

Beyond the Islamic State and Secularism: Nahdlatul Ulama and the Search for Religious–Nationalist State Model

Antara Negara Islam dan Negara Sekuler: Nahdlatul
Ulama dan Gagasan Negara Religius-Nasionalis

M. Zaki Mubarak & Idris Thaha

Abstract: *This article aims to analyze the dynamics of politico-religious thought within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) concerning the relationship between Islam and the state in Indonesia, with particular reference to the ideas of Wahid Hasyim, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Salahuddin Wahid. Existing studies primarily focus on institutional or ideological debates on Islam and the state, while little attention has been given to the internal intellectual evolution of religion–state thought within Nahdlatul Ulama across generations. Employing a qualitative approach, this study uses an intellectual comparative method by examining key writings, speeches, and the historical contexts shaping the thought of these three figures. The article explores patterns of continuity and changes in NU's responses to the question of the state foundation within a pluralistic society. The findings reveal that NU's political thought has evolved historically and is not monolithic; rather, it reflects three major tendencies: shari'a formalism, religious substantivism supporting pluralist secularism, and religio-nationalism as a synthesis. Wahid Hasyim represents a formalistic orientation that emphasizes the institutionalization of Islamic principles within the state; Abdurrahman Wahid advances a substantive approach that rejects formalization and support pluralist secular state; while Salahuddin Wahid proposes a religio-nationalist formulation that accommodates religious values without establishing them as the formal basis of the state. The study finds that these shifts are shaped by historical and sociological dynamics, including constitutional processes and the flexibility of Sunni fiqh traditions. It concludes that the relationship between religion and the state within NU constitutes a dynamic spectrum, with religio-nationalism emerging as the most adaptive model for reconciling religiosity and pluralism in Indonesia's democratic context.*

Keywords: Nahdlatul Ulama; religious-nationalist state; Islamic political thought; religion–state relations



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Abstrak: Artikel ini menganalisis dinamika pemikiran politik-keagamaan di kalangan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) terkait relasi Islam dan negara di Indonesia, dengan fokus pada pemikiran Wahid Hasyim, Abdurrahman Wahid, dan Salahuddin Wahid. Studi-studi yang ada sebagian besar berfokus pada perdebatan kelembagaan atau ideologis tentang Islam dan negara, sementara sedikit perhatian diberikan pada evolusi intelektual internal pemikiran agama-negara dalam Nahdlatul Ulama lintas generasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis komparatif intelektual, melalui penelusuran terhadap karya-karya, pidato, serta konteks historis yang melatarbelakangi pemikiran ketiga tokoh tersebut. Artikel ini mengkaji pola kontinuitas dan perubahan dalam respons NU terhadap persoalan dasar negara dalam konteks masyarakat plural. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran politik NU berkembang secara historis dan tidak bersifat monolitik, melainkan membentuk tiga kecenderungan utama, yaitu formalisme-syariatik, substantif keagamaan yang menopang pluralisme sekularisme dan nasionalisme-religius sebagai sintesis. Wahid Hasyim merepresentasikan orientasi formalistik yang menekankan pentingnya institusionalisasi nilai Islam dalam negara; Abdurrahman Wahid mengedepankan pendekatan substantif yang menolak formalisasi agama dan lebih menekankan nilai-nilai universal Islam; sementara Salahuddin Wahid menawarkan formulasi nasionalisme-religius yang mengakomodasi nilai agama tanpa menjadikannya sebagai dasar formal negara. Temuan utama penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pergeseran pemikiran tersebut dipengaruhi oleh dinamika historis dan sosiologis, termasuk proses konstitusional serta fleksibilitas tradisi fikih Sunni. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa relasi agama dan negara dalam tradisi NU membentuk spektrum yang dinamis, dengan nasionalisme-religius sebagai model paling adaptif dalam menjembatani religiusitas dan pluralitas dalam demokrasi Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Nahdlatul Ulama; negara nasionalis-religius; pemikiran politik Islam; relasi agama dan negara

Introduction

Debates over the design and form of the Indonesian state have persisted since the early years of independence. Far from being merely institutional questions, these debates have unfolded as arenas of ideological contestation in which competing political and religious forces continuously negotiate their visions of the state. In a deeply plural society—marked by ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity—contestation over state formation is inseparable from a more fundamental question, how should the relationship between religion and the state be defined and institutionalized.¹ In this regard, debates over the form of the Indonesian state have not been merely technical or constitutional, it also reflects a persistent tension between competing normative visions of political legitimacy and the sources of authority in public life.

In the ideological debate facing the “Golongan Kebangsaan” which is fighting for the idea of a nationalist-secularist state, Islamic figures, including those from Nahdlatul Ulama, are faced with a challenging test: to find a form of state that is in line with the values and aspirations of Muslims, but is also acceptable to other groups of Indonesian society. This debate about state and religion continued into subsequent periods. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was at the forefront of crucial and tense moments in this dispute. The evolution of thought within Nahdlatul Ulama regarding the relation between religion and state represents one of the most important cases in the Muslim world because of the flexibility and sophistication of this organization in combining Sunni traditionalism, democratic participation, and accommodation of the modern nation-state.

From a theoretical standpoint, the relationship between religion and the state is neither fixed nor uniform. Rather, it is shaped by historical interactions among competing social and political forces. Within this framework, Ahmet T. Kuru² distinguishes between two main variants of secularism: assertive secularism and passive secularism. The former is characterized by active state efforts to exclude religion from the public sphere, as reflected in the model of *laïcité* in France and the secularization (Kemalism) experience of early twentieth-century Turkey. By contrast, passive secularism allows for the public expression of religion, as long as it does not undermine the basic principles of the state, as seen in United States and United Kingdom. In practice, these variations reflect the evolving and contested nature of secularism itself.³

However, this dichotomy does not fully capture the diversity of religion–state arrangements beyond Western contexts. As Rajeev Bhargava suggests in the case of India, the relationship is often more dialogical, with the state not only maintaining a degree of distance from religion but also engaging with it to sustain pluralism and social justice.⁴ In more recent debates, the post-secular perspective associated with Jürgen Habermas suggests that modernity does not necessarily displace religion from the public sphere. Instead, it opens up the possibility for more productive engagement between secular rationality and religious sources of normativity.⁵

To move beyond these normative debates, it is useful to consider how religion–state relations operate in practice. Empirical findings suggest that hardly any modern state is fully secular or fully religious. As Jonathan Fox shows, even in states commonly regarded as secular, religion continues to play a role—both formally and informally—in political processes. Conversely, states that claim a religious foundation are not entirely free from secular practices. He also notes that many Muslims express a preference for a greater role of Islam in state affairs.⁶ In this light, the relationship between religion and the state is better understood as a dynamic spectrum, rather than a fixed or rigid dichotomy.

In this context, Indonesia's plural social setting calls for a model of religion–state relations that is both inclusive and adaptive.⁷ Overly exclusive models—whether in the form of a religious state or a rigid secularism—tend to face limitations in addressing social complexity. Debates over the place of Islam in the state become even more intricate given that Muslims, despite constituting a majority, are far from homogeneous. Classical studies point to significant internal differentiation, including the well-known typology of *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi*, as well as the divide between modernist and traditionalist orientations.⁸ This fragmentation suggests that debates over religion–state relations are not confined to contestation between Muslim and non-Muslim groups, but also play out intensively within the Muslim community itself.

Within this broader theoretical framework, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) constitutes an important case to examine. As the largest traditionalist Islamic organization in Indonesia, NU has not only played a significant political role, but has also demonstrated a distinctive intellectual trajectory in responding to the relationship between Islam and the state. In its early phase, NU, alongside other Islamic groups and the Masyumi Party, supported efforts to formalize Islam within the state. However, following the failure of these initiatives and shifts in the political landscape—particularly during the New Order period—NU gradually reoriented itself toward accepting the Pancasila-based nation-state.

The roots of this flexibility can be traced back to the colonial period. At its 1936 congress in Banjarmasin, NU declared the Dutch East Indies as *dār al-Islām*, despite being under non-Muslim colonial rule. This position was grounded in jurisprudential considerations that emphasized public welfare (*maṣlaḥa*) and the continuity of religious practice, rather than the formal structure of political authority. This early stance suggests that NU has long developed a contextual and non-rigid approach to understanding the relationship between religion and the state.⁹

This transformation reached a clearer articulation during the New Order period, particularly through the 1984 NU congress, which marked the organization's return to the *khittah* of 1926 and its acceptance of the nation-state as a final political framework. Under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid, NU developed a more substantive approach, emphasizing that Islamic values could be realized without being formally institutionalized in the form of an Islamic state. This orientation resonates with perspectives that view religion–state relations as integrative and mutually reinforcing, rather than strictly dichotomous. At the same time, such ideas have not been without criticism, particularly from those who argue that the notion of a religiously neutral state overlooks the sociological reality of Indonesia as a deeply religious society. These debates underscore the continuing dynamism and openness of discourse on religion–state relations in Indonesia.

Amid the expanding body of scholarship on Islam and the state in Indonesia, much of the literature has focused either on ideological contestation between Islam and secular nationalism or on the institutional dimensions of state–religion relations. Studies that examine internal intellectual dynamics within Islamic organizations—particularly the shift from formalistic to more substantive approaches—remain relatively limited.

This article seeks to address this gap by examining the evolution of political thought within Nahdlatul Ulama through its key figures: Wahid Hasyim, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Salahuddin Wahid. It argues that NU's shifting political stance cannot be understood solely as a response to changing political circumstances, but rather as the outcome of sustained internal intellectual contestation that has led to a reinterpretation of the relationship between religion and the state in a plural society.

More broadly, the article shows that NU's flexible approach—traceable to the colonial period—provided an important foundation for its later move toward a more substantive orientation. In this sense, the evolution of NU's political thought reflects a long-term intellectual process in responding to pluralism and shifting configurations of power, while also contributing to the emergence of a distinctly Indonesian model of religion–state relations.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using comparative intellectual analysis to examine the evolution of religion–state thought within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). The analysis focuses on three influential NU figures—Wahid Hasyim (1914–1953), Abdurrahman Wahid (1940–2009), and Salahuddin Wahid (1942–2020)—who represent different generations and intellectual orientations within the organization. As direct descendants of NU founder Hasyim Asy'ari, their ideas provide an important lens for understanding continuity and transformation in NU's political thought.¹⁰

The study relies primarily on documentary sources, including books, articles, speeches, organizational archives, and official records of NU congresses, supplemented by relevant scholarly literature and media publications. The units of analysis consist of five dimensions: (1) ontology of the state, (2) sources of political legitimacy, (3) the role of sharia in governance, (4) democracy and pluralism, and (5) models of religion–state relations.

Methodologically, the study combines historical-interpretive analysis with comparative intellectual inquiry. The ideas of each figure are interpreted within their respective socio-political contexts and examined through Anthony Giddens's concept of the duality of structure, which highlights the reciprocal relationship between individual agency and social structures.¹¹

To situate NU's evolving political thought within broader theoretical debates, the analysis also engages with Kuru's framework of secularism and Habermas's post-secular perspective.¹²

Data analysis proceeds through three stages. First, thematic analysis is conducted to identify key concepts related to religion–state relations in the thought of each figure. Second, comparative analysis is used to examine similarities and differences across normative, conceptual, and contextual dimensions. Third, the findings are synthesized into a typological framework consisting of formalist, substantive, and religio-nationalist orientations, enabling a systematic interpretation of the evolution of NU's political thought.

Wahid Hasyim as a Proponent of the Islamic State

Wahid Hasyim represents a key figure within the so-called “Golongan Islam” in the debates over the foundation of the Indonesian state on the eve of independence. His involvement in the *Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (also known as *Dokuritsu Junbi Chōsakai*)—Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence—and the *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (Dokuritsu Junbi Inkai)*—Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence—underscores his position as an actor who consistently advocated for Islam as the basis of the state. He later served as the first Minister of Religious Affairs under Sukarno, holding office in 1945 and again from 1949 to 1952.

His argument for Islamic State was based on both theological and sociological grounds. For him, Islamic teachings provide a comprehensive set of principles for governing the state. He also believed in a sociological premise: that the legitimacy of the state would be stronger if grounded in values already embedded in society. In the Indonesian context, where Muslims constituted the majority, Islam was seen as the most relevant normative foundation for public life. By contrast, the adoption of a secular ideology—often viewed as “*asing*” or “imported”—was seen as likely to produce only formal acceptance, without deeper social resonance.

Within this framework, Wahid Hasyim rejected the dichotomy between Islam and nationalism. He drew a distinction between “secular nationalists” and “Islamic nationalists,” while maintaining that a Muslim is, in essence, also a nationalist.¹³ In this view, the formalization of Islam within the state was not seen as contradicting the spirit of nationalism, but rather as reinforcing it.

Wahid Hasyim articulated this more Islam-oriented position clearly in the debates within the *Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence) and the *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Preparatory Committee for Indone-

sian Independence) in the lead-up to independence. He proposed that Islam be designated as the state religion and that the president of Indonesia should be a Muslim. In his intervention, he emphasized the importance of a close relationship between government and society in a Muslim community, stating: “For Muslim society, the relationship between the government and the people is of utmost importance. Therefore, it is proposed that Article 4, paragraph (2), be amended by adding the phrase ‘who is Muslim’—*‘yang beragama Islam’*.”¹⁴ If the President of Indonesia were a Muslim, it was believed that his policies would reflect Islamic values.

Wahid Hasyim, along with a number of other figures within the Islamic group and several Islamic parties, was also a strong supporter of what became known as the “Jakarta Charter (Piagam Jakarta),” which affirmed the guarantee for the implementation of Islamic law in Indonesia. He advocated for the inclusion of the clause stating “the obligation for Muslims to carry out Islamic law”—“*kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi para pemeluknya*”—in one of the articles of the constitution.¹⁵ He argued that if Islamic elements were largely removed from the constitutional draft, the risks for Indonesia’s future existence would be too great. A disappointed Muslim community, he warned, if Islamic values were not accommodated, could withdraw its legitimacy from the national struggle. If such a situation were to occur, the very fate of Indonesia as a nation would be at stake.

Although many of their aspirations were ultimately not accommodated in the final constitutional arrangement, Islamic leaders did not openly express resistance. The Jakarta Charter—initially agreed upon—was abruptly removed on the grounds that certain groups objected and threatened secession. Despite deep disappointment, the Islamic camp continued to hold that the space for renegotiation remained open, as had been previously signaled by Sukarno.

Wahid Hasyim’s view of a state informed by Islamic principles was closely aligned with that of Hasyim Asy’ari, the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama and his father. While Hasyim did not explicitly argue for an Islamic state, what he emphasized was the necessity of a government committed to the implementation of Islamic law. In his speech at the opening of the 1946 Masyumi congress, he noted that although the Prophet Muhammad did not leave detailed prescriptions regarding the form of government or its technical arrangements, Muslims nevertheless bore the obligation to strive for a system of governance in Indonesia that would uphold Islamic law.

“...Islam does not prescribe a specific form of government. When the Prophet Muhammad was about to pass away, he did not leave any instruction regarding the method of selecting a head of state... thus, matters concerning the selection of a head of state and many other affairs of governance were not determined in terms of mechanism. Everything is left to Muslims in each respective place. For us, as Indonesian Muslims who have been freed from colonial rule, it is our duty to strive in an orderly

manner toward the realization of an Indonesian government that implements Islamic law. We want those who hold leadership to carry out Islamic law.”¹⁶

The articulation of Wahid Hasyim’s ideas on religion and the state remains relatively limited, drawing primarily from the minutes of debates within the *Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence) and the *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence) in 1945, as well as a number of speeches and compiled writings. His conception of an Islamic-oriented state was not yet clearly formulated in a systematic manner. In 1952, amid an increasingly tense political atmosphere leading up to the national elections, Wahid reaffirmed that the forthcoming elections should ensure the victory of Islamic principles and the election of those who supported the implementation of Islamic law. He stated: “For Muslims, what is most important is not the victory of Nahdlatul Ulama, or the victory of Masyumi, or the Indonesian Islamic Union Party (PSII), or Muhammadiyah. Rather, what matters is the victory of Islamic principles and the election of those who genuinely seek to implement Islamic law.”¹⁷

The ideas of Hasyim As’yari and Wahid Hasyim regarding state as instrument for implementing Islamic law, and the requirement for leaders to be Muslim, clearly align with the thinking of al-Mawardi and al-Ghazali, two classical Sunni thinkers who are key references for Nahdlatul Ulama.¹⁸ For this reason, NU in 1940 rejected Sukarno’s idea of a secular state, inspired by Kemal Ataturk’s revolution in Turkey in the 1920s.¹⁹

From the discussion above, it is evident that there is a clear line of continuity between the ideas of Hasyim Asy’ari and Wahid Hasyim regarding the importance of a government grounded in Islamic legal principles. Wahid passed away in 1953 following an accident, two years before the 1955 general election, which was won by the Indonesian National Party (PNI). The Nahdlatul Ulama Party came in third place, after the Islamic-oriented Masyumi Party, and above the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI).

Wahid’s emphasis on the implementation of Islamic law by the state echoed the aspirations of Islamic groups whose voices had been relatively marginalized in the constitutional debates a year earlier. The desire to embed a strong Islamic character in the newly established state continued to persist among many Islamic leaders. They continued to await the right political moment to project Indonesia as a state firmly grounded in Islamic principles.

Supporters of the idea of an Islamic-based state once again found a political platform in the Constituent Assembly debates of 1957–1959. With approximately 40 percent of the vote from the 1955 elections, Muslim politicians from NU, Masyumi, the Indonesian Islamic Education Union (Perti), and the Indonesian Islamic Union

Party (PSII) once again advocated Islam as the basis of the state, in opposition to other parties such as PNI, which promoted Pancasila as the state ideology.

However, the concept of an Islamic state advanced by NU Party in the Constituent Assembly was neither an authoritarian Islamic state nor a global caliphate as promoted by Hizbut Tahrir. Nor was it identical to the model of an Islamic state envisioned by Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosoewirjo. Rather, the idea of an Islamic-based state advocated by NU and Masyumi politicians was essentially a democratic form of Islamic governance.²⁰ A concept grounded in the belief that, within an Islamic system of governance, democracy can function and develop. Saifuddin Zuhri, one of the leaders of NU Party who later served as Minister of Religious Affairs under Sukarno, referred to it as “democracy through religious channels.”²¹ Meanwhile, M. Natsir referred to his conception of Islamic democracy as “theistic democracy.”²²

Efforts by parties supporting an Islamic state ultimately reached a dead end. A political deadlock emerged as neither side—the proponents of an Islamic state nor those supporting a secular state—was able to secure the required quorum, namely two-thirds of the total votes. In several rounds of voting, support for Islam as the basis of the state consistently fell short of its opponents. Nevertheless, the failure of Nahdlatul Ulama to realize the idea of an Islamic state through constitutional means did not trigger any inclination to resort to extra-constitutional actions, such as the path taken by Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosoewirjo with his Darul Islam rebellion. By contrast, a number of leaders of Masyumi Party, increasingly dissatisfied with Sukarno’s political direction, chose to join the separatist Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI) movement in West Sumatra.

Abdurrahman Wahid as a Proponent of the Pluralist Secular State

Abdurrahman Wahid—widely known as Gus Dur—represents an important phase of transformation in the political thought of Nahdlatul Ulama regarding the relationship between Islam and the state. He was a multifaceted figure: an Islamic intellectual and religious leader, a political actor, and an activist with extensive networks across religious and ideological boundaries. He led NU for three consecutive terms from 1984 to 1999, founded the National Awakening Party (PKB), and was elected President of the Republic of Indonesia at the onset of the Reform era (1999–2001). He is widely recognized as a liberal thinker who engaged broadly with figures across ideological divides and who consistently advocated for tolerance and democratization.

In contrast to earlier generations such as Wahid Hasyim, who tended to support the formalization of Islam in the state, Abdurrahman developed a substantive approach that rejected the notion of an Islamic state as a normative category within Islamic teachings. He supported the idea of a Pluralist Secular State where the state

should distance itself from religion and adhere to the principle of neutrality. The state should also not allow one worldview to dominate the public sphere. A Pluralist secular state emphasized the importance of the state providing equal treatment for all religions, protecting the diversity of religious worldviews, and encouraging reciprocal dialogue. According to Wahid, religions can make important contributions as sources of social and moral ethics in nation-building. This idea aligns with Robert N. Bellah's concept of public religion.

As an Islamic intellectual with a *pesantren* background and extensive global exposure, he combined theological and sociological analysis in understanding religion–state relations—an approach often referred to as the “indigenization of Islam” or “*pribumisasi Islam*”.²³ Building on this intellectual orientation, the implications for religion–state relations become clearer. First, reference must be made to Islamic sources, particularly the Qur’an; and second, to the lived social realities of society. From this perspective, Abdurrahman Wahid’s position is unequivocal: he did not support any attempt to establish an Islamic state. On the question of whether Islam contains a concept of the state, he responded plainly that it does not. He stated: “...throughout his life, the author (Gus Dur) has searched in vain for the entity called the Islamic state. To this day, he has not found it. It is therefore not incorrect to conclude that Islam does not provide a concept of how the state should be constructed and maintained.”²⁴

In this regard, Abdurrahman Wahid appears to share a similar line of reasoning with Ali Abdel Raziq—the Egyptian intellectual whose controversial book in the 1920s argued that Islam recognizes only three foundational principles of governance: justice (*‘adālah*), equality (*musāwāh*), and deliberation (*shūrā*). Accordingly, any state—regardless of its name or institutional form—that upholds these three principles can be considered legitimate within Islamic teachings. As Abdurrahman notes, this idea is secular in character and is generally rejected by many Muslims who continue to demand the formal application of Islamic law. For them, such a view risks reducing Islam from a direct source of law into merely a set of philosophical values.²⁵

For Abdurrahman, the absence of a clearly defined concept of the state in Islam implies that questions of state form and governmental system are ultimately determined by historical processes. Additional evidence supporting the conceptual indeterminacy of the idea of an Islamic state can be seen in the absence of any standardized model for selecting political leadership. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims did not inherit a clear blueprint for choosing his successor. The mechanisms of selecting the caliphs in the post-Prophetic period varied significantly across different contexts and moments. The situation is not fundamentally different today, as there is no consensus on a distinct “Islamic” model of leadership selection, pre-

cisely because no definitive formulation exists in the tradition. In this respect, Abdurrahman's view is broadly consistent with that of his grandfather, Hasyim Asy'ari, who concluded that the Prophet Muhammad did not leave behind any specific model of the state. However, Abdurrahman departs from this line of thought in his understanding of the state's primary obligation to implement Islamic law.

The key criterion for Muslims, for Abdurrahman, is not the formal label or structure of the state, but the extent to which it guarantees freedom for Muslims to practice their religion. The freedom to carry out religious obligations is, in his view, a *conditio sine qua non* for Muslims in assessing the legitimacy of political authority. Historically, Nahdlatul Ulama has upheld a similar principle: as long as religious practice is not obstructed and Muslims are free to perform their obligations, there is no reason to question the legitimacy of the government.²⁶

According to Abdurrahman, if the theological basis no longer provides support, then the sociological reality of Indonesia's highly plural society also serves as an objective reason for not pursuing an Islamic state. The implication is that any continued attempt to impose such a model would likely result in intense conflict. Opposition to the idea of an Islamic state, he argued, would not only come from non-Muslim groups but also from within the Muslim community itself, where significant segments reject such an interpretation. The stakes, in his view, are too high, as they could threaten national disintegration and even the possibility of regional secession.²⁷ In reality, the aspiration to establish an Islamic state is largely confined to a minority of Muslims, while the majority—often described as “statistical Muslims” or *abangan*—do not share any desire for an Islamic state.

Abdurrahman Wahid's political and religious thought, which leaves no room for the idea of an Islamic state in Indonesia, can be understood alongside the decline of a number of long-standing assumptions that were previously used to legitimize the notion of an Islamic state.²⁸ The assumption that Indonesia's Muslim majority would naturally translate into support for an Islamic state rests on the idea that shared religious identity necessarily produces aligned political preferences. However, the results of the 1955 election clearly demonstrated that the quantitative fact of a Muslim majority does not translate linearly into strong political support for Islamic agendas. In other words, Islam as a personal belief does not automatically correspond to a uniform political orientation. During the New Order elections, despite widespread manipulation by the regime, there was still limited evidence of significant popular support among Muslims for Islamic political platforms. The vote share of the United Development Party (PPP)—the only formal Islamic political vehicle—remained stagnant and politically non-dominant. Against this backdrop, Abdurrahman Wahid's decision to move away from the “dead end” of Islamic political for-

malism under Suharto was politically strategic. This position was formally consolidated at the 1984 NU congress, where Abdurrahman and younger NU activists played a key intellectual role in steering Nahdlatul Ulama back to the khittah of 1926 and affirming the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) based on Pancasila as a final framework. Under his leadership, Wahid encouraged his supporters to abandon the struggle for the formalization of Islamic politics. Instead, he actively campaigned for inclusive and substantive Islamic values, civil rights, tolerance, and democracy. Abdurrahman's vision aligned with the post-Islamism ideas advocated by liberal intellectual Asef Bayat.²⁹

Abdurrahman's departure from Islamic formalism also extended a reformist intellectual trajectory that had earlier been articulated by Muslim intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid, who had called for the "necessity of secularization."³⁰ In the early 1970s, Nurcholish Madjid sparked controversy with his well-known slogan, "Islam, yes; Islamic party, no," in an effort to convince Muslim voters that Islamic aspirations and interests could be advanced through any political channel, and not necessarily through Islamic political forces or Islamic parties.

Abdurrahman Wahid's thinking is broadly in line with that of Nurcholish Madjid. As a thinker who prioritizes substantive dimensions, Nurcholish holds that a secular state and its legal framework do not need to be placed in opposition to Islamic law. For him, the substantive values of Islam can remain alive and be preserved within a secular legal order, making a formal application of Islamic law unnecessary. As long as laws and their implementation are just, they are already compatible with Islamic principles. From this perspective, Muslims should not be trapped in a formalistic understanding of the sharia, but instead focus on its ultimate objective—namely, the realization of justice for all human beings. This reflection of Nurcholish's socio-religious thought mirrors many characteristics of what is often described as post-Islamism, which moves away from exclusive and formalistic models of Islamic politics toward a more inclusive, liberal, and progressive orientation.

Salahuddin Wahid and the Middle Path of a Religious-Nationalist State

Salahuddin Wahid (Gus Sholah) offers a more moderate and integrative "middle path" compared to his predecessors. He was a prominent figure within Nahdlatul Ulama, widely recognized as a kyai, intellectual, and social activist with a reputation for moderation and reflection. As the son of Wahid Hasyim and younger brother of Abdurrahman Wahid, he was situated within the direct intellectual lineage of NU's founding family, representing both continuity and a degree of intellectual differentiation.

In contrast to Abdurrahman, who developed a more liberal substantive approach, Salahuddin occupied a more balanced position, emphasizing the importance of religion in public life without advocating the formalization of an Islamic state. He was active in various educational and social institutions and also served as caretaker of the Pesantren Tebuireng.

In discussions on religion–state relations, Salahuddin often criticized the idea of a fully “religion-neutral” state, arguing that the state must still accommodate the sociological reality of Indonesian society as a religious nation, particularly the majority Muslim population, while maintaining principles of justice and inclusivity in national life.

According to Salahuddin, Indonesia’s choice is neither an Islamic state nor a secular state. In his view, the effort to reconcile Islam and Indonesian-ness is undoubtedly complex, but historically the relationship has increasingly moved toward complementarity and convergence rather than divergence. In short, the relationship is becoming more accommodative and mutually reinforcing, rather than dichotomous or antagonistic. Without becoming a religious state, substantive Islamic values have gained greater space within state governance. Moreover, various Islamic aspirations have already been accommodated in state legislation and institutions.

Through his writings, Salahuddin sought to demonstrate that Indonesia’s evolving nationhood does not marginalize Islamic aspirations; rather, it gradually incorporates them. Many government policies during both the New Order and Reform eras, in his view, have reflected this accommodation of Muslim interests.³¹ In other words, a symbiotic process between Islam and the state has taken place, in which both reinforce each other’s existence. Models of politics that exclude religion, such as *laïcité* in France, are clearly no longer popular and lack social grounding in Indonesia’s increasingly religious society.

For Salahuddin Wahid, political parties in the post-reform era have played an important role in sustaining this symbiotic relationship between Islam and the state. Not only Islamic parties, but also nationalist parties, have come to accept a state that provides space for religious participation in national development. In his view, the growing number of state policies accommodating religious interests is a positive development, reflecting the gradual decline of perspectives that position Islam and nationalism in an oppositional framework.³²

However, Salahuddin Wahid emphasized that the constructive relationship between religion and the state must still observe clear boundaries that cannot be transgressed. Religion should not dominate the state, just as the state should not dominate religion. He opposed the imposition of will by certain hardline Islamic groups seeking to transform Indonesia into an Islamic state. In his view, the establishment of an Islamic caliphate or any other form of Islamic government is by no means a

solution to the country's social and political problems; rather, it would create serious challenges with the potential to fragment the nation. The idea of a religious state, he argued, is fundamentally at odds with Indonesia's plural social reality. For those still harboring the dream of an Islamic caliphate, Salahuddin stated:

One of the troubling issues is the presence of groups that reject a state based on Pancasila. They regard the Republic of Indonesia as a state that does not conform to Islamic teachings, even labeling it a *thaghut* state (a state that replaces God's law). Some seek to transform Indonesia into an Islamic state, while others aspire for it to become part of an Islamic caliphate (*khilafah Islamiyah*).³³

There is, however, no guarantee that the establishment of an Islamic state (*daulah khilafah Islamiyah*) or a caliphate would directly lead to the realization of the rule of law or the improvement of governmental bureaucracy.³⁴

For Salahuddin Wahid, the slogan "Sharia and Caliphate are the Solution" reflects an ahistorical and potentially misleading simplification. He emphasizes that Indonesian nationhood emerged from negotiated consensus among diverse groups within a plural society marked by ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Any attempt to impose a singular political vision at the expense of others' aspirations, he cautions, carries the risk of national fragmentation.

From a conceptual standpoint, his ideas represent a synthesis of two intellectual currents within NU: the formalist Islamic orientation associated with Wahid Hasyim and the pluralist secular orientation developed by Abdurrahman Wahid. The result is a model of a religious-nationalist state that is not formally grounded in religion, yet remains committed to integrating religious values in a balanced manner.

Within this framework, state alignment with the interests of religious communities—including Muslims as the majority—is considered legitimate, as long as it does not violate the principles of justice and inclusivity. He even points out that Western states often described as secular still provide space or certain privileges to their majority religious groups. For this reason, Salahuddin argues that the ideal design of religion-state relations in Indonesia lies in a middle path: neither a religious state nor a secular state that marginalizes religion. This model, in his view, best corresponds to Indonesia's dual character as both a religious and plural society.

Thus, the concept of a religious nationalist state lies somewhere between a passive secular state and a religious state. In this concept, the state goes beyond being friendly to religions, but also promotes the faith and piety of its citizens. The state also proportionally permits the existence of formal religious institutions, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and a number of religiously based legislation. For its supporters, Indonesia as a religious nationalist state has a strong legal and socio-historical foundation. The first principle of Pancasila, Belief in One Almighty God,

and the strong religiosity of Indonesian society are the *raison d'être* for the design of an Indonesian state that promotes religions.

The concept of a religious national state that opens up space for the formalization of religious rules, in this case Islamic sharia, and the existence of state religious institutions to serve the interests of religious communities, demonstrates a different position from Habermas's post-secularist discourse. While Habermas criticized the concept of classical secularism, which he considered to have failed to understand the resilience of religion, he encouraged modern secular societies to accept the role of religion constructively by opening public space for religious discourse in political debate.³⁵ However, religious aspirations voiced through rational public language must ultimately be accepted as secular products. Habermas's ideas are more in line with Abdurrahman Wahid's concept of a secular pluralist state.

Discussion: Dialectics and Typology of NU Thought on Religion–State Relations

The spectrum of thought among the three figures mentioned above demonstrates that the intellectual struggle within NU regarding the relationship between religion and state cannot be reduced to a single doctrinal position. Instead, it reflects an ongoing process of internal negotiation between competing normative orientations, shaped by shifting political contexts and generational change.

The variations in their views on religion and the state can be traced back to differences in their religious reasoning and their respective responses to the socio-political environments they faced. Wahid Hasyim grounded his views in classical Sunni Islamic thought; Abdurrahman, concerned with minority issues and pluralism, drew significant inspiration from both Islamic and liberal Western thinkers; and Salahudin Wahid adopted a more sociological-pragmatic approach amidst the rising aspirations for greater political representation among Islamic groups in the post-authoritarian New Order era.

Drawing on the sociologist Peter I. Berger,³⁶ the diverse responses of these figures regarding the religion-state relationship represent “structures of plausibility” that emerged as they—acting as agents—interacted with the challenges and conditions of varying social structures. Among these three approaches, Abdurrahman Wahid's concept of “substantive Islam” underpinning a pluralistic, secular state appears the most progressive, yet it garnered minimal support both from the Muslim community or NU's followers; conversely, he received strong backing from the minority groups that were the focus of his concern. Wahid Hasyim's ideas, which championed an Islamic ideology, appear the most conservative but consistently enjoyed NU's support, at least until the late 1950s. As for Salahudin Wahid—though less prominent as a public figure than the other two—his concept of a “religious-nationalist

state” benefited from the crisis of secularism and the surge in political Islamic aspirations during the Reformasi era.

Broadly, the variations in thinking on Islam and the state among Wahid Hasyim, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Salahuddin Wahid can be grouped into three main intellectual currents (see comparative table). Their ideas cover key dimensions such as the ontology of the state, sources of legitimacy, the role of sharia, political orientation, and models of religion–state relations. Within the NU tradition, these variations can be systematically classified into three streams: sharia formalism (Wahid Hasyim), pluralist secular (Abdurrahman Wahid), and religious nationalism as a synthesis (Salahuddin Wahid). Rather than being discrete categories, these currents form a continuum that interacts and evolves historically, reflecting an epistemological shift in NU’s political thought.

“Comparative Table of Religion–State Thought within NU”

Analytical Dimensions	Wahid Hasyim	Abdurrahman Wahid	Salahuddin Wahid
Historical Contexts	Early independence / formulation of the state foundation	New Order to early Reform era	New Order to early Reform era
Basic Orientation	Formalistic-institutional	Pluralist-inclusive	Moderate-integrative
Position on the Islamic State	Tended to support	Rejected as a necessity	Does not promote, but does not fully reject, a religious basis
Views on Secularism	Skeptical of secularism	Reinterpreted secularism (not anti-religion)	Critique of overly abstract neutral secularism
Religion-State Relations	Religion as the basis of the state	Religion as a source of values	Religion as a proportionate source of legitimacy
Role of the State toward Religion	The state formally supports Islam	The state is neutral and guarantees all religions—not only Islam	The state is not fully neutral, taking the majority into account
Concept of Justice	Justice based on Islamic values	Universal and equal justice	Proportional justice (not always identical to absolute equality)
Jurisprudential/Normative Approach	Normative-doctrinal	Contextual-hermeneutic	Normative-contextual
Political Strategies	Formalization through the constitution	Cultural and substantive	Negotiation between normative principles and political realities
Typology	Formalist	Pluralist	Integrative

As reflected in the table, the three intellectual currents do not stand as separate and isolated categories. Rather, they form a continuum of thought that moves from formalism toward substantivism, and from exclusivism toward inclusivism. This evolution within NU thought is shaped not only by a more flexible understanding of Islamic jurisprudence, but also by the lived political and social experiences of the three figures, particularly at critical junctures in Indonesia's nation-building process.

From an analytical perspective, this trajectory can be read as a form of historical dialectic. On one side, Wahid Hasyim represents the initial thesis: the idea of a state grounded in Islam, with strong emphasis on the sociological legitimacy of the Muslim majority and the role of the state in implementing sharia. As reflected in the dimensions of "state–religion relations" and "sources of legitimacy" in the table, this position is fundamentally formalistic, viewing the state as an institutional instrument for realizing religious norms.

In contrast, Abdurrahman Wahid advances an antithesis that explicitly rejects such formalization. Within the same analytical framework, he shifts the basis of legitimacy from normative textual authority to substantive ethics, and from the state as an enforcer of sharia to the state as a guarantor of freedom. If Wahid Hasyim occupies the formalistic pole, Abdurrahman moves toward functional differentiation: religion and state operate in distinct domains, yet remain capable of interacting at the level of shared values. In this sense, the difference between the two is not merely political but epistemological—shifting from a normative-theological approach to a historical-sociological one.

Meanwhile, Salahuddin Wahid occupies a synthetic position that bridges these two poles. Across nearly all dimensions of comparison—ranging from the position of religion in the state, models of relations, to attitudes toward pluralism—he consistently demonstrates a moderating pattern. The state, in his view, should neither become an instrument of religion (as in the formalistic model) nor be entirely neutral in a strict secular sense. Instead, it must accommodate public religiosity in a proportional manner while maintaining commitments to justice and inclusivity. This synthesis is therefore not merely a compromise, but a new normative formulation that is more attuned to Indonesia's sociopolitical realities.

If pushed further, the differences among the three figures cannot be separated from their respective historical contexts. Wahid Hasyim operated in the early phase of state formation, when the question of the state's ideological foundation was still open and ideological contestation reached its peak, particularly in the BPUPKI and PPKI deliberations. In contrast, Abdurrahman Wahid emerged in a period when the state was already consolidated but faced problems of authoritarianism and political

exclusion under the New Order, which pushed him to emphasize democracy, pluralism, and limits on the state's role in regulating religion. Meanwhile, Salahuddin Wahid developed his thinking in the post-reform era, when religion–state relations were no longer debated at an existential level, but rather in terms of quality and intensity of interaction.

Beyond contextual factors, this dynamic was also shaped by the empirical political experience of Indonesian Muslims. Three key moments—the failure to formalize Islam in the 1945 constitutional debates, the 1955 election results that did not produce political dominance for Islamic forces, and the deadlock of the 1957–1959 Constituent Assembly—highlight the limits of a formalistic approach in a plural society. Read through the dimension of “social basis of support” in the table, this historical evidence suggests that the idea of an Islamic state did not command sufficiently strong majority legitimacy, even among Muslims themselves.

Within this context, the shift from formalism to substantivism in NU's tradition can also be understood through the lens of flexible Sunni political jurisprudence. Categories such as *dār al-Islām*, *dār al-sulḥ*, and *dār al-mīthāq* provide normative space for various forms of polity that do not necessarily take the shape of a formal Islamic state. This logic found its clearest articulation in the 1984 NU congress decision, which accepted Pancasila as a legitimate expression of Islamic ethical values.³⁷ Thus, as reflected in the table under the dimension of “theological basis,” this transformation should not be understood as a deviation from the tradition, but rather as a reinterpretation operating within the tradition itself.

However, as also reflected in the comparative framework, Abdurrahman's secular-substantive approach faces limitations in terms of social acceptance. In a society that remains deeply religious, a strict separation between religion and state is often perceived as a threat to religious identity. On the other hand, formalistic approaches are equally problematic, as they risk neglecting social and religious pluralism. It is in this context that Salahuddin's synthetic position becomes relevant as a balancing point between sociological legitimacy, religious commitment, and democratic principles. Through this synthesis, religion is given a broader role in the public sphere and becomes a constructive partner for the state. Currently, the concept of “eliminating” religion in modern democracies is beginning to be challenged.³⁸ The efforts to achieve such strict secularism have proven failed.

Seen comparatively through the analytical table, the evolution of NU's political thought does not proceed in a linear fashion. Rather, it unfolds through an ongoing process of negotiation between text, context, and historical experience. The outcome is not the victory of one model over another, but the emergence of a distinct Indonesian configuration of religion–state relations: a nation-state that is neither rigidly

secular nor a religious state, but one that accommodates religiosity within a democratic and pluralist framework.³⁹

Conclusion

This article shows that political and religious thought within Nahdlatul Ulama is far from monolithic. Instead, it has developed through a long and evolving process of historical dialectics. By examining the ideas of Wahid Hasyim, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Salahuddin Wahid, this study identifies a clear trajectory: from formalism that privileges a sharia-based state, to substantivism that locates religion as a source of ethical values for the foundation of a pluralist secular state, and finally to an integrative formulation in the form of a religious-nationalist state. These strands do not cancel each other out; rather, they form a continuum of thought shaped by ongoing engagement with Indonesia's changing social and political realities.

The findings also suggest that repeated failures to institutionalize Islam politically, combined with Indonesia's deep social pluralism and the flexibility of Sunni jurisprudence, have pushed NU intellectuals toward more moderate and context-sensitive positions. In this setting, the religious-nationalist model articulated by Salahuddin Wahid emerges as a middle path that bridges the tension between religious commitments and democratic pluralism. It avoids both extremes: a theocratic state on the one hand, and rigid secularism on the other, while still preserving a meaningful space for religion in public life.

In this sense, the evolution of NU thought highlights the broader role of Islamic civil society in shaping a distinct Indonesian model of religion–state relations. More importantly, it suggests that the future trajectory of Islam and state relations in Indonesia is more likely to be defined by adaptive and inclusive integration, rather than by rigid ideological dichotomies.

Theoretically, this study proposes a spectrum model of religion–state relations within Nahdlatul Ulama, demonstrating how Islamic political thought evolved from formalist aspirations toward a religio-nationalist synthesis while maintaining continuity with Sunni theological traditions. This model contributes to broader debates on Islam, democracy, and post-secular politics in Muslim-majority societies.

Endnotes

1. Jeffrey Haynes & Guy Ben-Porat. "Globalisation, Religion and Secularisation". *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11(2) (2010), 125–132. See also, Ahmet T. Kuru, *Islam: Authoritarianism, and Underdevelopment: A Global and Historical Comparison* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
2. Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

3. Jonathan Fox, *An Introduction to Religion and Politics, Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018). Fox also identifies a range of variations in state–religion relations: (1) hostility, (2) inadvertent insensitivity, (3) separation with a somewhat hostile stance toward religion, (4) accommodation—where the state is friendly and neutral toward religion, (5) equal support for all religions, (6) cooperation with preferential treatment for one religion while others also benefit, (7) civil religion—where the state does not officially endorse a particular religion but one religion functions informally as a civic religion of the state, (8) states with more than one official religion, and (9) states with a single official religion. See Jonathan Fox, *A World Survey of Religion and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). 48.
4. Rajeev Bhargava, “What is Indian Secularism and What is it for?” *India Review*, 1(1) (2002), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480208404618>.
5. Jurgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere”. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 14 (2006), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2006.00241.x>. See also, Jurgen Habermas, “A Post-Secular Society-What Does That Mean?” Reset Dialogues on Civilization in Istanbul seminar, June 2-6, 2008. <https://www.resetdoc.org/story/a-post-secular-society-what-does-that-mean/>
6. Fox, *A World Survey ...*, 355.
7. Robert W. Hefner, *Islam and Citizenship in Indonesia: Democracy and the Quest for an Inclusive Public Ethics*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2024.
8. Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).
9. M. Ali Haidar, *Nahdlatul Ulama dan Islam di Indonesia: Pendekatan Fikih dalam Politik* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1994).
10. W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 7th Edition (Essex: Parson, 2014)
11. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, (United States, University of California Press, 1984), 25-26.
12. According to Kuru, the French and Turkish models of assertive secularism or laiceite emerged through the victory of secular groups in their struggle with religious groups. Kuru, *Secularism....*; Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2006): 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2006.00241.x> See also, Jürgen Habermas, “A Post-Secular Society—What Does That Mean?” Article’s seminar, Istanbul, 2–6 June 2008. <https://www.resetdoc.org/story/a-post-secular-society-what-does-that-mean/>
13. Aboebakar, *Sedjarah Hidup K.H. A. Wahid Hasjim dan Karangan Tersiar* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama, 1957), 698.
14. Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, *Risalah Sidang BPUPKI dan PPKI 1945* (Jakarta: Sekretariat Negara, 1995), 224.
15. Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, *Risalah ...*, 124.
16. Hasjim Asjari, “Ideologie Politik Islam,” *Koran Menara*, 23 February 1946.
17. Aboebakar, *Sedjarah Hidup ...*, 756.
18. Ali Haidar, *Nahdlatul Ulama ...*, 29-31.
19. Berita Nahdlatol Oelama, 21 tahun 09, 1 September 1940, in Muhammad Ainun Najid, “NU, Soekarno dan Staat Islam: Wacana Negara Islam dalam Berita Nahdhatol Oelama (BNO),” *Ahkam* Vol. 5 No 1. 2017
20. Rémy Madinier, *Partai Masyumi: Antara Godaan Demokrasi dan Islam Integral* (Bandung: Mizan, 2013), 316
21. NN, *Tentang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante*, Jilid I–II (Bandung, 1958), 403.

22. Mohammad Natsir, *Capita Selecta, Jilid 3* (Jakarta: PT Abadi, 2008), 126
23. For Abdurrahman Wahid, it is inappropriate to situate Islam within its original cultural context of Arabia; instead, Islam as a tradition must accommodate indigenous and local cultures. In this view, Islam should function as a complementary force within Indonesia's socio-cultural life. Bahtiar Effendy, *Insight: Essays on Islam and Public Affairs* (Bekasi: Penjuru Ilmu, 2017), 27.
24. Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2006), 81.
25. Abdurrahman Wahid, "Islam, Ideologi dan Etos Kerja di Indonesia," in Budhy Munawar-Rachman (ed.), *Kontekstualisasi Doktrin Islam dalam Sejarah* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 584.
26. Abdurrahman, "Islam, Ideologi ..., 583.
27. Abdurrahman, *Islamku ...*, 107.
28. Taufik Abdullah, *Islam dan Masyarakat: Pantulan Sejarah Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1996), 38-39.
29. Asef Bayat, "Post-Islamism and the Future of Democratic Pluralism." *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 2023, 49(7), 819-834.
30. Muhammad Wahyuni Nafis, *Cak Nur Sang Guru Bangsa* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2014)
31. Nafis, *Cak Nur ...*
32. Salahuddin Wahid, "Keindonesiaan dan Keislaman," *Kompas*, 16 August 2014.
33. Salahuddin, "NU 30 Tahun ..."
34. Salahuddin, "Keindonesiaan ..."
35. Jurgen Habermas, "A Post-Secular Society-What Does That Mean?" Reset Dialogues on Civilization in Istanbul seminar, June 2-6, 2008. <https://www.resetdoc.org/story/a-post-secular-society-what-does-that-mean/>. Also, Jurgen Habermas, "Note on Post-Secular Society" *New Perspective Quarterly* Volume 25, Issue 4 Fall 2008 Pages 17-29. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5842.2008.01017.x>
36. Peter I. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor, 1967)
37. Kacung Marijan, *Quo Vadis NU: Setelah Kembali ke Khittah 1926* (Surabaya: Erlangga, 1992), 150.
38. Beaumont, Justin, "Postsecular Cities and the Return of Religion in the Public Sphere." *Religion, State and Society*, 2022, 50(3), 201-218
39. Recent studies on religion, pluralism, and politics can be found in Aspinall and Mietzner (2019). He notes the paradox that Jokowi has manipulated the support of pluralist groups, including those from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and minorities, for political gain that undermines democracy, while also showing political intolerance toward Islamist groups that oppose him. Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietner, "Southeast's Asia Troubling Election: Nondemocratic Pluralism in Indonesia", *Journal of Democracy*, October 2019, Vol. 30, issue 4, 104-118.

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M. Zaki Mubarak, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta; Email: zaki.mubarak@uinjkt.ac.id

Idris Thaha, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta; Email: idris.thaha@uinjkt.ac.id