

POWER ISLAMIZATION: UNVEILING THE ISLAMIC POLITICS OF KIAI AS LEADERS OF THE INDONESIAN PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to review the politics of Islam Kiai by explaining the historical social arguments and strategies pursued by the religious elite to keep playing a role in the lives of Muslims. The methodology of this study uses the social history school as a research method to see the social background in the Islamic political history of the Kiai and contains a critical aspect to analyze the dynamics of the Kiai's Islamic politics. Analysis of the data by reconstructing socio-political events involving traditionalists on the Indonesian political scene from the time of independence until the 2019 election. The main finding in this study is that the Islamic politics promoted by the Kiai are based on the Islamic teachings about social concern such as masalah mursalah and kulliatul khoms which created the Kiai's movement concept, namely mabadi' khoiru ummah (a path that shapes the best people) and syuun ijtimaiah (social concern). The Kiai's involvement in politics is based on this foundation. The significance of this study takes social history as a method by introducing a new approach in revealing the political and socio-cultural significance of the Kiai in his involvement in power-politics arena in Indonesia. So that it can fully demonstrate the values built by the Kiai towards Muslims in political education that leads to building awareness of the nation and state.

Keywords: *Kiai, community leader, Islamic politics, social history*

A. INTRODUCTIONS

The involvement of traditional ulama, known as Kiai, forming the Indonesian state to practical politics, is nothing new to this day. The Kiai is not just elites in religion. Moreover, its role has expanded to the social sphere, so this strengthens the position of the Kiai to touch and gain power. Kiai has considerable trust from the community to guide life to political affairs. This position explains the strategic condition of the Kiai in moving the people to certain choices. In this context, it is no longer denied the presence of Kiai as well as political elites ¹.

In the political context, the Kiai does not only involve within the boundaries of political parties, even his existence also determines the political process and its results ². The Kiai who is from the beginning of the implementation of elections in Indonesia until the reform era has been directly involved in the process, even on a practical level to the point of driving support ³. Countless Kiai has directly intervened in the campaigns of certain candidates and political parties ⁴. What should be questioned here is whether Kiai's position is exploited or a well-founded choice to gain the aspirations of certain candidates' constituents as the party machine to gain support. The fall in the choice of party machinery against the Kiai is a natural thing to see that they are social elites that may contribute to direct the views and choices of people's lives ⁵. Kiai is there and presents directly amid his followers.

In many ways, the Kiai is seen by his followers as a proper authority to issue fatwas on the problems faced by his followers ⁶. As a

¹ Robin Bush and Greg Fealy, 'The Political Decline of Traditional Ulama in Indonesia: The State, Umma and Nahdlatul Ulama', *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 42.5 (2014), p. 536; Endang Turmudi, 'Religion and Politics: A Study on Political Attitudes of Devout Muslims and the Role of the Kyai in Contemporary Java', *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 23.2 (2008), p. 18

² Leni Winarni, 'The Political Identity of Ulama in the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election', *Al-Jami'ah*, 52.2 (2014), p. 257

³ Bush and Fealy.

⁴ Thomas B. Pepinsky, R. William Liddle, and Saiful Mujani, 'Testing Islam's Political Advantage: Evidence from Indonesia', *American Journal of Political Science*, 56.3 (2012), p. 584

⁵ Muhammad Zainal Abidin, 'Ulama in Indonesian Urban Society: A View of Their Role and Position in the Change of Age', *Jurnal Theologia*, 28.2 (2017), p. 235.

⁶ Alexander R. Arifianto, 'Practicing What It Preaches? Understanding the Contradictions between Pluralist Theology and Religious Intolerance within Indonesia's Nahdlatul

leader, he is also seen as a cleric who is used as a reference by Muslims, especially in rural areas in terms of carrying out Islamic religious beliefs and practices ⁷.

Many studies assert that Kiai is charismatic leaders having full authority that goes beyond their role as religious leaders, Geertz claimed in his early research on Kiai (1960), Binder (1960), Jay (1969), Noer (1973) Wahid (1974), Horikoshi (1987; 1976), Dhofier (1980). With the authority they have, the followers obey Kiai's leadership⁸. Kiai's special position cannot be separated from their background making them known as educated elite. They have the expertise to transform Islamic knowledge to their followers. Kiai is considered the only tutor, especially in Islamic boarding schools ⁹. Also, their wealth grants them a unique position as the "fortress" for the community when facing economic hardships ¹⁰.

Kiai as patrons in the society, their influence in Indonesian Islamic society, has deeply rooted. They are part of the elite in the social, political, and economic structure of the local community. People's dependence on Kiai is very strong ¹¹. They are effective decision-makers on socio-political issues in Indonesia. As advocates of Islam, their influence is beyond the territorial boundaries of their residence and Islamic boarding schools (Pribadi, 2018). Besides, the psychological relationship between teacher-student is very touching and strong, and consequently, their views and instructions have a tremendous impact when taken into account by the

Ulama', *Al-Jami'ah*, 55.2 (2017), p. 241

⁷ Faisal Ismail, 'The Nahdlatul Ulama: Its Early History and Contribution to the Establishment of Indonesian State', *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 5.2 (2011), p. 247

⁸ Ahmad Hariyadi, Suwito Eko Pramono, and Heri Yanto, *Charismatic Leadership of Kiai in Developing an Organizational Culture of Islamic Boarding School*, *The Journal of Educational Development JED*, 18 January 2018, p. 23

⁹ Imam Azro'i and Isyrokhu Fuaidi, 'The Existence of Pesantren: Implication Study of Pesantren Leadership Regeneration in Central Java', *Santri: Journal of Pesantren and Fiqh Sosial*, 1.1 (2020), p. 1

¹⁰ M Falikul Isbah, 'Pesantren in The Changing Indonesian Context: History and Current Developments', *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies (QIJIS)*, 8.1 (2020), p. 20

¹¹ Yanwar Pribadi, 'Religious Networks in Madura: Pesantren, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Kiai as the Core of Santri Culture', *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 51.1 (2013), p. 10

number of alumni in Islamic boarding schools who are spread throughout Indonesia¹².

The existence of Kiai has by far granted them the role of non-formal leaders for the community. In national and governmental context, the roles and functions of Kiai are to fill the gap between weaknesses and strengths of the government, starting from the village and central levels. Therefore, it is not surprising that many government officials consult the Kiai or take advantage of using them during elections. In return, when the Kiai, the Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic organizations they lead experience difficulties in their operations, they will ask the officials to solve it. This relationship shows the presence of powers within the context of Kiai taking advantage of each other.

The incessant involvement of Kiai in political power, which continues until now, requires serious study to see the values that are built in this relationship, both to government officials and with Muslims in Indonesia. Through a social history approach, this research will explain how these values have lived among Indonesian Muslims from the pre-independence era until now.

B. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Kiai's knowledge of power and politics is not new let alone contested. Classical books taught from generation to generation have become genealogy of knowledge and used in Islamic boarding schools as traditions, written by medieval scholars which were not merely books that contained issues of ritual worship. It has far touched on the comprehensive fields needed in human life, as well as political issues¹³.

According to the history of Islam, the issue regarding power is embedded with significant thoughts and phenomena, laid up in detail and its universal nature, as depicted in the "Medina Charter"¹⁴. Through this

¹² A Asror, 'Reproduksi Islam Dalam Tradisi Keberagaman Populer Di Lingkungan Masyarakat Santri Jawa', 2010. p. 87

¹³ Vedi R. Hadiz and Khoo Boo Teik, 'Approaching Islam and Politics from Political Economy: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Malaysia', *Pacific Review*, 24.4 (2011), p. 463

¹⁴ Rasha Diab, 'Legal-Political Rhetoric, Human Rights, and the Constitution of Medina', in *Rhetorica - Journal of the History of Rhetoric* (University of California Press, 2018), XXXVI, p. 219

charter, the systematic incidents structuring a neatly structured model of government is displayed that empowers the society and the nation progress, and so much more what has shaped the political system of Rasulullah (May Peace Be Upon Him), during the Medina government which unveils the time and its modern place ¹⁵.

Barton (2014), mentions that the vast majority of all classical books about Kiai in carrying out religious practices affirm that the Prophet Muhammad was a religious leader as well as a political leader. His success in building Medina is viewed as an implicit call for Muslims to make a connection between religion and politics. This fact is not only accepted as a reality, it is even used as a teaching concept (*fiqh*) ¹⁶.

Looking at the source of the doctrine that is used as a reference for the Kiai for power, it is certain that Islamic politics must use religion-politics. Islamic politics aims to provide benefits in this world and in the hereafter, therefore the provisions used do not only refer to what was created by statesmen, philosophers and politicians but more importantly also use the provisions outlined in general by Allah. For this reason, it is necessary to refer to Islamic rules, even in state affairs ¹⁷. However, this alone is not finished to become the embodiment of a community regulation system that has different needs and of course cannot live on its own. If not regulated, there will be disputes that can lead to division and loss of peace. As a result, it is not calm and comfortable in carrying out worship ¹⁸. Therefore, "political science" is needed in contrast to "political fiqh". If "fiqh" is halal-haram, then "science" reaches out to "how to regulate and manage the public". Whereas in the Qur'an and Hadith it is never mentioned how the model of government is, whether it is a nation-state, kingdom, federal, republican and parliamentary. The existing texts

¹⁵ Md Nazrul Islam and others, 'Islam and Democracy: A Philosophical Debate', in *Islam and Democracy in South Asia* (Springer International Publishing, 2020), p. 67

¹⁶ Abdul Ghofur Maimuoen, 'Sejarah Fiqh Politik Islam: Upaya Memahami Lahirnya Model Negara Islam Dalam Fiqh Sunni', in *Khittah Dan Khidmah: Kumpulan Tulisan Majma' Buhuts An Nahdliyah*, ed. by M Bshri Adib Hattani (Pati: Majma Buhuts An Nahdliyah, 2014). p. 102

¹⁷ Zaman Stanizai, *How Islamic Is an Islamic State? A Theoretical Debate on Islamic Political Order*, 1 June 2020, p. 67

¹⁸ Muhammad Fuad Zain and Ridwan Ridwan, 'God and Human Sovereignty in Islamic Political Tradition', *Ijtima'iyah: Journal of Muslim Society Research*, 5.1 (2020), p. 10

only oblige Muslims to form a government without limiting the model, and also their obligation to obey the ruler¹⁹. Therefore, the concept of managing the state and government in Islamic teachings is not static, moreover it can always be negotiated with political needs²⁰. NU in state politics will refer to the religious values it adheres to.

Abdurrahman Wahid firmly emphasizes that the state political actions of the NU Kiai are based on views formed by religious beliefs as performed by intellectuals in building the civilization of the people. It is not based on one "ideology". Unlike other Islamic groups, the NU Kiai flawlessly develop their scholarly traditions. Its perfection comes from the traditions of *tauhid*, *fiqh* and *tasawuf*²¹. These three traditions become three main things in considering the future of human relations with others, as well as in politics. In Islamic politics, the Kiai is mainly responsible (*tauhid*) for dealing with God's work and carrying out the *fiqh* for the common welfare (*tasawuf*)²².

Based on these three traditions, there are teachings that give meaning and meaning to everyone who runs. In carrying out Islamic politics, the Kiai adhere to this tradition, the goal is to lead to *maslahah* (the common good), which is the core of every legal and policy determination in politics. This goal is better known as the concept of *maslahah mursalah*, once again which is the core of all *qoidah fiqh* sparks (rules in establishing law)²³. The consideration in determining the *maslahah* is based on the *maqosid* of Islamic sharia known as the concept of *kulliyatul khoms*, in the form of *hifdz al din* (religious rights), *hifdz al nafs* (right to life), *hifdz al á ql* (right to thought), *Hifdz al nasl* (right of descent).), and *Hifdz al mâl* (rights of wealth processing)²⁴. From there,

¹⁹ Maimuoen, p. 110

²⁰ Nazek Jawad, 'Democracy in Modern Islamic Thought', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 40.3 (2013), p. 324

²¹ Greg Barton, 'The Gülen Movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: Progressive Islamic Thought, Religious Philanthropy and Civil Society in Turkey and Indonesia', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 25.3 (2014), p. 287

²² Bush and Fealy, p. 201

²³ M. Jadul Maula, 'Kembali Ke Khittah 1945: Negara Republik Indonesia Adalah "Negara Islam" Nya Umat Islam Indonesia Menurut NU', in *Khittah Dan Khidmah: Kumpulan Tulisan Majma' Buhuts An Nahdliyah*, ed. by M. Bishri Adib Hatani (Pati: Majma Buhuts An Nahdliyah, 2014), p. 186

²⁴ Kosim, 'Law Politics in Sharia Perspective', *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews*, 7.4 (2019), p. 297

Kiai Mahfud Siddiq's statement about *mabadi' khoiru ummah* (a path that shapes the best ummah) developed in the late 1930s. This concept concerns the socio-economic improvement of the people. Continuing to be reaffirmed by the kiai at the 26th congress in 1979 with the concept of *syuun ijtimaiyah* (social care) ²⁵.

The direction and implementation of the *maslahah* provisions cannot be separated from attitudes that have to be considered, namely *tawasuth* (neutral manner) *tawazun* (equity), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *i'tidal* (fairness) ²⁶. In establishing peace for the nation and the world, it is crucial to understand the concept that was coined by Kiai Ahmad Siddiq at the 1987 NU National Conference, namely *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), *ukhuwah watoniyah* (national brotherhood) and *ukhuwah basyariyah* (human brotherhood) ²⁷.

These guidelines and methods are believed to be the principles in carrying out Islamic politics that are soft, peaceful, dignified and civilized. The aspiration determining the "representation" of Allah's will in the form of social welfare and religiosity complies with the concept echoed about *izzul Islam wal Muslimin* (Islamic and Muslim glory) ²⁸.

Currently, the Islamic politics promoted by these Kiai are still considered as a strategic force to safeguard democracy and create human civilization. The study of Al-Hamdi (2017) and Hidayaturrahman & Sudarman (2019), shows Indonesia as the largest Muslim country, has almost reached two decades of a wave of democratization since the fall of authoritarian authority regulations in 1998. Kiai argues that democratization in Indonesia leading to prosperity is very likely, but the government has a slow pace towards democracy. Political parties, one of the important democratic institutions, do not have a significant answer to maintaining a democratic system because they are the sole representatives for creating government leaders and policies. Therefore, Islamic politics still has a strategic role in building the fate and future of Indonesia.

²⁵ Abd. Latif Bustami, *Resolusi Jihad: Perjuangan Ulama Dari Menegakkan Agama Hingga Negara* (Jombang: Pustaka Tebuireng, 2015), p. 222

²⁶ Tim PW LBM NU Jawa Timur, *Islam Nusantara; Manhaj Dakwah Islam Aswaja Di Nusantara* (Surabaya: PW LTN NU Jawa Timur, 2018), 91

²⁷ Andrée Feillard, 'Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia', 2013, p 236

²⁸ Abidin, 21

Especially Islamic boarding school as the real basis for Kiai to reign a democratic atmosphere ²⁹.

However, it does not rule out that Islamic politics will continue to shrink because the role of the Kiai is only used as vote panners, without maintaining the values that have long been the guidelines for previous Kiai in seeing the relationship between religion and state ³⁰. Although at present the power of the Kiai is still proven to be very calculated in general elections in Indonesia, for example the appearance of Kiai Ma'ruf Amin as vice president of the Republic of Indonesia ³¹.

C. METHODOLOGY

This study uses the social history method to approach research issues or what Ferdinand Broudel calls structural history ³². Development of the style of writing history and its analysis of historical phenomena using a structural approach, where humans as historical supporters are in the existing structures in the aspects of human life.

In principle, this study answers six main questions in history. The questions are what (what), when (when), where (where), who (who), why (why), and how (how), an event occurred. These questions are traced through the literature related to the focus of this research.

The focus of the research is directed at analyzing the study of the thoughts of the Kiai carried out by previous anthropologists by prioritizing the social background in the Kiai's Islamic political history as well as containing critical aspects for analyzing the political dynamics of the Kiai's Islam. This study was carried out by reconstructing the socio-political events involving traditionalist Kiai on the Indonesian political stage from before the independence period to the 2019 elections.

²⁹ Muh Nur Rochim Maksum, Musa Asy'arie, and Abdullah Aly, 'Democracy Education through the Development of Pesantren Culture', *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews*, 8.4 (2020), p. 10

³⁰ Ahmad Khoirul Umam and Akhmad Arif Junaidi, 'Political Islam: The Shrinking Trend and the Future Trajectory of Islamic Political Parties in Indonesia', *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik*, 30.1 (2017), p. 1

³¹ Thomas Pepinsky, 'Islam and Indonesia's 2019 Presidential Election', *Asia Policy*, 14.4 (2019), p. 54

³² Samuel Kinser, 'Annaliste Paradigm? The Geohistorical Structuralism of Fernand Braudel', *The American Historical Review*, 86.1 (1981), p. 63

In the framework of achieving research objectives, in this study the following methods are used:

1. Collection of resources (Heuristics). At this stage, activities are directed at the exploration, search, and collection of literary sources under study, both in the form of primary sources related to the Kiai's Islamic political footprint in Indonesia, as well as secondary sources related to the interpretation of political interactions carried out by the Kiai.
2. Verification and validation (source criticism and source validity). In each event, at least three literature sources were compared to ensure the authenticity, originality and integrity of the sources.
3. Interpretation (Analysis and Synthesis). Intended to unite some of the existing data, and grouped them by conceptual generalizations. In the process, objectively the data on the Kiai's Islamic political events are analyzed through the interpretation of the symbols used in the Kiai's Islamic political interactions. Interpretations are carried out using verified and validated literature sources.
4. Presentation of data. The model used descriptively reconstructs the political footprint of the Kiai Islam in Indonesia.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The fight against colonization to achieve independence is an irrefutable fact of the political role of the Kiai. The enthusiasm and drive for this role cannot be separated from the Islamic spirit which is the main background of the Kiai in Islamic missions³³. These struggles continue to amplify the roles they hold during the post-independence, New Order and Reform era.

The activities of the Kiai continued when Soekarno proclaimed Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945, but that did not mean that foreign interference had stopped from interfering in controlling Indonesia. This was addressed by the Kiai led by Kiai Hasyim Asyari by issuing a fatwa "*jihad* resolution" on 22 October 1945 which stated that *jihad* (war) against the legal invaders was *fardlu ain* (obligations imposed on each

³³ A. Syafii Maarif, *Islam Dan Politik Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 1988), p 229

individual)³⁴. This determination was further emphasized by the Kiai in the 16th congress in Purwokerto in 1946, wherein the congress the status of Indonesia's territory was raised to *darul harbi* (territories of war) which resulted in the call for jihad (war) for all Muslims³⁵.

At the beginning of independence, the political position of Islam had not shown any significant involvement in the political constellation in Indonesia because only 15 of the 136 Central Indonesian National Committees (KNIP) were representatives of Islam. Therefore, Islamic leaders called on the public to establish a political party by holding the Indonesian Muslim Community Congress in Yogyakarta, on November 7-8, 1945. This congress succeeded in forming the *Masyumi* Party (*Majelis Syura Muslimin Indonesia*) as the only political platform for Muslims³⁶.

The Islamic organizations adhering to the *Masyumi* members only lasted six years due to differences in point of view because *Masyumi* was largely controlled by the modernist group – its representation in the parliament and the disputes over appropriateness for the minister of religion at that time led the Kiai who were members of the NU organization to leave *Masyumi* in 1952. This resignation showed how NU Kiai did what was right referred to as "political necessity". This involvement in politics further convinced the Kiai that it offered the most effective means to fight for NU's religious and social independence. Power, authority and resources can be obtained through political means and traditional religious institutions. The Kiai then declared NU a political party. The appearance of NU as a political party participating in the 1955 election contestation cannot be underestimated. Evidence of the amount of support for the NU Kiai places NU as the political party who later won the third election after PNI and *Masyumi*³⁷.

Before the election, *Masyumi* became the ruling party three times, namely at the time of Prime Minister Muhammad Natsir (1950-1951), Prime Minister Sukiman (1951-1952) and Prime Minister Burhanuddin

³⁴ Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara, *Menemukan Sejarah Wacana Pergerakan Islam Di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 158

³⁵ Bustami, *Resolusi Jihad: Perjuangan Ulama Dari Menegakkan Agama Hingga Negara*, p. 143

³⁶ John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), p. 67

³⁷ Greg Fealy, *Ijtihad Politik Ulama: Sejarah NU 1952-1967* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2003), p. 43

Harahap (1955-1956). However, in the 1955 elections, PNI was the winner succeeding *Masyumi* as the ruling party (Esposito, 1984). In the following years, the representation of the Kiai battle in the government received a larger portion as ministers during the second term of Sostroamidjojo cabinet (1956-1957) until it was finally replaced by the New Order³⁸.

In 1956, when the Constituent Assembly held a session, regarding the formulation of the basic philosophy of the state using *Pancasila* and Islam, all Islamic-based parties supporting Islam were used as the basis of state ideology. But their vote was only 48 percent, while 52 percent supported *Pancasila*. Each group could obtain 2/3 of the votes for ratification of the constitution^{39 40}.

The rivalry among political parties in the democratic parliament ceased when a Presidential Decree was issued on July 5, 1959 which brought Indonesia to a guided democracy. This has caused political parties to change their strategy in their struggle, as did the NU and *Masyumi*.

The *Masyumi* movement which became a forum for modernist Muslim groups, prioritized a confrontational attitude towards the government, whereas the traditional Kiai chose a cooperative path. At that time, the Kiai, especially those who were members of NU, was claimed to be pragmatic and opportunistic. However, this was denied as part of the NU principles which have always been adhered to in formulating the idea of *masalah mursalah*. Such cooperative attitude was shown by the NU Kiai during the Alim Ulama Conference held in Cipanas which was led by the Minister of Religion, Kiai Masykur and attended by NU Kiai and Perti deciding that Soekarno and the ruling state officials as *waliyul amri can addhoru*, as a legitimate ruler because his power must be obeyed by the Muslims⁴¹.

³⁸ Fealy, 67

³⁹ Deliar Noer, *Partai Islam Di Pentas Nasional* (Jakarta: Grafiti Press, 1987), p. 82

⁴⁰ Adnan Buyung Nasution, *Aspirasi Pemerintahan Konstitusional Di Indonesia: Studi Sosio-Legal Atas Konstituante (1956-1959)* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1995), 77

⁴¹ Andree Feillard, *NU Vis a Vis Negara; Pencarian Isi, Bentuk Dan Makna* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 1999), p. 122

A title was awarded in order to allow sharia court, like the case in Sumatra, which has a higher position than the customary court.⁴² Such title granting was reiterated during the 20th Congress of NU, in Surabaya in 1954. President Soekarno also used this decision to legitimize the *Darul Islam* (DI) movement which was still strong by then. People may usually perceive or misinterpret this step as a form of flirt between the NU Kiai and the authorities for pragmatic purposes⁴³. A number of figures beheld this move as NU's political setback. Soekarno set his political policies like the basic character of the political behavior of the NU Kiai. Politically speaking, NU was perceived as being controlled by the authorities and in turn visibly seen as a weak opposition force that should instead have an impact on the country⁴⁴.

This step once realized, would recognize the legitimate authority called the Sunni Islamic political paradigm which acknowledges brutal leaders rather than chaotic politics owing to a lack of a leader⁴⁵. This view is reflected in the Kiai's Islamic politics which envisions achieving the benefit of the *maslahat ummah* rather than prompting a confrontational character that can sacrifice the benefit the *maslahat ummah*. It is important to emphasize that such a paradigm is applied based on the values developed in the tradition of Islamic *fiqh* boarding school. It is perceived that *fatwa* adopted a harsh policy for the Kiai about colonialists by issuing the "jihad resolution" which is thought to threaten the religious practice of Muslims, their lives and the Indonesian as a nation in general.

Masyumi is usually condoning a controversial stance against the authorities, who were later accused of treason because certain party figures were involved in the fight for the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI). *Masyumi* was finally dissolved by

⁴² Daniel Lev, *Islamic Courts in Indonesia: a Study in the Political Bases of Legal Institution*. (California: University of California Press, 1972), p. 42.

⁴³ Martin Van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradisi, Relasi-Relasi Kuasa Dan Pencarian Wacana Baru* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 1994), p. 143

⁴⁴ Amin Rais, 'Gerakan Islam Internasional Dan Pengaruhnya Bagi Gerakan Islam Indonesia', *Prisma Ekstra* (Jakarta, 1984), p. 36.

⁴⁵ Andree Feillard, 'Islam Tradisional Dan Tentara Dalam Orde Baru', in *Tradisionalisme Radikal: Persinggungan Nahdlatul Ulama Dengan Negara* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 1997), p. 70

Soekarno in 1960⁴⁶. The dissolution of *Masyumi* made NU the only political representation of Muslims in the political competition dominated by the Soekarno-PKI-Army (AD) camp. This is the momentum for the NU as the biggest Islamic force against communism. Then, the Kiai drove NU organization to establish subsidiary organizations in almost all professional fields, competing with the PKI movement in building its organizational wing, as part of the arrangement of the Islamic political base.⁴⁷ The Kiai's Islamic political dominance was evident in the DPR-GR composition where NU had 36 seats and simultaneously held strategic ministerial positions in the government and the Supreme Advisory Council (DPA)⁴⁸.

When Sukarno fell and was replaced by Suharto in the so-called New Order era, the NU Kiai was treated with suspicion. This was due to the active participation of NU Kiai in the power of Guided Democracy, even though the PKI “eradication” force formed by the NU wing organization, Ansor, was active in East Java. Tensions between the New Order and the Muslim community, particularly a number of NU Kiai, escalated in the elections held by the New Order government in 1971. Certain intimidation from the government side was noticed against potential voters through the *Golkar* political party by utilizing the Armed Forces of the New Order government⁴⁹. This tension continued and frustrated the Islamic parties, especially NU, when the government decided to fuse parties on the grounds of simplifying the political system. Thus, the NU Kiai could not refuse when their party was forced to fuse with other Islamic parties into the United Development Party (PPP) in 1973. This fusion was a form of weakening the civilian party and fully controlling the government under the pretext of stability.

This fusion reminds me of the *Masyumi* movement. However, the Kiai from NU though had a significant bargaining power as seen from the number of votes obtained in the 1955 and 1971 elections which is the highest among other Islamic parties, so the dominance of the NU Kiai at

⁴⁶ A. Syafii Maarif, *Islam Dan Masalah Kenegaraan: Studi Tentang Percaturan Dalam Konstituante* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1987).

⁴⁷ Selamat Efendi Yusuf, *Dinamika Kaum Santri* (Jakarta: Rajawali, 1983), p. 112

⁴⁸ Fealy, p. 78

⁴⁹ Bruinessen, p. 34

the beginning of the establishment of the PPP was still strong, including their political views. Kiai Bisyri Syamsuri, who at that time was PBNU's Rais Am, was appointed as Chairman of the PPP *Syuro* Council. At that time, the Kiai movement was more opposed to the government. This caused PPP and NU to be eliminated from the government circles. There was even a purge of PPP and NU people in the government, including those in the structure of the Ministry of Religion ⁵⁰.

The PPP has been suspected of having had confrontations with the government several times. After conducting a "walkout" in 1978, PPP experienced considerable government interference. The NU Kiai eventually acknowledged the defeat by the PPP leader, Naro because they unilaterally prepared a list of candidates for the 1982 election in which the portion of NU members was drastically reduced, and most of the important NU members were placed at the bottom of the list, so they could not possibly be elected. Despite the strong protests, the list proposed by Naro is the one recognized by the government.

Myriads of political problems encouraged the NU Kiai to reconsider their people: empowerment and the religion of the people. So that at the 26th Congress in 1979, the Kiai agreed to re-think how the socio-economic life of the people they are responsible for, especially those affiliated with NU. In the congress, the concept of *syuun ijtimaiah* was born. A year before the discourse on *syuun ijtimaiah* was raised, a number of NU Kiai had formed the Islamic boarding schools and P3M (Community Development Institute). The Kiai who are coordinated in this association carry out their social functions in community empowerment. So, in large and important Islamic boarding schools located in important regions, the Kiai formed an agency called the "Development Bureau" that functioned as the basis for the activities of the TPM (Community Development Workers). This is where conceptual and organizational work is carried out for the implementation of the village development program. Here, the Kiai also collaborated with representatives from non-religious institutions (LP3ES, LSP and so on) as sponsors ⁵¹.

The NU Kiai informed the lower class people during the 27th Congress held in 1984 strongly prompting the resolution which sparked

⁵⁰ Bruinessen, p. 86

⁵¹ Manfred Ziemek, *Pesantren Dalam Perubahan Sosial* (Jakarta: P3M, 1983), p. 45

the '*khittah nahdiya*' movement announcing the 'single principle of Pancasila' as the base of the national constitution, not based on religion but which cannot be used to replace the position of religion". Also, it unequivocally rejects the ideals of establishing an Islamic state that the government has eyed and which clearly demonstrates NU's loyalty to the government. This was a turning point indicating the relationship between the NU Kiai and the state authorities⁵². Such a relationship was enhanced in order to rid of the government suspicion, including ABRI, towards NU Kiai. Government officials were invited by influential Kiai in East Java to visit their Islamic boarding schools. Likewise, a number of influential Kiai were invited to attend Golkar recitation events or to come to the Palace.

The close collaboration between NU Kiai and the government caused an embodiment of PPP. Consequently, the results of the 1987 PPP election experienced a dramatic decline in vote acquisition. Kiai Abdurrahman Wahid was also in a confusing position when the government appointed him as a representative of Golkar in MPR. His nomination was merely symbolic because the MPR only existed for five years. No one rejected the nomination of Kiai Abdurrahman Wahid, but it was difficult for him to work closely with the NU since they reject the political practices given his position as Chairman of the PBNU as a result of Situbondo Congress. This fact reopened the debate about the "NU *khittah*". The debate continues as a result of dynamic politics. Even though Gus Dur was willing to become a member of the MPR, his attitude was still critical towards the government, criticizing the Kedung Ombo reservoir project in Central Java^{53 54}.

The debate continued on the 28th NU Congress in 1989. The Kiai and some political figures who were against the decree issued during the Situbondo Congress about the neutrality of NU, which was initially favorable to the government, decided to oppose and cancel the Congress. When Siddiq-Wahid was re-elected, it perpetuates previous decisions on the depoliticization of NU by the strict separation between NU and PPP which was hugely favored by President Soeharto, who was present at the

⁵² Bruinessen, p. 98

⁵³ Bruinessen, p. 85

⁵⁴ Greg Barton, *Biografi Gus Dur* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2002), 21

Congress showing more generosity towards NU and leaving an impression as a leader who is culturally close to NU Kiai ⁵⁵.

The political reforms in 1998 opened the door for the Kiai to participate in political practices and processes. Their support for political parties' formation allowing them to engage in politics showed a significant indication of Kiai being involved in politics. From there the National Awakening Party (PKB) was born which was fully supported by NU by involving NU Kiai at the central level known as the Team five, including Kiai Ma'ruf Amin (Rois Syuriah PBNU), Kiai Dawam Anwar (Katib Amm PBNU), H. Rozi Munir (Chairman of PBNU), Kiai Said Aqil (Deputy Katib), and H. Ahmad Bagja (Secretary-General of PBNU). Apart from that, there was also an assistance team consisting of all NU organization branches. The foundation of PKB automatically attracted many Kiai to be involved in politics whether those who were previously active in NU management or those who were only religious leaders at the Islamic boarding schools, from the central level to the regional level ⁵⁶. The 1999 general election proved that the role of Kiai, both those who ran for the legislature candidate and those who simply supported, had significant votes of PKB ranking it fourth after PDI, Golkar Party and PPP.

The Kiai's decision to preserve and keep Gus Dur as President of the Republic of Indonesia replacing President Habibbi was simply a political decision that involved all the Kiai members at the parliament. This support though came from the central axis prompted by Amin Rais through parties' coalition based on Muslim voters. Through an election involving MPR members, Gus Dur won the most votes ahead of Megawati ⁵⁷. When President Gus Dur resigned on July 21, 2001 as a result of the *Bulogate* and *Brunaigate* inquiry, the Kiai who were in PKB and those who were outside the political arena tried to thwart the Special Session by mobilizing a mass demonstration in Jakarta in front of the parliament and DPR/MPR (Parliament and People's Consultative Assembly of the

⁵⁵ Bruinessen, p. 91

⁵⁶ Effendi Choiri, *PKB, Politik Jalan Tengah NU, Eksperimentasi Pemikiran Islam Inklusif Dan Gerakan Kebangsaan Pasca Kembali Ke Khittah 1926* (Jakarta: Pustaka Ciganjur, 2002), p 127

⁵⁷ Muhammad Sobari, *Gus Dur Di Istana Rakyat* (Jakarta: LKBN Antara, 2000), p. 46

Republic of Indonesia) building. Some troops who were ready to shed their lives came in order to defend Gus Dur from his presidency⁵⁸.

The support strength of Kiai during the 2004 presidential election, split into two because two candidates strongly represented NU at that time, and with two vice president candidates, namely Kiai Hasyim Muzadi and Kiai Salahudin Wahid. Kiai Hasyim's position, who at that time Chairman of the PBNU, was massively criticized by Gus Dur camp and the Langitan axis, known as Kiai *khos* when Gus Dur announcing them during the Special Session (SS) regarding the presidential election of the transition regime in 1999. The Kiai members are: Kiai Abdullah Faqih (Langitan, Tuban), Kiai Abdullah Abbas (Buntet, Cirebon), Kiai Abdurrahman Khudlori (Tegalrejo, Magelang) and other East Java Kiai, like Kiai Mas Subadar (Pasuruan) Kiai Sholeh Qosim, Kiai Khotib Umar (Jember), Kiai Idris Hamid (Pasuruan), Kiai Anwar Iskandar (Kediri), Kiai Hamid Abdul Manan (Pamekasan), Kiai Nurul Huda and Kiai Munif Jazuli (Ploso), Kiai Nawawi Abdul Jalil (Sidogiri), Kiai Ja'far Yusuf (Sampang), Kiai Abdullah Ubaid (Langitan), and Kiai Lutfi Abdul Hadi (Malang). The problem is not only about Kiai Hasyim but also concerning the fatwa forbidding women to become president⁵⁹.

The other groups supporting Kiai Hasyim's candidacy encouraged the emergence of Lirboyo axis including: Kiai Idris Marzuqi and Kiai Abdullah Kafabih (Lirboyo), Kiai Masduqi Mahfudz (Malang), Kiai Ali Masyhuri (Sidoarjo), Kiai Zainuddin Jazuli (Ploso), Kiai Abd. Ghofur (Lamongan), Kiai Hasyim Syaharga (Banyuwangi), Kiai Bashori Alwi (Malang), Kiai Mansur Sholeh (Jember), Kiai Zubair (Bangkalan), Kiai Muaffa Asyari (Pamekasan), Kiai Subadar (Pasuruan), Kiai Miftahul Ahyar (Surabaya) and others listed in the Medina Charter Document supporting the Kiai for the nomination of Megawati-Hasyim Muzadi (Noeh, 2014: 106-18). During the second round of the 2004 presidential election, the Langitan axis affirmed their neutrality because their candidate

⁵⁸ Andree Feillard, 'Indonesian Traditionalists Islam's Troubled Experience with Democracy', *Archipel*, 64 (2002), p. 117

⁵⁹ munawar Fuad Noeh, *Kyai di Panggung Pemilu: Dari Kyai Khos Sampai High Cost* (Jakarta: Rene Book, 2014), p. 79

failed. The Kiai let the community to decide whether to support the pairs Mega-Hasyim or SBY-Kalla ⁶⁰.

Then, the PKB camp split which prompted the creation of a new party from among the NU Kiai, namely the Ulama National Awakening Party (PKNU) in 2006. Initially, during the 2nd Congress in 2005, another incident occurred when some members of Kiai from the Langitan group including Gus Solah and Kiai Yusuf Hasyim, Tebuireng considered PKB as illegitimate. An election was held during the Congress which designated Gus Dur as Chairman of the Syuro Council and Muhaimin as General Chair of PKB ⁶¹. As a result, the peak of that incident occurred on March 31, 2007, where 17 Kiai from the Langitan axis declared the foundation of PKNU in front of the people and the Kiai at the Langitan Islamic Boarding School ⁶². PKNU participated during the 2009 elections even though it did not obtain the vote threshold during the central legislative elections. The PKNU no longer participated during the 2014 elections.

The following referendum to elect the Head of Region in 2015 strengthened the public appearance of Kiai to participate in the political arena. A number of Kiai or Nyai who participated in the election contested, including Gus Yasin, son of Kiai Maimun Zubair, paired with Ganjar Pranowo as Deputy Governor of Central Java, Kiai Fathul Huda (Tuban), Nyai Kartika Hidayati (Lamongan), Kiai Moch. Qosim (Gresik), Kiai Syaefuddin (Sidoarjo), Kiai Hamid Wahid and Kiai Fadil Muzakki (Situbondo), Kiai Busyro Karim and Nyai Dewi Khalifah (Sumenep), and in Jember Regency, Kiai Arief Muqiet who paired with Faidah ⁶³.

The strength of Islamic identity on the Indonesian political scene ⁶⁴ has recently attracted political observers and academics. Mass

⁶⁰ Noeh, p. 92

⁶¹ Abd. Latif Bustami, *Kiai Politik Dan Politik Kiai* (Malang: Pustaka Bayan, 2009), p. 58

⁶² Tim ELVEKA Institute, *Indonesia Negeri Kiai: KH. A. Sofyan Miftahul Arifin Bukan Kiai Kampung* (Surabaya: ELVEKA Institute, 2008), p. 21

⁶³ Mohammad Hidayatullah and Sudarman Sudarman, 'Kiai and Political Relations Reconciling Politics and Religion in Indonesia', *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 18.2 (2019), p. 371.

⁶⁴ Aulia Nastiti and Sari Ratri, 'Emotive Politics: Islamic Organizations and Religious Mobilization in Indonesia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, 40.2 (2018), p. 196

mobilization embedded with Islamic attributes ⁶⁵ demonstrated in several actions to defend Islam in the 2017 gubernatorial election in Jakarta and the 2019 presidential election. On the other hand, a moderate group of traditional Islam prompted another movement in response to holding more political events following the ideology from secular nationalists ⁶⁶. Reminiscing back to historical records, these factions are convincing as non-perennial historical incidental facts. Based on incidents occurred after independence, this phenomenon is an indication demonstrating a significant transformation.

The Islamic identity exhibited in various areas in Indonesia including Jakarta, indicates the Islamic formalism activities that are used for certain purposes. "This is purely politics, not based on a religious spirit," said Kiai Ma'ruf Amin, Jokowi's running mate in the 2019 presidential election ⁶⁷. A number of Kiai are also worried about it fearing that religion was used as a symbol to hide political interests by digging up the justification of arguments.

During the 2019 presidential election, Rois Amm PBNU, as a result of the 33rd Congress in 2015, Kiai Makruf Amin ran for Jokowi's representative. According to KPU decision on May 22, 2019, the pair Jokowi-Ma'ruf won the election as President and Vice President respectively in the next coming term. Observers commented on their victory as lucky pairs because Kiai Ma'ruf Amin was able to unite the NU voters in the 2019 presidential election.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Considering the values that are used as a foothold as well as the teachings formulated by the kiai in Islamic politics in Indonesia, it is not surprising that kiai's involvement in politics in Indonesia is deeply rooted.

⁶⁵ Dimitar Gueorguiev, Kai Ostwald, and Paul Schuler, 'Rematch: Islamic Politics, Mobilisation, and the Indonesian Presidential Election', *Political Science*, February, 2019, p. 187

⁶⁶ Lili Romli, 'Political Identity and Challenges for Democracy Consolidation in Indonesia', *Politik Indonesia: Indonesian Political Science Review*, 4.1 (2019), p. 78

⁶⁷ Jefferson Citation Nubowo, Andar; Ng, *The Three Streams Facing Indonesian Muslims: Pulls of Politics* (Singapore, 2019), p. 69

Especially if it is drawn to the pattern of struggle of the kiai in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries not only appear as a voice-raiser in practical politics, but more than that can formulate principles that refer to religiosity, philosophy and statesmanship as we can see from the triggers of kiai responding to the dynamics of politics in Indonesia.

On the other hand, the role of politics is nothing more than a vote getter. This is the anxiety of many people, especially supporters and sympathizers. In such cases, most kiai are only utilized by party machines or successful teams of candidates—although there can be contracts or reciprocal material gains through government program projects. Kiai's role is limited to vote getter has uprooted the roots of kiai subtansi as a guide of the ummah and monitor in the formulation of strategic principles carried by the party and candidate pairs in the election. The most prominent impact felt by the grassroots is the struggle for influence between kiai, thus dividing the community.

This phenomenon caused uncertainty for the community about their choice. For those who were used holding rational thinking about the ideal function of the institutions that constitute the structure of society, they would consider Kiai as role models, spiritual teachers and teachers. In contrast, those who hold superficial mindset, would experience problems not only for themselves but also for the increasingly murky political competition, especially if supported by social media.

This study is to rethink and evaluate the involvement of Kiai in the political arena. The religious vision or religious politics that has become a tradition should be used as guidance in the Kiai's involvement in practical politics as has been echoed by his predecessors. In addition, this study provides a complete picture of the political Islam of the Kiai, which is tinged more or less by clashes between the NU Kiai themselves. This needs to be a concern for the Kiai circles in order to maintain the unity of the people and to focus more on the goals in Islamic politics, namely the benefit of the ummah and counteracting all efforts that can divide the unity of the nation.

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