



Nationalism and Religious Moderation in Indonesia: The Contribution of Nahdlatul Ulama to Nation Building Perspective of Islamic Political Thought

Abidin Nurdin^{1*} and Sri Astuti A. Samad²

¹ Universitas Malikussaleh, Aceh Utara, Indonesia.

² Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Aceh, Indonesia.

*Corresponding Author: abidin@unimal.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to discuss nationalism and religious moderation in Indonesia which is focused on the contribution of Nahdlatul Ulama to the development of the nation from the perspective of Islamic political thought. An important study in the midst of the threat of ideology and group movements that are anti-Pancasila in the name of a certain religion. The study uses a qualitative method by analyzing it with Islamic political theory. The data analyzed refers to literature studies in the form of articles, books, and various studies related to the focus of the discussion. This study concludes that NU as a religious organization has a significant contribution to nationalism and religious moderation in Indonesia. These contributions are not only at the conceptual level but also the implementation of the state and national politics, democracy and nationalism. According to NU, the relationship between religion and the state refers to the concept of hubbul watan minal iman (love for the homeland is part of faith). NU is based on the madhhab ahlusunnah wal aljamah, a very moderate school in Islam. So that based on this, NU does not have ideological constraints when it comes to dialectics about concepts; state, nationalism, democracy and Pancasila. The values developed by NU are tawazun (balance), tasamuh (tolerance), tawasut (moderate), and i'tidal (fair). In fact, NU is a leading organization in defending Pancasila as the nation's philosophy in the midst of the threat of radical ideology. In the context of Islamic political thought, NU is of the view that the relationship between religion and the state is a symbiotic relationship, which is complementary and mutually reinforcing, not formalistic, let alone secular.

Keywords: Nahdlatul Ulama, Nationalism, Religious moderation, symbiotics, Islamic politics

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is the largest Muslim population in the world, Islam that develops in the archipelago is different from that developed in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Central Asia. The teachings of Islam practiced in Indonesia are known to be harmonious, accommodating and respect for local values that have developed in society since the 7th century AD when traders and Sufis came to bring Islam to the coast of Aceh until now. The scholars from the archipelago have a network of scholarly and spiritual *sanad* to the Middle East and other regions. From

Aceh, Islam then developed massively to the areas of Palembang, Minangkabau, Demak, Banten, Cirebon, Banjar, Banten, Makassar, Ternate and Tidore. Furthermore, to Southeast Asia, Malaysia, Southern Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, and the Southern Philippines, without changing the characteristics of harmonious, moderate and inclusive Islam.¹

These characteristics then had a strong influence from ancient times, until when Indonesia was formed as a nation state. Especially when Indonesia was independent from colonialism and was debating the form and basis of the state. democratically Indonesia then chose Pancasila as the basis of the state and the 1945 Constitution, although Islamic values and divinity were still used as the main foundation in the state process. as a pluralistic and pluralistic country consisting of various tribes, nations, languages, cultures, and even religions which as a whole are a unity in the philosophy of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (different remains one). The diversity of its constituent elements makes the Indonesian nation also have characteristics that are different from other nations, the life contained in it has many uniqueness, so that this great nation is also not spared from challenges and threats that are ready to attack at any time.²

The process of establishing the Republic of Indonesia began with a debate about the basis of the state, although in the end it was nationalists and religious who agreed on Pancasila as the basis and ideology of the nation. The first precept, namely the One Godhead, is fundamentally the starting point to unite both nationalists and religious. The bond of togetherness as citizens of the republic became a bond of unity for the formation of the Indonesian state. Pancasila is an ideal that is important for individuals and citizens to continue to have a strong faith and still believe in it as a guideline for the life of the nation and state.³

Religious groups or religious groups in political studies are often called political Islam resurfaced in the 1955 elections carried out by the Masyumi Party and the NU Party. This issue resurfaced at the beginning of the reforms in the 1999 elections, although throughout the elections in Indonesia, Islamic parties were never the winners of the elections, although the strength of Islam was always taken into account. Indonesia's founders, when developing the constitution, were caught

¹ Azyumardi Azra, "Networks of the Ulama in the Haramayn: Connections in the Indian Ocean Region," *Studia Islamika* 8 (2) (2001). <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v8i2.689>. Jajat Burhanudin, "Nineteenth-Century Kitāb Jawi Sufi Works in Pattani, Thailand: Mainstreaming Ethical Sufism of Al-Ghazali," *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought & Civilization* 28 (1) (2023). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31436/shajarah.v28i1.1594>. Mohd Pua'ad Abdul Malik, et.al., "Intellectual Tradition of Islamic Civilization in the Malay World: An Analysis of Classical Malay Works from the 17th to the 19th Century," *Journal at-Tamaddun* 20 (2) (2025). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol20no2.19>.

² Yudi Latif, "The Religiosity, Nationality, and Sociality of Pancasila: Toward Pancasila through Soekarno's Way," *Islamic Studies* 25 (2) (2018). <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v25i2.7502>. Khalimatus Sadiyah, et.al., "Kajian Teoritis tentang Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman dalam Upaya Menjaga Eksistensi Pancasila," *De Cide: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* 1 (2) (2021). DOI:10.56393/decive.v1i2.309

³ Abidin Nurdin, "Dialectics in Relationship Between Religion and State: A Correlation of Religious Principles and Ideals of Law in Indonesia," *Al Bayyinah: Journal of Islamic Law* 4 No. 1 (2020).

up in a debate about the role of Islam and sharia in their new country. Suharto artificially reduced the potential role of Islamic politics through the enforcement of the single principle of Pancasila and a careful balance between Islam and the military. However, almost immediately after Suharto's fall, there was an explosion of political parties carrying the banner of Islam, and the discourse on the new form of Indonesia's political system was dominated by debates about the role of Islam in the country.⁴

The dynamics of the Indonesian nation's journey have experienced many challenges and even threats, one of which is the influence of globalization. Global influence will have a lot of influence if it cannot be responded to properly and balanced by the Indonesian people, this can be seen from the behavior of people who are prouder of the culture owned by other nations. The Indonesian nation will become a strong nation if by living in the Netherlands Pancasila and all elements of society want to increase the attitude of love for the homeland, this needs to be done so that the Indonesian nation does not lose its identity, namely the characteristics and personality of the Indonesian nation itself.⁵

One of NU's greatest contributions to the Republic of Indonesia was the fatwa of Hadarutus Sheikh K.H. Hasyim As'ariy, the founder of NU through a fatwa of "jihad" against the colonizers who later succeeded in expelling the colonizers from Indonesia. The fatwa is like a mantra that drugged the students to dare to die, sacrifice their souls and bodies for the sake of the nation and state, the impact of the fatwa then gave birth to Heroes' Day on November 10. Because of the strong mass base of the NU, the political influence of the fatwa is quite wide. The important influence shown by the NU jihad fatwa, which was later supported by the spread of jihad ideology in the war of independence, has contributed an important page of history that has been neglected.⁶

When the Indonesian revolution in 1945 was underway and the war to defend independence raged in almost all-important cities in Java, Nahdlatul Ulama issued a fatwa on the need for "jihad" to defend Indonesian sovereignty from Dutch colonialism. The NU's strong mass base, the political influence of the fatwa is quite wide. A note worth putting forward is that the history of Indonesia's physical revolution rarely mentions the role of Islam in shaping ideological resistance. The important influence shown by the NU jihad fatwa, which was later supported by the

⁴ Robin Bush, "Redefining "Political Islam" in Indonesia: Nahdlatul Ulama and Khittah '26," *Studia Islamika* 7 (2) (2000).

⁵ Khalimatus Sadiyah, et.al., "Kajian Teoritis tentang Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman dalam Upaya Menjaga Eksistensi Pancasila, *De Cide: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* 1, (2) (2021).

⁶ Inggar Saputra, "Resolusi Jihad: Nasionalisme Kaum Santri Menuju Indonesia Merdeka," *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* 3, (1) (2019).

rise of jihad ideology in the war of independence, has contributed an important page of neglected history.⁷

Therefore, according to van Bruinessen and Feillard, NU is an organization that is rooted in tradition to progressive movements such as the establishment of Islamic boarding schools spread throughout Indonesia. reviving traditions, reviving classical science not as artifacts of the past, but as ethics and methodologies of thinking that are flexible and contextual with local culture. Likewise, NU has superior and intelligent political adaptability, this was seen during the congress in Situbondo to return to "*Khittah* 1926", which is to get out of practical politics and return to *khittah* as a religious organization, which actually gives freedom to expand culturally and intellectually. NU's support base is firmly rooted in Islamic boarding schools and tarekat that are able to reach the voices of the lower class (grassroots). Lastly, NU is a religious organization that pioneered the acceptance of Pancasila as the sole principle and ideology of the state. Thus, rigid assumptions about traditionalist tendencies actually have a deep commitment to national values, openness to renewal, and flexibility in the context of the nation.⁸

Furthermore, NU transformed into an organization that carried out intellectual productivity in the early 21st century Indonesia as a result of the development of education. The last generation of NU groups, namely those aged 20-30 years, have better access to education than their predecessors. This is also the result of the adoption of the national school system by Islamic boarding schools. however, the intellectual role of NU remains under the control of the ulama or *kiai*, as the holder of greater religious authority than the scholars or intellectuals. The existence of NU intellectuals has fluctuated according to the social and political situation around it, including with the activeness in political parties and bureaucrats in the government. NU's young intellectual group prefers to establish an institution that can accommodate their movements and intellectualism.⁹ Therefore, the role of NU, the largest Muslim organization in the world, in advocating for and practicing religious pluralism. NU's commitment to fostering religious pluralism develops through the organization's condemnation of various forms of religious violence and through the mainstreaming of moderate Islam. NU's idea of pluralism and its practices is not monolithic because there has been a spectrum of pluralism within NU, ranging from communal to liberal tolerance.¹⁰

The characteristics of Islam developed by NU were later referred to as Islam Nusantara. Actually, Islam Nusantara not only emphasizes names, but also

⁷Amiq Amiq, "Two Fatwas on Jihad Against the Dutch Colonization in Indonesia A Prosopographical Approach to the Study of Fatwa," *Studia Islamika* 5, No. 3 (1998).

⁸Martin van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradisi, Relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru*, Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1994. Andr  e Feillard, *NU Vis-  -vis Negara: Pencarian Isi, Bentuk dan Makna*, Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2009.

⁹Khairun Niam, "Nahdlatul Ulama and The Production of Muslim Intellectuals in The Beginning of 21st Century Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesia Islam* 11 (2) (2017).

¹⁰Ahmad Zainul Hamdi, "Constructing Indonesian Religious Pluralism: The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in Countering Violent Religious Extremism," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 15, (2) (2021).

characters to show heterogeneous entity patterns. The concept of Islam Nusantara confronts Islam in the Middle East. Diversity as a typology of Islam in the archipelago is the result of a long struggle between religion and the dimensions of life such as social, economic, political and cultural; contextual texts that complement each other so that Islam emerges as something friendly, peaceful, anti-radical, harmonious, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.¹¹ However, some groups and organizations disagree with the concept of Islam Nusantara, accusing it of being a synthesis or a combination of Islam and culture that has no basis in postulates and laws.

METHOD

The study using qualitative methods is analyzed based on Islamic political thought, especially the theory of religion and state relations. The theory of religious and political relations in the context of Islamic political thought consists of three rice lines, namely; formalistic, substantivity, transformative in other terms, namely intergalactic, symbiotic and socialistic.¹² The typology of NU's political thought as embraced by thinkers and its leaders, for example, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) can be categorized as substantivity or symbiotic. Substantialist and symbiotic reflection in the political field basically makes a significant effort towards political thinking and orientation that emphasizes the substantial manifestation of Islamic values in political activity. Not only in appearance, but also in their political format of thought and institutions. For substantialist proponents, the existence and articulation of intrinsic Islamic values in the Indonesian political climate is more important and very adequate to develop Islamization in the face of the culturalization of modern Indonesian society. This is the basic view of the substantialists based on a historical perspective.¹³

The process of culturalization has given birth to competition among the competing cultural forces. In order for Islam to win the competition, the process of Islamization, according to substantialist proponents, must take the form of culturalization and not politicization. Thus, Islamic movements should become cultural movements, rather than making themselves political movements. Substantivity thinking is intended as an accentuation that the substance or meaning of faith and worship is more important than the formality and symbolism of religion and literal obedience to the text of God's revelation. Meanwhile, the messages of the Qur'an and hadith, which contain an eternal essence and universal meaning, are reinterpreted based on the sequence and time span of the generations of Muslims and contextualize them with the prevailing social conditions of their time. Substantialists realize that the developing countries or the third world today are

¹¹ Lukman Nurhisam and Mualimul Huda, "Islam Nusantara: A Middle Way?" *Qudus International of Islamic Studies* 4, (2). (2016).

¹² M. Din Syamsuddin *Islam dan Politik Era Orde Baru*, Jakarta: Logos, 2001. Bakhtiar Efendi, *Islam dan Negara: Transformasi Pemikiran dan Praktik Politik Islam di Indonesia*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998.

¹³ M. Syafi'i Anwar, *Pemikiran dan Aksi Islam Indonesia: Sebuah Kajian Politik Tentang Cendekiawan Muslim Orde Baru*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995. p. 155.

economically, politically, culturally and socially very different from Saudi Arabia in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). Also, the literal understanding of the meaning of the Qur'an, the uncritical acceptance of the hadith and the legal principles derived from the traditional schools, must be reinterpreted into modern understanding.¹⁴

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Referring to the study, the discussion will explain about the state, religion and national politics, *ahlu sunnah* and Islamic moderation, Islam and Pancasila, democracy and state order, nationalism and nationality.

Nation, Religion, and Politics

NU was founded on January 31, 1926 in Surabaya, East Java, by several prominent *kyai* such as K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari and K.H. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah. Nahdlatul Ulama was born in the *pesantren* culture which is often called traditional Islam has been rooted and preserved. In this context, Nahdlatul Ulama declared his religious ideology as '*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*.' This religious ideology has become an important characteristic of Nahdlatul Ulama that distinguishes it from Muslim 'modernist' organizations. In its early movements, Nahdlatul Ulama played an important role by, for example, prohibiting Muslim youth from entering Dutch military service, prohibiting Muslims from supporting the Dutch army, and rejecting Dutch aid offered to Nahdlatul Ulama madrasas. Furthermore, along with other nationalist movements, this organization played an active role in the process of establishing the Indonesian State and in the war to defend Indonesia's independence from the Dutch who sought to re-establish their colonial rule in Indonesia. These facts, no doubt, prove that Nahdlatul Ulama has made a great contribution to the Indonesian nation and state.¹⁵

NU is a socio-religious organization that has distinctive characteristics. Initiated by the *kiai pesantren* in 1926 in Surabaya, this organization has an institutional network that is structured from the central to the village level. As an organization led by *ulama*, their role in NU is very crucial. However, their influence as leaders in their respective communities has created other social structures, so their presence in NU also represents the interests of those structures. NU was born in the midst of complex social, political, and religious dynamics during the Dutch colonial period. At that time, Indonesian society was undergoing significant social changes due to colonial policies and the penetration of Western culture. In addition, the emergence of various national movement organizations also influenced the political and religious landscape in Indonesia. NU positions itself as a guardian of moderate Islamic traditions and values in the midst of rapid change. Apart from being a religious organization, NU also plays an active role in the struggle for

¹⁴M. Syafi'i Anwar, *Pemikiran dan Aksi...*, p. 155.

¹⁵Faisal Ismail, "The Nahdlatul Ulama: Its Early History and Contribution to The Establishment of Indonesian State," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 5, (2) (2011).

Indonesian independence by providing moral and material support for freedom fighters.¹⁶

It is interesting to see that in different situations we find completely different opinions. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in 1926, he founded his NU *pesantren* in Tebuireng in East Java. After the end of the second world war and Japan left Indonesia, Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed the Republic of Indonesia on August 17, 1945. This new, independent republic was not recognized by the allied forces, who sought to restore Dutch sovereignty in Indonesia through the Dutch International Government (NICA). From September 1945, efforts to rebuild military power to achieve this goal began.¹⁷

It was during this time that Hasyim Asy'ari gave an interesting and heroic fatwa. The text of this fatwa has actually been lost a summary of its contents has been found in the Indonesian newspaper *Kedaulatan Rakyat* dated November 20, 1945. According to Kaptein, the most important points of this fatwa are: 1) Fighting the infidels who are now obstructing our independence, is an individual obligation (*fardoeain*) for every Muslim who is able to do so, even if he is poor; 2) Anyone who died fighting NICA and its allies was a martyr; 3) Anyone who divides our union must now be killed. These opinions were repeated and affirmed in several other fatwas and declarations, such as the famous Resolution issued before the Constitutional Court, the Nahdlatul Ulama Congress, held in Surabaya on October 21 and 22, 1955.¹⁸

Several times NU appears as a fortress and front line when the nation's condition is under threat of national disintegration. For example, when Indonesia was faced with a political party that had strong support at the beginning of independence, namely the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) as an extreme left group. The Communist Party revolted against the state twice, in 1960 and 1965.¹⁹ The PKI is not only a political party but also a movement that has succeeded in propagandizing the public through economic, social and cultural aspects as well as ideology. When the New Order emerged, communists were established as a forbidden party and ideology, along with the weakening of communist countries on a global level.

Then, when the movement of the extreme right group wants to threaten and replace Pancasila as the basis of the state. The group was initiated by *Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI), the *Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI), *Jamaah Anshar Daulah* (JAD),

¹⁶ Mohammad Nasih Al Hashas, et.al., "Agama, Budaya, dan Negara: Formulasi Nasionalisme dalam Pemikiran Nahdlatul Ulama dan Muhammadiyah," *Zawiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 11 (2), 2025. DOI: 10.31332/zawiyah.v11i2.13181.

¹⁷ Kaptein, N.J.G. "Acceptance, Approval and Aggression: Some Fatwās Concerning the Colonial Administration in The Dutch East Indies," *al-Jamiah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 32, (2) (2000).

¹⁸ Kaptein, N.J.G. "Acceptance, Approval and Aggression.

¹⁹?????? JOURNAL ARTICLES

and *Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid* (JAT).²⁰ The group emerged after the reforms when the shells of democracy were wide opened. The group is a movement influenced by transnational groups such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir* which was first established in Palestine. Meanwhile, JAD and JAT are affiliated with ISIS based in Iraq and Syria.

In the end, HTI was dissolved by the government in 2017 through the Minister of Law and Human Rights at that time led by Mohammad Mahfud MD. Mahfud MD is a NU figure and is very close to Gusdur and in line with his thinking. Thus, radical groups such as MMI, JAD and JAT over time did not receive support from the public. because some of his followers committed acts of terror such as the Bali I and II bombings, the JW Mariot bombing which was not only against religious and national values,²¹ which was very high in humanity and love and peace.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) positions religion and the state as two entities that complement and strengthen each other (symbiotic). NU views that religious commitment is part of the nation's commitment, where the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and Pancasila are the final form of national agreement (*Dār al-mīthāq*). According to KH. Ma'ruf Amin, former Vice President and one of the NU figures, said that Indonesia as *Dār al-mīthāq* is a socio-political consensus in the midst of diversity and the threat of extremist ideologies that endanger national unity. *Dār al-mīthāq* is a treaty-based constitutional framework that redefines the state as a religiously based consensus, integrating faith, justice, and tolerance in a pluralistic society. The application of the principles of political pluralism can serve as a strategic solution to ideological conflicts, while also requiring a shift towards critical multiculturalism to ensure substantive equality and inclusive participation.²²

In this context, NU before Indonesia was born as a nation, had emerged with the spirit of building the state, national politics based on noble religious values. Therefore, when the state is faced with dialectics and ideological and theological debates in the name of religion, NU appears to provide answers that have a conceptual foundation and methodological roots in the framework of the state constitution and its relationship with Islam as a religion.

²⁰Noorhadi Hasan, "The Failure of The Wahhabi Campaign: Transnational Islam and the Salafi Madrasa in Post-9/11 Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 18, No. 4 (2010). <https://doi.org/10.5367/sear.2010.0015>. Noorhadi Hasan, "Reformasi, Religius Diversity, Islamic Radicalism after Soeharto," *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 1, No. 1 (2008). Doi: <https://doi.org/10.14203/jissh.v1i1.2>.

²¹ Abdul Majid, et.al., "Salafi, Hadith, and Islamic Law: Identity Politics and Wahabi Movement in East Kalimantan," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah* 23, No. 1 (2023). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v23i1.32139>.

²² Ahmad Musadad, et.al., "Beyond Sharia and Secularism: Political Pluralism and Multiculturalism in The Concept of Dār Al-Mīthāq," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 19, No. 2 (2025). DOI: 10.15642/JIIS.2025.19.2.524-545.

Ahlu Sunnah and Islamic Moderation

NU in its articles of association and bylaws states that the Islamic *manhaj* that is followed is madhhab *ahlu sunnah waljamaah*. Following the imams of the madhhab, Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali. Although in practice more followers of Imam Shafii as the majority sect in Indonesia and even in Southeast Asia. in theology following the teachings of Imam Ash'ari and Maturidi in the field of Sufism following Imam al-Ghazali and Imam Junaid al-Baghdadi. *Ahlu sunnah wa al-jamaah* is a moderate understanding that is in the middle between the rational *Qadariyah* understanding and the *Jabariyah* that does not use reason. It is also different from *Khawarij* who is rigid and *Muktazilah* who is too amazing in intellect.

The social capital owned by the Indonesian nation is a character of society that has strong social cohesiveness. K.H. Ahmad Siddiq formulated three important keywords that describe the way of religious moderation of the Nahdliyin, namely *tawasuth* (moderate), *tasāmuḥ* (tolerant), and *tawāzun* (balanced). The essence of *tawasuth* is how the character of society is not extreme in looking at various kinds of problems and always takes a middle way from various extreme points both in thinking and extreme points in movement.²³

As for *tasāmuḥ* meaning tolerant, Indonesian society is basically a tolerant society that can always take a peaceful stance and not impose their will. While *tawāzun* means balance, he strives to find balance in various kinds of problems faced. According to K.H. Ahmad Siddiq (d. 1991), of the many characters of society in Indonesia that have never been formulated, but are only carried out and practiced. Then it is summarized into the character of the people who *tawasuth*, *tasāmuḥ* and *tawāzun* are able to make a very big contribution to the Indonesian nation, especially in their ability to maintain many characters that grow. The character of *tasāmuḥ*, *tawasuth*, and *tawāzun* is actually an important value of the Indonesian nation that can be promoted to the international world to overcome various kinds of conflicts and conflicts. Then on its way, NU's moderate tradition is also contained in the trilogy of NU *ukhuwah*, namely *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (brotherhood of religion), *ukhuwah basyariyah/insaniyah* (brotherhood of fellow humans), *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (brotherhood of fellow people). The three *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) combine important components in order to unite elements of the Indonesian nation.

In addition, NU people are very accommodating to local culture as mandated by the Ministry of Religion, one of the indicators of religious moderation is local cultural accommodation. It is quite logical, NU's openness to local wisdom, tradition and culture, because the majority of Nahdliyin's existence base occupies rural areas. During its development, NU had a slogan "*al-muhafadhah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wal*

²³Moh Ashif Fuadi, "Tradisi Pemikiran Moderasi Beragama Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)," *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 21 (1) (2022). DOI:10.24014/af.v21i1.16692.

akhdzu bil jadidi al-ashlah" which means "must maintain good old traditions and then take new and better traditions" so this is the foundation of NU.²⁴

Therefore, the strength of NU lies in its tradition of thought that has been rooted since its establishment with a moderate pattern. NU's inclusive Islam is now called *Islam Wasathiyah* or religious moderation. The religious moderation movement in NU is integrated in several ways, namely by accepting one of the four madzhabs, following the thinking of the Asy'ariyah Faith, finalizing the pattern of relations between Islam and nationality, and habituating interreligious dialogue. In addition, the value of NU moderation is manifested in the attitude of *tasāmuḥ*, *tawasuth*, *tawāzun* and the synergy of the *ukhuwah* trilogy (*Islamiyah*, *Insaniyah*, *Wathaniyah*). With a moderate tradition, NU plays a very important role in maintaining the plurality of the Indonesian nation.²⁵ Therefore, according to Sa'id Aqiel Siradj, *ahlussunnah wal jama'ah* is a religious method of thinking that covers all aspects and problems of life based on the characteristics of moderation, neutrality and balance, and tolerance.²⁶

In fact, Barton positioned Gusdur as a Muslim thinker and intellectual in Indonesia who had a neo-modernist view. The Islamic neo-modernist movement (often associated with the term liberal Islam) according to Barton is a progressive Islamic thought reform movement. This movement combines the ideals of rational modernization with the strong roots of Islamic traditions, aiming to respond to the challenges of modern times without abandoning Islamic identity. Although the term liberalism is not as full as it is not very appropriate. This movement, which emerged two decades or more ago, is not well understood.²⁷ Especially if it still refers to the dichotomy of modernist and traditional that was initiated by Deliar Noer. According to Noer, the modernist group is represented by Muhammadiyah while the traditional is NU.²⁸

Currently, the categorization needs to be reviewed, because in some aspects NU is very modern in the context of the way of thinking, the way of summarizing Islamic law (*istinbath*). as represented by Gusdur and several other young figures of NU. If what is explained that neo-modernism is the success of combining the ideals of rational modernization with the roots of strong Islamic traditions, it cannot be denied. However, if it is associated with liberals, then it will be inappropriate here. Therefore, in the context of the relationship between religion and the state, the term

²⁴ Moh Ashif Fuadi. "Tradisi Pemikiran Moderasi Beragama Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)."

²⁵ Moh Ashif Fuadi. "Tradisi Pemikiran Moderasi Beragama Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)."

²⁶ Sa'id Aqiel Siradj, "Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah", makalah untuk Bahtsul Masail tentang Aswaja oleh Lajnah Bahtsul Masail PBNU, 15 September, 1996, p. 24-25.

²⁷ Greg Barton, "Indonesia's Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Intellectual 'Ulamā': The Meeting of Islamic Traditionalism and Modernism in neo-Modernist Thought," *Studia Islamika* 4 (1) (1997). <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v4i1.786>. Greg Barton, "Neo-Modernism: A Vital Synthesis of Traditionalist and Modernist Islamic Thought in Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 2 (3) (1997). <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v2i3.827>.

²⁸ Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia 1900-1942*, Jakarta: LP3S, 1980.

substantivity or symbiotic is more acceptable. The substantivity view focuses more on culturalization and not politicization, i.e. Islamic movements in the form of culture, rather than making themselves political movements.

Islam and Pancasila

Pancasila is the basic ideology for the State of Indonesia, which is the formulation and guideline of the life of the nation and state for all Indonesian people. For the Indonesian people, the true essence of Pancasila is as a view of the nation's life and as the basis of the State Pancasila. These two meanings should be understood in their essence. In addition to these two things, Pancasila has several different names, such as: Pancasila as the soul of the nation, Pancasila as the personality of the nation, Pancasila as the source of all sources of law, Pancasila as the basis of the philosophy of the State of Indonesia, as affirmed in the 1945 Constitution.

Pancasila are the five principles of the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state. This principle reflects the characteristics of Indonesia as a multicultural nation-state that must absorb and transform all elements of the nation into a strong, permanent, and dynamic guiding principle. These five principles are seen as the crystallization of the nation's core values and ideals, as idealized by the existing "trilogy of ideologies": religious ideology, nationalist ideology, and socialist ideology. All these ideologies have been synthesized to find a common ground that embodies the common good (*al-maṣlaḥah al-'āmmah*) for the life of the nation. The history of the conceptualization of Pancasila is a long process characterized by the "planting seeds" phase, the "formulation" phase, and the "implementation" phase. Each phase involves the participation of various actors and elements. However, in national cooperation, one of the most prominent actors was Sukarno. To understand Pancasila, one needs to understand his life and thoughts.²⁹

Pancasila is the foundation of the ideology of the Indonesian state and not Pancasila has never separated religion from Pancasila. This can be seen from the Precepts of the One Godhead, just and civilized humanity, Indonesian Unity, Democracy led by wisdom in deliberation/representation, and Social Justice for all Indonesian people; in essence in harmony with the values of Islamic teachings. In principle, NU and Muhammadiyah view that the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) is a Pancasila state that is upheld on a noble national philosophy and in line with Islamic teachings. There is no contradiction between Islam and Pancasila at all. According to him, Islam and Pancasila must synergize with each other for the sustainability of religion, the nation and the state of Indonesia itself. However, this is not in line with HTI. HTI is in a group that rejects Pancasila as the ideology of the Indonesian state, HTI itself does not only fight for the enforcement

²⁹ Yudi Latif, "The Religiosity, Nationality, and Sociality of Pancasila.

of Islamic sharia in Indonesia, but has a greater demand, namely the establishment of an Islamic caliphate state.³⁰

The debate between Islam and Pancasila has resurfaced in the latest national political arena. Trans-national Islamic movements such as HTI and the *Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI) and Salafi-Wahhabi that clash religion and the basis of the state. Pancasila is considered a secular ideology because it does not come from revelation, while Islam is clearly sourced from revelation. So various movements such as Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, the Muslim Brotherhood to Wahhabism spread propaganda so that Muslims reject Pancasila and idealize Islam as the basis of the state. This debate has long been answered by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Through the NU Alim Ulama National Congress in 1983, NU affirmed the harmony of Islam and Pancasila. The precepts of the One God are interpreted as a reflection of monotheism, so even though the basis of this state is not a religion. But it is a reflection of the fundamental values of religion. In the midst of the ideological challenges of Islamic trans-nationalism, NU's thinking about Pancasila has become very relevant to be understood and socialized.³¹ NU is of the view that the state as a legal entity is built through agreements and must be maintained. *Qanun Asasi* and *Bahtsul Masail* affirmed the position of the Republic of Indonesia as a final form (*al-muwâthanah*) that is valid according to sharia.³²

KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) tries to place Islam in the modern context in Indonesia in a non-monolithic political face, which does not confront the strategy of the struggle of the ummah with the strategy of national development. This article seeks to examine his thoughts on the relationship between Islam and the state of Pancasila. NU's acceptance of the single principle of Pancasila in 1984 under the leadership of the duo of K.H. Ahmad Siddiq and K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid is a historical continuation in NU's history. In 1936 NU justified the Dutch East Indies as *dar al-Islam* (Muslim country) because of the existence of the Headship Institution (*Het Kantoor voor Inlandsche zaken*), an institution that specifically takes care of the interests of Muslims, and Muslims have the freedom to practice their religious teachings as a sine qua non condition for the existence of the state. Islam sees the state as very important to avoid the occurrence of anarchy, but Islam does not have the concept of statehood. Therefore, Muslims do not insist on establishing an Islamic state. There are three reasons for the acceptance of Muslims in the Pancasila State, namely the plurality of the Indonesian nation, the justification of NU *fiqh*, and the scientific tradition of NU.³³

³⁰ Zamani Dzaki Aflah & Tutik Hamidah, "Islam Dan Pancasila Dalam Perdebatan Ormas-Ormas Islam," *Risâlah Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam* 7(1) (2021).

³¹ Syaiful Arif, "Islam dan Pancasila Pasca Reformasi: Pandangan Kritis Nahdlatul Ulama," *Tashwirul Afkar* 38 (2). (2020).

³² Mohammad Nasih Al Hashas, et.al., "Agama, Budaya, dan Negara.

³³ Syaiful Arif, "Islam dan Pancasila Pasca Reformasi: Pandangan Kritis Nahdlatul Ulama."

According to Nakamura, Islam spread throughout the "archipelago", one of which was through the da'wah work of *Wali Songo* and other scholars, who accepted, included, and integrated Islamic teachings with the original culture that existed before, which was later known as "Islam Nusantara" which was characterized by moderation, justice, progress, middle way, and harmony. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) can be classified as the largest Islamic organization in the world, with about 121 million members. NU upholds Pancasila and unity in diversity, namely religious and cultural pluralism. This is the line of indigenization and Indonesianization of Islam campaigned by Gus Dur. Gus Yahya's new leadership is recognized as able to absorb Gus Dur's ideology of tolerance, openness, middle path, gradualism, pluralism, humanity, and the flexible application of Islamic law (*fiqh*). The current leadership, Gus Yahya is also able to continue ideologically and promote the value of pluralism. This new leadership aims to strengthen the vitality and independence of NU as an organization. Improving management skills and improving the living standards of NU's support base, namely farmers and fishermen, as well as increasing micro, small, and medium enterprises, trade, and industry. All NU members are expected to act as movers of social reform (agents of change).³⁴

Democracy and Governance

The relationship between Islam and the state has long been an intellectual discourse, for example Ali Abd. Raziq (d. 1966 AD), a great scholar from Egypt, argued that in Islam there is no teaching about the state. In contrast to A'ala al-Maududi who views in Islam the concept of the state is very clear so that the idea of *theo* democracy (divine democracy) emerges.³⁵ Then in the context of Indonesia, a similar polemic occurred around the 1940s until entering the independence period between Muhammad Natsir who was of the view that Islam was a religion that could be used as an ideology with his idea of theistic democracy (d. 1960) and Soekarno (d. 1960) who argued that Islam was only a spiritual religion.³⁶

It seems that polemics and debates about the relationship between Islam and the state continued until the New Order period and even entered the reform period. A number of scholars gave their points of thought and clarification. Clarification and influence are more aimed at Muslims who are still hesitant or worried about the position of Islam in the national state and the ideology of the Pancasila state. These doubts and concerns are understandable because in the 1980s – the government – Suharto was quite intensely engaged in what Taufik Abdullah calls "ideological-offensive" that had a far-reaching impact on Islamic political power. Meanwhile, on

³⁴ Mitsio Nakamura, "Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia, a New Era with the "New Gus Dur", *Islam Nusantara: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture* 4, (1) (2023).

³⁵ Donohue, J.J., & Esposito, J.L. (ed.) *Islam in Transsition: Muslim Pespectives* diterjemahkan, *Ensiklopedi Pembaharuan: Masalah-Masalah*, Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 1997).

³⁶ Yusril Ihza Mahendra. *Makna dan Peranan Islam dalam Proses Sosio-Politik di Indonesia: Dulu, Kini dan Mendatang* dalam A. Rahman Zainuddin (et.al.), *Kontekstualisasi Ajaran Islam: 70 Tahun Prof. Dr. H. Munawir Sjadazli*. Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995.

the other hand, the New Order government, although it sounds a bit exaggerated, also doubts the loyalty of the Islamic group to Pancasila.³⁷

Gus Dur also argued that in Islam, the state is the law and does not have a form of state that is important for Islam, continued Gus Dur is the ethics of society and community. The reason is that Islam does not recognize the concept of definitive government. In the main issue, namely succession, power turns out to be inconsistent with Islam. Sometimes it uses *istikhlaf*, *baiat* or *ahlu al-halli wa aqli* (formative system). In fact, the issue of succession is a fairly urgent issue in state affairs. If Islam had a concept, of course it would not have happened.³⁸

According to Gus Dur, the main task of Islam is to develop social ethics that allow the achievement of the welfare of human life, both through the form of society called the national state and outside it. The functionalization of social ethics can be in the form of an invitation through formal law, or simply through public awareness of the importance of implementing religious teachings in real life.³⁹ The two views mentioned above basically give the understanding that the state is only an instrument or tool to actualize Islamic social ethics in society, not the goal of establishing an Islamic state.

The role of NU in counteracting radicalism in Indonesia through strengthening humanitarian nationalism. Humanitarian nationalism developed by NU is a nationalism that provides recognition to all elements of the nation consisting of different ethnicities, religions, races, and inter-groups to actively participate in carrying out rights and obligations based on Pancasila. Humanitarian nationalism is manifested through da'wah and educational activities to produce superior human resources in affirming and disseminating the understanding of *Aswaja* as a pillar of strengthening adaptation, integration, achieving goals and maintaining order as a sovereign nation. In implementing humanitarian nationalism, NU applies basic principles, namely *tawazun* (balance), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawasut* (moderate), and *i'tidal* (fairness) in various sectors of the life of the nation and state.⁴⁰

The moderate attitude of Nahdlatul Ulama is due to its nonviolent theological point of view. These two organizations, in addition, agree with the idea of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), one of the most latent issues propagated by hardline Muslims in this country. For both, the form of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, with Pancasila as its ideological basis, the 1945 Constitution as its constitutional basis, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* as its slogan, is

³⁷M. Syafii Anwar, *Pemikiran dan Aksi Islam Indonesia: Sebuah Kajian Politik Tentang Cendekiawan Muslim Orde Baru*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995.

³⁸Abdurrahman Wahid, "Islam dan Masyarakat Bangsa," *Pesantren* 3 (4). (1998).

³⁹Abdurrahman Wahid, "Islam dan Masyarakat Bangsa," *Pesantren* 3 (4). (1998).

⁴⁰ Abdul Rahman, et.al., "Peran Strategis Nahdlatul Ulama Dalam Penguatan Nasionalisme Kemanusiaan Untuk Menangkal Radikalisme," *Jurnal Artefak* 8, (2) (2021).

considered capable of accommodating the substantive elements of moderate Islam, whose theological vision is grace for all nature (*rahmatan li al-'alamin*).⁴¹

On the other hand, there are groups that have closer emotional and ideological ties to hardline ideologies. Some of them have even metamorphosed ideologically into hardline movements and have become part of the ranks in religious movements such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI), *Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI), *Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid* (JAT) led by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, and the like. The hardline group made NU-Muhammadiyah residents the main target in da'wah activities.⁴²

In addition to the positive note of the acceptance of the two mainstream mass organizations towards the Republic of Indonesia, Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, and modern values, there is another characteristic of Islamic moderation that is generally accepted in the Western perspective but rejected by both: secularism. Almost all—if not all—moderate Indonesian Islam rejects the idea of secularism on the grounds that it is a moderation constrained by Western characteristics that do not apply in the context of Indonesian Islam. The majority's rejection of secularism, indeed, requires strong empirical data that warrants further investigation. As far as Indonesian Islam is concerned, secularism is not a familiar term for the majority of Indonesian Muslims even though in practice secularism has become an unspoken part of their daily lives. This is simply because most Indonesian Muslims are not comfortable with the idea of separation between religion and state. The classical nomenclature of Islamic thought only recognizes the doctrine of Islam as a religion and a state (*dawlah*).⁴³

Nationalism and Nationality

The concept of nationalism was indeed promoted by Sarekat Islam, Budi Utomo, and others, but these two organizations have disbanded. Currently, what is still surviving is NU, which can be said to be the successor of friendly Islam-breathing nationalism. The idea of love for the homeland, nationalism, which is packaged with the idiom *hubbul wathan minal iman* (love for the homeland is as of faith) has never been separated from the role of the ulama and kiai of the archipelago, especially NU. Linguistically, *hub* means love, *wathan* means homeland (nation), *minal iman* means from or part of. The concept of *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman* was first initiated by Islamic boarding schools before independence, one of which was KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah is an elder and founder of NU.

Indonesian nationalism according to George McTurnan Kahin, an American historian, is rooted in the Islamic tradition in the archipelago which is driven by

⁴¹ Masdar Hilmy, "Whither Indonesia's Islamic Moderatism? A Reexamination on The Moderate Vision of Muhammadiyah and NU, *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 7, (1). (2013). DOI: 10.15642/JIIS.2013.7.1.24-48.

⁴² Masdar Hilmy, "Whither Indonesia's Islamic Moderatism?"

⁴³ Masdar Hilmy, "Whither Indonesia's Islamic Moderatism?"

pesantren. Nationalism came from the struggle of ulama and kiai in the archipelago to fight the colonizers who ate away at the indigenous wealth at that time. The pesantren here is the pesantren taught by KH. Hasyim Asyari is the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama who instills the spirit of nationalism breathing Islam. The students at that time proved their nationalism by taking up arms to expel the colonizers.⁴⁴

The strengthening of nationalism was agreed by President Sukarno with the proposal and blessing of several indigenous Indonesian scholars and kiai which can still be enjoyed to this day.⁴⁵ KH. Hasyim Asy'ari made a jargon, namely *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman*, which means "love of the homeland is part of faith." The work was then made into a song, with the title "*ya ahlal wathon*," by KH Abdul Wahab Hasbullah in 1934. It is hoped that this song can add and increase the sense of nationalism of the Indonesian people.⁴⁶ The spirit of struggle or nationalism manifested by the Indonesian people, the majority of whom are Muslims, is based on their faith and devotion to Allah SWT, the love for the Indonesian homeland is part of the faith that cannot be separated from the aspect of worship to Allah, this love for the homeland is often known as *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman*, this faith is also manifested in a song to increase the sense of nationalism of the Indonesian people.

In addition, for someone who gets an education in the character of love for the homeland which is the implementation of the slogan *hubb al-wathan min al-iman* KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, will form a character who has a sense of pride in the nation in language, culture, social, politics and economics so that he is willing to sacrifice to defend, protect, and advance the nation consciously without any coercion from anyone.⁴⁷ The behavior of loving the homeland means loving domestic products, diligently learning for the progress of the nation and state, loving the environment, carrying out a clean and healthy life, getting to know the territory of the homeland without regional fanaticism. This attitude *off faith* now needs to be encouraged in the younger generation as the successors of the nation, so that they become accustomed to the spirit of love for the homeland with the aim of keeping the Indonesian nation in the essence of its country which has the ideology of Pancasila and can achieve the nation's ideals well. *hubbul wathan minal iman*, thus can be a form of state defense in Indonesia as a manifestation of the political actions of Muslims.

The connection between the concept of *hubbul wathan minal iman* and the republic (*res publica*) is in the anchor of history, where Islam as part of *res privata* participated in the struggle to defend the Indonesian homeland from the oppression

⁴⁴George McTurnan. *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1952. Hamidollah Ibda, "Konsep Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman Dalam Pendidikan Islam Sebagai Ruh Nasionalisme," *International Journal Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din* 19, (2) (2017). DOI: 10.21580/ihya.18.1.1740.

⁴⁵Hamidollah Ibda, "Konsep Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman.

⁴⁶Nur Rofiq, "Telaah Konseptual Implementasi Slogan Hubb Al-Wathan Min Al-Iman KH. Hasyim Asy'ari dalam Pendidikan Karakter Cinta Tanah Air." *Jurnal Keluarga Sehat Sejahtera* 16, (2) (2018). <https://doi.org/10.24114/jkss.v16i32.11924>.

⁴⁷Nur Rofiq, "Telaah Konseptual Implementasi Slogan Hubb Al-Wathan Min Al-Iman.

of the Dutch and Japanese. Religious primordial values that every human being, even every human being who has religious beliefs needs independence, does not want to be colonized, and for that reason unites in the struggle by representing the struggle in the Indonesian nation. In short, the role of Muslims is to realize a form of love for the homeland in order to gain independence. Wahid stated that the relationship between Islam and Pancasila is First, Pancasila as a philosophy of the Indonesian nation, not as a religion. Second, the precepts of the One Godhead reflect monotheism according to the concept of faith in Islam. Third, Islam is a creed and sharia, covering human relations with Allah and between humans. Fourth, the acceptance and practice of Pancasila is a form of Indonesian Muslims to carry out sharia. Fifth, as a consequence of this attitude, Muslims (NU) are obliged to secure the correct understanding of Pancasila.⁴⁸

Therefore, the concept of *hubbul wathan minal iman* is the idea of NU scholars about nationalism with the fusion of the spirit of Islam and nationality. Pancasila is the basic ideology for the State of Indonesia. Pancasila is the formulation and guideline of the life of the nation and state for all Indonesian people. *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman's* attitude or nationalism has a good relationship with Pancasila which is in harmony and must be implemented as a guideline to maintain Indonesia's sovereignty. For NU, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila is the final form of state formation by all elements of the Indonesian nation. Therefore, it is important to have the attitude of *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman* in order to maintain the existence of Pancasila as the ideology of the Indonesian nation. Efforts to maintain the existence of Pancasila in facing the challenges of globalization are through a real attitude. Muslims with the attitude of *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman* can keep Pancasila as the ideology of the Indonesian nation in its existence. The suggestion from the researchers is that a form of love for the homeland can be initiated and implemented in the form of an act of nationalism.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

There are two main keys that cause NU to have this contribution not only at the conceptual level but also the implementation of nationalism, moderation, national politics and democracy and commitment to Pancasila. That is because NU has a *madhhab ahlusunnah wal aljamah*, a very moderate school in Islam, and both concepts of *hubbul watan minal iman* (love for the homeland is part of faith). These two keys cause NU to have symbiotic or substantive principles, namely between religion and the state complementing and strengthening each other, the state is not an end but a tool. Therefore, NU has a valid source about the framework of the nation-state in Islam developed by the scholars of the *ahlu sunnah* which has been for example in the rules, *al-muhafadhah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wal akhdzu bil jadidi al-ashlah*" which means "must maintain the old good tradition and then take a new

⁴⁸Abdurrahman Wahid, "Islam dan Masyarakat Bangsa," *Pesantren* 3 (4). (1998).

⁴⁹ Khalimatus Sadiyah, et.al., "Kajian Teoritis tentang *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman*".

and better tradition. In this context, moderate thinking in all aspects both in aqidah, muamalah and in national politics. Indonesia should be grateful that an organization as large as NU has nationalist and moderate political principles and rules.

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