU's goals as stated by Greg Fealy were nothing more than temporary positional and material issues, including: 1) channeling government funds to the NU community, especially to improve educational and religious facilities, such as Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, mosques and also the construction and maintenance of social infrastructure, such as health clinics, orphanages, and meeting centers; 2) trying to

get business opportunities from the government for NU from its supporters; 3) getting positions for NU members in the bureaucracy (Fealy 2003).

NU's political goals above are fine. NU and citizen claims are always empty slogans. Since only political elites benefit. Given this, the NU Congress in Jakarta in 1959 proposed reviving *Khittah* 1926 as a socio-religious movement. The fact that NU power prioritizes personal interests over socio-religious interests, NU's main goal since its founding, is paradigmatic. NU politicians are more likely to 'play politics' to seize power by 'commercializing NU'. Unfortunately, NU political elite-controlled mainstream currents drown out the echo of *Khittah* 1926. In 1974 and 1979, the NU Congresses in Surabaya and Semarang discussed returning to *Khittah* 1926. Congress participants again rejected the idea.

There are several social contexts that support the return to *Khittah* 1926 as NU's socio-religious mainstream.

First: To counterstate hegemony, it requires massive community empowerment. In 1984, the New Order regime was superpower, and the community was violently hegemonized when the *Khittah* NU emerged in Situbondo (Nurhasim and Ridwan 2004). According to Martin Van Bruinessen, young NU activists concerned about social issues wrote a draught urging NU to return to *Khittah* 1926 and criticising state control. Criticizing the government's top-down approach and claiming that official cooperation institutions and other development have diverted funds from villages to cities (Van Bruinessen 1997).

Re-establishing NU as a socio-religious movement in *Khittah* is focused on empowering citizens, especially marginalized grassroots who are exploited and hegemonized by the state. For this reason, the community must increase their knowledge, be empowered economically and socially, and have strong marketability and bargaining power before the state, especially for state-related interests. This context influenced NU's return to *Khittah* 1926.

Second: NU's practical politics dominate. Before Returning to *Khittah* 1926, practical politics sapped NU's political energy. NU directly participated in politics as an independent party or as the PPP's largest voting supporter. As stated in the *Khittah* NU, 'The *Khittah* of Nahdlatul Ulama is also extracted from the essence of the history of its service from time to time.' This context of reflection is NU politics (Jamil 2007).

Based on Mitsuo Nakamura's historical periods, NU's history has been too political. Nakamura divides NU history into several periods: 1926-1942, when NU established a practical non-political stance; 1943-1945, when NU was forced to cooperate with Japan; 1945-1952, when NU became a special member of the Masyumi Party; 1952-1973, when NU became an independent political party; and 1973 (and later), when this situation was marked by the fusion of NU with PPP (Nakamura 1997). From these periods, NU's history has been dominated by practical political service. This long service to practical politics has abandoned NU's great work on its people's problems.

Third: the drive to empower marginalized NU residents. Implementing the first point involves advancing marginalized NU citizens. 'The Situbondo Mukhtar represents a victory for interested groups in community development, and this is reflected in the work program which contains lengthy sections on social work, economic enterprises (self-reliance work to develop villages), and improving labor conditions' (Van Bruinessen 1997). Returning to *Khittah* with social movement spirit was essential. Gus Dur claims that 'the NU people, apart from a few successful Kiai and urban politicians, are marginalized at all levels'. The NU community is the underclass, *wong ndeso*, *kaum sarungan*, and *kaum marjinal*.

Returning to the paradigm of Return to *Khittah* 1926 and rationalizing its demands is not always accepted by its members. The NU Congress in Semarang's decision to return NU to a socio-religious organization restored NU conceptually but failed operationally. Since

1926 *Khittah*'s steps and strategies haven't been addressed from the start. Thus, returning to *Khittah* is irrelevant and unworkable. Non-politician NU clerics and young intellectuals have never stopped fighting for NU to return to *Khittah* 1926. The 1984 NU Congress in Situbondo decided to return to *Khittah* as a socio-religious organization after a difficult process.

The 27th NU Congress in Situbondo rewarded the noble effort. NU established nine political *Khittah* points at the 27th NU Congress. NU has pledged to leave politics and serve the people. The points of *Khittah* NU formulated in Situbondo were then reaffirmed at the 28th NU Congress in Krapyak, Yogyakarta in 1989.

At that time, the 'Guidelines for Politics of NU Citizens' were decided, which consisted of nine points, namely:

"...1) Politics for NU implies the involvement of citizens in the life of the nation and state as a whole in accordance with Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution; 2) Politics for NU is politics with a national perspective and towards the integrity of the nation, with steps that always uphold unity and integrity to achieve common goals, namely the realization of a just and prosperous community life physically and mentally, and carried out as an act of worship towards happiness in the world and the hereafter; 3) Politics for NU is the development of the values of true independence and democracy, educating the maturity of the nation to realize rights, obligations and responsibilities to achieve common benefits; 4) Politics for NU must be carried out with morals, ethics and culture based on Pancasila; 5) Politics for NU must be carried out with religious conscience and morals, constitutional, fair, in accordance with agreed regulations and norms and can develop deliberation mechanisms in solving common problems; 6) Politics for

NU is carried out to strengthen national consensus, and is carried out in accordance with *akhlakul karimah* as a practice of *Ahlussunnah wal-jamaah* Islamic teachings; 7) Politics for NU under any pretext should not be done at the expense of common interests and divide unity; 8) Differences in political aspirations by NU residents must continue to run in an atmosphere of brotherhood, *tawadhu'* and mutual respect for each other, so that in politics unity and integrity within NU can be maintained; 9) Politics for NU requires mutual community communication in national development, to create a climate that allows the development of more independent community organizations, and is able to carry out its function as a means for the community to associate, unite aspirations and participate in development." (Jamil 2007).

The points of *Khittah* and Guidelines for NU Citizens' Politics, born at the Situbondo Congress and refined at the Krapyak Congress, show that NU has prioritized cultural politics over structural politics since 1984. NU returned to "*Khittah*" as a socio-religious movement organization.

This change is obsessed with returning NU's service to addressing socio-economic issues. With "*Khittah*" NU, NU institution will become a large and reliable socio-religious movement, affecting marginalized NU citizens in social, economic, and educational fields. NU fighters want that.

Fourth, NU's Political Passion. Since PBNU founded the National Awakening Party (PKB) and Gus Dur became president of Indonesia through Parliamentary voting, NU has returned to practical politics. NU's political party days returned. The Kiai remembered Soekarno's romance. NU's dark period under Soeharto's hegemony was also remembered. NU must return to power. Since then, NU has been 'allergic' to practical politics but more eager to work in the practical political zone

than in the populist political zone.

NU structures ignore professional pluralists at the base level. It is even sadder when they are empowered as objects to be mobilized, politicized, and exploited or *diperdayakan* (with a small "p") rather than *diberdayakan* (with a small "b"). The embarrassing exchange of deputy government officials between NU figures shows this. Hasyim Muzadi and Shalahudin Wahid are these figures. Elder Kiai interests would clash. The NU Kiai supported PKB nominee KH. Shalahudin Wahid. The NU Kiai, especially the Tanfidziyah, support KH. Hasyim Muzadi. KH. Musthafa Bisri (Gus Mus), KH. Sahal Mahfudh, and several PBNU Shuriah functionaries remained in a political free zone (Jamil 2007).

The Kiai split again on July 5, 2004, after the Megawati-Hasyim Muzadi and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Jusuf Kalla pairs were declared finalists. The cultural and structural Kiai fought over *Khittah* 1926's meaning. Cultural clerics believe that the *Khittah* initiated at the Situbondo Congress and confirmed at the NU Congress in Krapyak means NU is no longer involved in practical politics.

Structural NU supporters see *Khittah* as not sacred and not textually binding. They must place *Khittah* in a socio-historical context, when NU's position was difficult and government seats were unavailable. They added that the *Khittah* text can be interpreted according to the political and sociological climate of the time. The NU organization may be too opportunistic and only interested in power for these reasons. Thus, Islamic discourses emerged to save *Khittah* and oppose the bureaucracy's political ambitions.

The NU organization's paradigm, based on the 1926 *Khittah*, did not change after the second orientation anomaly. NU's political service in economic empowerment, education, and national harmony shows this. The withdrawal of structural NU support that does not limit citizens' political work to the PKB makes it clear. NU cadres can join any party.

Fifth, National Politics Building; Islam Wasatiyah Affirmation. The fall of the New Order regime, followed by the Reformation era, gave rise to several national political parties and allowed Indonesian religious views to diversify. Islamist parties and foreign Islamic community organizations enlivened Indonesia's religious market. Reopening old wounds over the Islamist group's crushing defeat at the PPKI meeting during the state foundation debate accompanied their emergence. They demand that Islam return to the democratic public sphere and be used as law and state. Islam must be the ideal religion and state.

In particular, descendants of Takfiri Ideology, which carries Islamism, are most vocal about Islam as religion and state. Abdul Wahhab (115-1206) revived Ibn Taimiyah's ideas and incorporated them into his works, which became the movement's ideological foundation.

However, Islamic fundamentalist movements like Hasan al-Banna's Ikhwanul Muslimin in Egypt and Abul A'la al-Mawdudi's Jami'at-i Islami in Indo-Pakistan cannot be ignored (Siregar 2008). Islamists see Islam as a complete divine system with superior structure and order, adaptable to all problems.

This Islamist group views Islam as a teaching that covers all aspects of life and is the only complete basis in government, education, legal system, culture, and economy because Islam is not just a theoretical system but must be implemented in the real world, especially in the form of an Islamic state (Tibi 2016). Unfortunately, the Islam promoted is rigid, intolerant, and harsh towards Indonesian religious practises. Indonesian Islam is syncretic, permissive, and accommodating to local traditions. They rejected Muslims because they thought they had made a big mistake by deviating from Muhammad's pure Islam. Allah only accepts pure Islam (Wijaya 2018).

Indonesia is a tolerant, pluralist nation that values local wisdom, but Takfiri ideology and Islamism threaten its sovereignty. Indonesian Islam's ability to briefly acculturate

is important. Non-violent Islam penetrated Indonesia's geographical and demographic boundaries. Indonesian Islamic civilization has a magical power to make its audience accept its ideas (Umar 2019). Its teachings reflect society's values and are reasonable. Indonesian Islam is dominated by Wasatiyah theology, which favors reconciliation in every situation. Its flexible approach and lack of threat to local powers made it popular.

Islam Wasatiyah in Indonesia may conjure up NU. NU's Wasatiyah has become mainstream moderate Islam. NU has always represented moderate Islam, pluralism, compromise, and local culture since its founding over a century ago. In conclusion, NU's style has created an archipelago Islam. NU's *Wasatiyah* Islam balances extreme scripturalism and absolute rationalism. The archipelago's culture and Islam Wasatiyah NU grow together. Islam *Wasatiyah* in Indonesia always follows four principles: *Tawassuth* (moderate), *Tawâzun* (balanced), *al-I'tidal* (fair), and *Tasâmuh* (tolerant) (Yusqi 2015).

Indonesian Islam follows the above principles. Islam is flexible, peaceful, and tolerant. NU always repeats these principles to prevent radicalism, a Wahhabi imitation teaching. NU counterattacks by redefining Islam's true meaning and contextualizing it with Indonesia's cultural subculture as the gatekeeper of Mazhabiyah traditionalism, which carries the paradigm of Wasatiyah Islam in Indonesia.

NU's institutional transformation in education began to penetrate modern education. The scientific paradigm taught is uniquely linked to da'wah goals. The Faculty of Islam Nusantara's Pilot Project at UNUSIA Jakarta shows Indonesia's commitment to Islam *Wasatiyah*. Knowledge, meaning, and flexibility triumph at the Faculty of Islam Nusantara. The faculty nurtures a new, fluid, and peaceful Islamic epistemology. That Archipelago Islam is friendly, accommodating, inclusive, and respectful of local culture. Gus Dur's '*Pribumisasi Islam*' included this step.

By mainstreaming religious moderation

into the education curriculum, NU strengthens national political consolidation and epistemological discourse. Religious moderation—a distillation of Islam Wasatiyah—is taught in schools. In an instant, Wasatiyah theology Islam has become a core value in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, a foundation for Indonesia's theology of harmony, and a topic of daily discussions, interfaith dialogues, and research at Islamic Religious Universities. The Research and Development Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs releases massive funds for output-based research projects almost every year. Mainstreaming religious moderation so it becomes a way of seeing people and institutions is the main goal.

At the praxis level, moderate religiosity is strengthened through three main strategies: socializing ideas, knowledge, and understanding of religious moderation to all levels of society; institutionalizing religious moderation into binding programs and policies; and integrating religious moderation formulation into the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI 2019). The Ministry of National Development Planning's 2020-2024 RPJMN can incorporate religious moderation into Indonesia's cultural strategy to develop human resources. So that religion's understanding doesn't conflict with national values, especially in state life.

CONCLUSION

A paradigm shift is a transformative perception. At least, this was what took place in the case of the development and struggle of NU in the national politics arena. After almost half of its movement was spent on the art of achieving power in the electoral political circle, NU as a Theo-cultural agent of the Indonesian nation, has found itself as a solid epistemological building that emphasizes itself as part of the pillars of the establishment of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Through the epistemological building of

Wasatiyah Islam, which in principle tends to fit and appreciate the culture of Indonesian society, NU's presence is not only contributing to the quantity of Islamic religious organizations in Indonesia but also playing a strategic role as a cultural biopower and asymmetrical religious practice compared to other groups.

When in pre-independence, NU's national political struggle focused on efforts to release the nation from the shackles of colonialism protection and the spread of transnational Islamic ideology, then after independence, NU's national political struggle was more directed towards competition at the electoral political level before finally ending its struggle by returning to *Khittah* of 1926 and starting the Islam Wasatiyah campaign through biocultural politics. NU's work in the national arena, in this case, further emphasizes the strength of its identity through biocultural politics that combines Islamic, State, and cultural forces simultaneously.

Tracing the dynamics of NU's national political upheaval is so interesting. On the one hand, traditionalism requires stability, but at the same time, NU's political views are dynamic. This can be seen from the history of the journey, the views of Islamic theology, and the social dynamics surrounding NU's national politics. Today, when Nahdlatul Ulama is mentioned, our memories are immediately drawn to the term NU's national politics. From the beginning, the Islam Nusantara project was echoed with a complete package of balanced values based on the principle of Islam *Wasatiyah*. Through biocultural politics that combines the power of Islam, the State, and culture simultaneously, the idea of Islam Wasatiyah has become the mainstream of the values and practices of Muslims in Indonesia amidst various threats of Takfiri ideological espionage.

Islam Wasatiyah is then translated into the idea of Moderate Religiosity (*moderasi beragama*). It has become a national priority program in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan of the Ministry of

National Development Planning/Bappenas. In this situation, NU has encouraged and strengthened biocultural politics, contributing living energy that should be the primary substance of the body of Indonesian culture. A positive energy that lives in the person of a plural society. The energy of joy, love for others, and compassion are expected to become social capital and cultural capital amid the plurality and heterogeneity of the Indonesian nation. These feelings and ideals are what our nation, Indonesia, requires.

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