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The *Khittah* of 1926 Reexamined: Views of the NU in Post-Cipasung Congress

Abstraksi: Ketika berdiri pada tahun 1926 di Surabaya, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) sebenarnya dimaksudkan sebagai organisasi ulama yang bergerak dalam bidang sosial-keagamaan. Konsentrasi perjuangan dan kegiatan organisasinya pun berbentuk pada pengembangan masyarakat Muslim Indonesia dalam lapangan sosial-budaya seperti pendidikan, pengajaran, pelayanan kesehatan dan pengembangan ekonomi umat. Dalam kerangka itulah, untuk kemudian, para ulama dan tokoh organisasi ini merumuskan sebuah visi NU yang dikenal dengan *Khittah* 1926.

Setelah untuk masa yang lama kiprah NU menyimpang dari *Khittah* yang digariskannya, dengan memasuki dunia politik praktis — bergabung dalam Masyumi, menjadi Partai NU, berfusi dalam PPP — pada Mukhtamarnya yang ke 27 di Situbondo, 1984, duet KH. Abdurrahman Wahid dan KH. Ahmad Siddiq, berhasil membawa NU kembali kepada *Khittah* 1926. Keputusan itu berarti mengeluarkan diri dari jeratan politik praktis dan mengutamakan pengembangan masyarakat Muslim Indonesia secara budaya.

Penegasan NU kembali ke *Khittah* 1926 itu ternyata sama sekali tidak memperl lemah posisi tawar-menawar NU dalam politik nasional. Bahkan, dalam banyak hal, NU di bawah Wahid menjadi salah satu kekuatan Islam yang mempunyai akses sosial politik yang sangat modern: menumbuhkan Masyarakat sipil (*civil society*), menegakkan sikap atas dominasi negara dan mengembangkan visi tentang paham kebangsaan dan demokrasi. Melihat kenyataan ini, negara berupaya membendung gerak sosial-politik NU, atau sekaligus ingin menariknya ke dalam jalur yang dapat dikontrol.

Tetapi, kuatnya orientasi kekuasaan yang dimiliki oleh masyarakat NU menyebabkan tarikan masuk ke dunia politik tetap saja terjadi. Ada tiga faktor yang mendasarinya: pertama, NU adalah ormas yang mempunyai basis massa pedesaan yang besar. Kedua, pandangan romantis tentang kejayaan politik NU pada masa Orde Lama, dan ketiga, mudahnya organisasi keagamaan semacam NU dimanipulasi untuk kepentingan politik. Di sini, jebakan-jebakan untuk membawa NU menjadi kuda tunggang politik — dan dengan sendirinya menguji visi *Khittah* 1926 — akan tetap berlangsung.

Wajar jika belum lagi 10 tahun setelah kembali ke *Khittah* 1926 dicanang-

kan, tarikan untuk menyeret NU ke dalam pusaran politik kembali terjadi. Pada Mukhtamar ke 29 di Cipasung pada 1994, terjadi krisis internal NU yang dipicu oleh persaingan dalam memperebutkan kursi kepemimpinan NU antara Wahid dan Abu Hasan. Tampilnya Abu Hasan banyak dipandang sebagai preseden bangkitnya sayap politik NU. Lebih dari itu, Hasan juga disokong secara tak langsung oleh kekuatan politik lain yang merupakan representasi dari kekuatan negara (state). Krisis itu berpuncak dengan diadakannya Mukhtamar Luar Biasa diikuti lahirnya susunan Pengurus Besar NU tandingan pada 17 Januari 1996, yang disebut Komite Pengurus Pusat NU (KPPNU) dengan ketua Abu Hasan.

Yang mengejutkan, sikap elit politik Indonesia dalam meresponi terbentuknya KPPNU itu tampak ambivalen. Sebagaimana memberi angin, dan sebagian yang lain lebih mengakui kepemimpinan Wahid sesuai dengan hasil Mukhtamar Cipasung. Hal ini mengisyaratkan bahwa sedang terjadi bukan saja konflik kepentingan dalam kaitannya dengan keberadaan NU, tetapi juga perbedaan strategi elit politik dalam pendekatan terhadap masyarakat Muslim umumnya. Di satu pihak, terdapat sebagian elit politik yang menginginkan NU (dan juga semua kekuatan Islam) terserap menjadi bagian dari arus besar bangkitnya Islam politik, tetapi sebagian lain mengharap agar NU tetap berjalan sesuai dengan Khitahnya.

Semua ini tidak bisa dilepaskan dari kecenderungan politik Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Se-Indonesia (ICMI) yang semakin mencolok merepresentasikan kekuatan Islam politik yang terkooptasi oleh negara. Bagi kalangan elit politik tertentu, apabila NU berhasil masuk ke dalam gelombang Islam politik itu, maka legitimasi keagamaan dan politik atas ICMI semakin kuat pula. Dengan begitu, dukungan atas negara oleh mayoritas umat Islam juga dapat diperoleh. Dalam konteks ini, usaha untuk menolak kepemimpinan Wahid dalam NU sebenarnya dimaksudkan sebagai usaha elit politik dalam memperbesar legitimasi atas negara. Meskipun, bukan berarti bahwa usaha ini akan berjalan tanpa tantangan. Ini terutama akan muncul dari kalangan masyarakat (bersama elit politik) yang mengkhawatirkan bahwa kebangkitan Islam politik yang terkooptasi oleh negara itu akan berujung pada tumbuhnya sektarianisme dan surutnya demokratisasi.

Sekarang ini terdapat dua Pengurus Besar NU: di bawah Wahid dan Hasan. Dua kemungkinan yang mungkin terjadi untuk menyelesaikan krisis internal NU itu. Pertama, akan ditempuh usaha perdamaian antara kedua pemimpin NU itu melalui pendekatan kekuasaan dengan menghadirkan tokoh lain yang dipilih negara. Kedua, dibiarkannya krisis itu berlarut sampai salah satunya tenggelam. Dengan catatan, sejauh salah satu pemimpin NU itu (dalam hal ini Wahid) tidak mengganggu legitimasi politik atas ICMI dan negara.

رجوع خطة ١٩٢٦ للتجربة

تحليل عن نهضة العلماء أثر مؤتمر تشيفاسونج

عندما تأسسها سنة ١٩٢٦ فى سورابايا، كانت نهضة العلماء ترمى -فى الحقيقة- بوجودها منظمة للعلماء تتحرك فى المجال الاجتماعى الدينى.. إن تركيز الجهاد وتحرك المنظمة بتشكلاان كذلك فى تطوير المجتمع الإسلامى الإندونيسى فى المجال الاجتماعى الثقافى مثل التزية والتعليم والرعاية الصحية وتطوير اقتصادية الأمة الإسلامية فى هذا الإطار، ليصبح علماء المنظمة وزعماءؤها يسعون وراء وجهة نهضة العلماء المعروف بخطة سنة ١٩٢٦.

بعد مدة طويلة انخراف سير عمل نهضة العلماء عن هذه الخطة المرسومة ودخل فى دنيا السياسة العملية بانضمامها إلى مشومى (MASYUMI) (مجلس شورى مسلمى إندونيسيا) -أكبر حزب إسلامى- وأصبحت نهضة العلماء حزبا سياسيا باسم حزب نهضة العلماء، وبعد ذلك انضوت فى جمعية الاتحاد البنائى (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan [PPP]). فى مؤتمر النهضة السابع وعشرين المنعقد فى سيتوبوندا (Situbondo) سنة ١٩٨٤ نشب جدال نضالى بين عبد الرحمن واحد (Abdurrahman Wahid) والشيخ الحاج أحمد صديق (K.H. Ahmad Siddiq) الذى جعل نهضة العلماء ترجع مرة أخرى إلى خطة سنة ١٩٢٦. وهذا القرار بالرجوع إلى الخطة المذكورة معناه الخروج من الشبكة السياسية العملية وبأولية العمل بتطوير المجتمع الإسلامى الإندونيسى عن طريق الثقافة.

إن تأكيد نهضة العلماء الرجوع إلى خطة سنة ١٩٢٦ ظهر كليا عدم انخفاض فى وضع نهضة العلماء فى مساوماتها السياسية الوطنية، بل فى كثير من الأحوال تحت قيادة عبد الرحمن واحد صارت إحدى القوات الإسلامية المالكة رصيذا اجتماعيا سياسيا حديثا للغاية: بتنحية المجتمع الحرفى (غير العسكرى) بتأكيد

خطة السيطرة الدولية وتطوير صيغة فهم القومية والديمقراطية. بالنظر إلى هذا التصريح فالدولة تسعى في حصار حركة نهضة العلماء الاجتماعية السياسية أو في دفعة واحدة ترغب سحبها بحصار حركتها الاجتماعية السياسية تلك، أو في نفس الوقت سحبها إلى الدخول في الممر الضيق الذي يمكن مراقبتها.

ولكن قوة السلطة التعبيرية التي يملكها مجتمع نهضة العلماء سببت في دخول هذا الحزب إلى الدنيا السياسية الدائمة الحدوث. هناك ثلاثة عوامل التي وطدت هذا الأمر: الأول أن نهضة العلماء منظمة شعبية لها قواعد شعبية كبيرة في القرى، والثاني النظرة الرومانتيكية بخصوص العظمة السياسية لنهضة العلماء في العهد القديم، والثالث سهولة المنظمة الدينية مثل نهضة العلماء أن تتلاعب للصالح السياسي. هنا، تلك المناصب التي تجعل نهضة العلماء كفرس الركوب السياسي، -وفي نفس الوقت لاختبار وجهة خطة سنة ١٩٢٦- الدائمة الحدوث.

ملائم إذا كان قبل مضي عشر سنوات بعد الرجوع إلى خطة سنة ١٩٢٦ قد أعلنت، فمحاولة سحب نهضة العلماء إلى سيرة السياسة بدأت تظهر، ففي المؤتمر التاسع والعشرين في تشيفاسونج (Cipasung) في سنة ١٩٩٤ حدثت أزمة داخلية في نهضة العلماء شعلتها المنافسة في الاستيلاء على كرسي الرئاسة للنهضة العلماء بين عبد الرحمن واحد وأبي حسن (Abu Hasan). وظهر أبو حسن ينظر كثيرا إلى أن له سابقة وعى ويقظة الجناح السياسي لنهضة العلماء. أكثر من ذلك أبو حسن كذلك يسنده -عن طريق غير مباشر- قوة سياسية أخرى ممثلة في قوة الدولة. وهذه الأزمة وصلت إلى القمة بعقد مؤتمر غير عادي الذي أعقبه تكوين مجلس إداري أعلى لنهضة العلماء المنافس، وذلك في ١٧ يناير سنة ١٩٩٦، الذي يقال عنه لجنة رئاسة مركزية نهضة العلماء (Komite Pengurus Pusat Nahdlatul Ulama [KPPNU]) بزعامة أبي حسن.

المفاجيء هو خطة علية أهل السياسة الإندونيسية في إجابة تكوين هذا الرئاسة الجديدة مختلفة، والبعض يعطون فرصة وهواء باردا والأخرون يعتقدون أكثر بزعامة عبد الرحمن واحد بناء على قرار مؤتمر تشيفاسونج. هذه الحالة تشير إلى أن الحادث لم يكن نزاعا مصلحيا فيما يتعلق بكيان نهضة العلماء فحسب، ولكن كذلك اختلاف استراتيجي بين علية السياسة في التقرب إلى المجتمع المسلم على وجه العموم.

من ناحية يوجد بعض عليية السياسة ممن يريدون نهضة العلماء بل كذلك كل القوات الإسلامية أن تتجمع تيارا شديدا لاوار لبعث الإسلام السياسي، بين أن الآخرين يرغبون أن تكون نهضة العلماء تمشى دائما على خطتها المعروفة. كل هذه الأمور لا يمكن فصلها عن الميول السياسية لرابطة المثقفين المسلمين (Ikatan Cendikiawan Muslim Indonesia [ICMI]) في كل أنحاء إندونيسيا التي ترفض تمثيل القوة الإسلامية السياسية تختارها الدولة لصالحها.

وبالنسبة لكتلة عليية السياسة الخاصة، إذا ما استطاعت نهضة العلماء الدخول في الموجة السياسة الإسلامية تلك، فإن الشرعية الدينية والسياسية لرابطة المثقفين المسلمين تكون أقوى كذلك مما يؤدي إلى تأييد أكثرية الأمة الإسلامية للدولة يمكن الحصول عليها. في هذا المجال أن المسعى لأزاحة زعامة عبد الرحمن واحد من نهضة العلماء في الحقيقة يقصد بها مسعى عليية السياسة في توسعة الشرعية للدولة.

ولوأن هذا لا يعطى معنى بأن هذا المسعى سوف يمشى دون عرقلة واعتراض، فإن هذا سيحدث من كتلة المجتمع (مع عليية السياسة) التي تخاف البعث الإسلامى السياسى الذى تختاره الدولة ينتهى إلى النمو التحزبى وانخفاض الديمقراطية.

في هذه الآونة يوجد مجلسا إدارة عليا لنهضة العلماء تحت رئاسة عبد الرحمن واحد والآخر تحت رئاسة أبى حسن. فهناك إمكانيتان الممكن حدوثهما لحل هذه الأزمة الداخلية في نهضة العلماء: الأولى اختيار المسعى السلمى بين الرئيسين لنهضة العلماء مرورا على تقرب السلطة بإحضار الزعماء الآخرين الذين تختارهم الحكومة. والثانية ترك الأزمة مستمرة إلى حين أحد الطرفين يغرق ويختفى عن عالم الوجود. مع التسجيل إلى مدى عدم تعرض أحد الزعيمين لنهضة العلماء (وفى هذه الحالة عبد الرحمن واحد) للشرعية السياسية لرابطة المثقفين المسلمين والدولة.

Introduction

This article attempts to review the crisis over Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, "the Revival of the 'Ulamâ') following the conflict during its twenty-ninth congress (muktamar) in Cipasung, December 1994. The NU is one of the largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia. Established by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari (1871-1947) and KH. Wahab Chasbullah (1888-1971) in January 1926, the NU was projected to be the basis for the cultural resistance of traditional Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Its arrival in the political atmosphere of the Dutch colony marked three important concerns:¹ it was meant to be an 'ulamâ' organization to preserve the traditions of religious thought and practices; it was relatively modern social movement, patterned by its religious attributes, which had a system of political orientation based on *fiqh* principles (Islamic jurisprudence); it was a national movement in the sense that it was generated by the commitment to liberate Indonesia from colonial rulers, and to the social and economic improvement of Indonesian Muslims.

The spirit of the NU, being a social and political expression of a particular people, is greatly conditioned by the course of history and social development. Similarly, the NU's political orientation, being a part of the response to a particular challenge and problem, is very much inspired not only by the spirit within the internal community of the organization itself but also by the political development of its nation in general. Hence, any attempt to understand the NU and its political orientation requires a knowledge of both the internal spirit of that organization and the nation's developments of which the NU is a part.

It is along these lines of thought that the following outline of the NU's political articulation and socio-cultural mission will be made. It is hoped that this will provide the background needed for a proper and adequate understanding of the NU's decision — after for a long period of being involved in practical politics — to return to its original spirit and mission as a social and religious organization, called "the Khittah of 1926" (the Spirit of 1926).

The Khittah of 1926 and NU's Final Break with Politics?

As a formulated vision, the Khittah of 1926 did not exist until after the NU's twenty-sixth congress in Semarang, Central Java, in December, 1979.² What existed prior to that time were only a sort of

vague ideas about the "khittah". A clearer idea about it began to gain momentum when the intellectual criticisms and striking ideas on destabilizing the NU's strong political orientation in Idham Chalid's leadership (the former chairman of NU) and his circle, as well as reevaluation the NU's involvement in practical politics mounted. Then, starting in the early 1980s, following religious disputes at the Semarang congress, most of the 'ulamâ' and the young intellectuals of the NU who were raised during the New Order regime and had little experience in practical politics were devoted themselves to the task of bringing the NU back to its original spirit and mission, as a socio-religiously based organization. It was this common socio-political concern that finally gave birth to the decision for the NU's final break with politics.

Properly speaking, the movement for the return to the *khittah* started at the 'Ulamâ' Conference at the end of 1983, in Situbondo, with the emergence of the 'ulamâ' and intellectual circles of the NU responding the unintended developments in the NU's political tradition and nature. Initiated by two charismatic traditional 'ulamâ', KH. As'ad Syamsul Arifin (1897-1991) and KH. Ahmad Siddiq (1926-1990), the reformulation of the NU's *khittah* was projected to be the basis for the resistance of the social and cultural mission of the NU for several reasons. First, it was intended to revitalize the social, religious and educational activities which had been ignored for so long by the central board of the NU due to its power-minded fashion. Second, it was a relatively political movement in its aims and character, but with a cultural strategy which accommodated the process of the depoliticization of mass organizations conducted by the New Order government beginning in the early 1980s. Finally, the *khittah* was a religio-cultural movement in the sense that it was generated by the commitment to liberate the NU members — commonly associated with rural Muslims — from political exploitation, and to improve their social and economic conditions through social and economic agendas.³

As a basis for the revitalization of social and religious activities, the return to the *khittah* is an historical achievement in its own right. Studies of the history of the NU show that its political orientation started with the involvement of some of its prominent figures such as KH. Hasjim Asy'ari (the founder) and Zainul Arifin in the formation of Masjumi, the name being contracted from Majelis Syura Muslimin Indonesia (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims),

under the Japanese colonial patronage, in 1944.⁴ The formation of Masjumi was at first meant to be a political coalition for all Islamic organizations and parties such as NU, Muhammadiyah, Sarekat Islam (SI), Al-Irsyad, Persatuan Islam (Persis), Darul Da'wah Indonesia (DDI), and Persatuan Tarbiyah Indonesia (Perti). It was merely intended to give the Indonesian Muslims an apparatus in order to extend their vital role in the former Dutch East Indies. But, in its development, this apparatus was quickly transformed into a political party sorting all Muslim political aspirations following the reorganization of Masjumi on November 7, 1945. The NU, as an important element in Masjumi, would soon be able to follow the latter's political orientation.

By the end of first decade of its existence, however, the uneven crisis among the members of the coalition — more precisely between modernist and traditionalist Muslim wings — in Masjumi reemerged. It appears that the struggle for the post of Ministry of Religious Affairs in the Wilopo cabinet between Muhammadiyah (claiming the post for Fakhri Usman) and NU circles (claiming the post for Wahid Hasyim) became the immediate cause of the conflict. Yet, in this regard, the ideological and tactical differences between the modernist and the traditionalist Muslims in the struggle within the Islamic community in Indonesia were usually considered to be the roots of the conflict. This led to the resignation of the NU from the Masjumi coalition — based on the NU's nineteenth congress in Palembang — in April 1952. This move was then followed by the establishment of the NU as an independent political party in Indonesia.⁵

As an Islamic political party, the NU has appealed as one of the most leading parties in the Indonesian political constellation, during the NASAKOM era in 1950s, with its political basis of rural areas. In the first election in 1955, the NU successfully gained the rural Muslim voters and became the third biggest party in the country (with 18.22 % of voters), after Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Nationalist Party, PNI, 22.%) and Masjumi (20.02%).⁶ During the era of the Sukarno regime, the NU was perhaps the most powerful segment of the Islamic parties which continued to survive, although it was somehow associated with being a government-minded party due to its accommodative performance. Up until the emergence of the New Order government in early 1966, the NU was the most important force in political Islam which competed with the ruling party, Golongan Karya (Functional Group). In the New Order's first elec-

tion in 1971, the NU regained its major achievement as the second largest party defeating the PNI, SI and Parmusi. With the New Order's policy of political modernization, however, starting in 1975 the NU entered a new phase of political manifestation, i.e. in the form of a fusion within the United Development Party, PPP, along with other Islamic elements such as the SI, Perti, and Parmusi.

The implications of this development in the NU are easy to see. Its social, religious and educational activities were neglected for its political orientation. The NU's community, both the 'ulamâ' and politicians, always distorted the organization's programs within the framework of political calculation, especially during KH. Idham Chalid's leadership (1954-1984). Equally important, the NU communities had been given the confidence that practical politics was the only means by which the NU would be able to achieve its goals and mission. Hence, any attempts to revitalize the social and educational programs of the NU, in particular those which emerged among the young intellectuals during the early 1970s, bore no fruit.

Up to the end of 1983 when the National Conference of 'Ulamâ' was held, this movement reached its momentum by virtue of three consequential factors: the increasing crisis over Chalid's leadership due partly to his failure to approve a satisfactorily bargain on the NU's mission in the PPP, the rise of NU scholars and professionals who no longer put their aspirations in practical politics and, thirdly, the great influence of the Islamic renewal movement (*gerakan pembaharuan Islam*) stimulated in the early 1970s which was devoted to interpreting Islam in the social and cultural context of contemporary Indonesia. It was then decided that the NU's twenty-seventh congress in Situbondo on December 17-23, 1984, would be the time for the final struggle to return to the *Khittah* of 1926. Even though it faced serious challenges from Chalid's political wing, the Congress was finally able to bring this into effect.

The Congress issued a number of important decisions which, in essence, tried to adopt a new orientation for the NU in the future. Firstly, the Congress decided to accept Pancasila (the Five Principles) as the sole ideological basis for the organization. This implied that, as a social and religious organization with Islamic attributes, the NU affirmed its commitment to national ideology and unity. Secondly, the Congress decided that the NU would remain a social and religious organization: it would not be turned into a political party nor affiliate itself with any social and political forces. Members would be

left free to be active in any political or social organization. This represented an affirmation of the NU's commitment, as was observed earlier, to detach itself from the PPP and to return to the spirit of 1926. Finally, the Congress elected KH. Ahmad Siddiq, as chairperson of Syuriah (General policy-making board), and KH. Abdurrahman Wahid as the head of Tanfidziyah (executive board), the two prominent figures of the formulation of the *Khittah*, through an appointment procedure by a select group of authoritative 'ulamâ', the *ahl al-halli wa al-'aqdi* (the People who loosen and fasten).⁷ The elections of Siddiq and Wahid marked the defeat of the political wing of the NU and, consequently, played a part in the NU's commitment to the cultural development of Indonesian Muslims without getting involved in practical politics.

The crystallization of the NU's decision to return to the *Khittah* was enhanced in the twenty-eighth congress in November, 1989, in Yogyakarta, by the successful consolidation of a group of young intellectuals who formulated a more practical formulation of the *Khittah*. Among the members of this group were Fahmi Saifuddin, Said Budairi, Danial Tanjung, Mustafa Bisri, Mahbub Djunaidi, Slamet Effendi Yusuf, Ahmad Bagdja, and Masdar F. Mas'udi.⁸ The consolidation was considered in order to establish a basic working program for the following period covering a variety of subjects such as *da'wah* (Islamic mission), education, economic activities and the environment. Also, the congress reelected Siddiq and Wahid as the top leaders of the NU for the following period, although, in the beginning, it faced some difficulties from the respected 'ulamâ' who do not favor with Wahid's performance which sometimes raises controversy, such as As'ad and Ali Yafie, as well as the NU's political wing.

The consolidation of the *khittah* wing — as it may be called — during the congress, therefore, proved another important effect: that, as a basis for social and economic improvement among the NU's communities, the *khittah* has a solid rationale. Since the Yogyakarta congress, the NU's social and economic activities have increased tremendously alongside religious activities. During this time various economic activities have been introduced for the purpose of social improvement among the NU's communities: co-operation between the NU and the Summa Bank to try to establish 2,000 small scale banks (in reality only 12 before the bankruptcy of Summa in 1992), the NU's entry into agricultural business, and its commitment to supervise many small firms in Eastern Java, are just few examples.

Joining some leading Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), the social activities developed further and were used as an effective strategy for improving rural Muslims, especially *pesantren* communities.⁹

Beyond these more limited achievements, more important still is the fact that the NU's performance as a socio-culturally based Muslim organization was further stabilized and solidified, i.e., in the form of a cultural movement for Indonesian Muslim. The NU's social and economic orientation during this period represented a new phase for Islamic movement which is patterned by an attempt to explain and articulate Islamic doctrines in the cultural context of modern Indonesia. Wahid's opinion, for example, the NU's main objective with this kind of cultural strategy is "to observe the basic answer to the challenge of Islam in modern Indonesia. The NU's roots are *pesantren* communities. There is no need to transform these communities only through political action, but ignoring cultural approaches."¹⁰ Wahid provides the means by which the struggle to modernize Muslim communities would be fruitful. These are: education (*pesantren*), social and economic improvements, and political conscientization without being involved in practical politics. This, Wahid asserts, often takes the form of cultural approaches in community development.

The NU's conception of the role of Islam and its traditional heritage which is codified in the principles of social *fiqh* as the tools for the cultural strategy of community development set it apart from the political-minded orientation of Indonesian Islam. The NU's experience under KH. Idham Chalid's leadership — especially during the New Order regime in the early 1970s — gave the NU members a more sophisticated view of the role of such an Islamic movement as an unproductive movement, backwardness, stagnation and mass exploitation. Therefore, many of the young cadres within the NU were sincerely concerned about developing the spirit of the Khittah, and of course also about Wahid's innovative efforts, in a broader context in accordance with the increasing need to stabilize the NU as a cultural force in Indonesian Islam.

Based on this and other notions, the NU's "final break" with practical politics after the end of 1984 did not, however, lead its 'ulamâ' and intellectuals to passiveness concerning political issues. After returning to the Khittah, under Wahid the NU became one of most important Islamic movements which contributed to the enrichment of Indonesian political discourse. The seeds of this development can be observed in, to give some examples, the NU's leading role in build-

ing an Indonesian civil society, its critical response towards the increasing trend of state hegemony and domination, its refutation of religious sectarianism and, above all, its contribution to the process of democratization. These views, together with Wahid's role in the establishment of the Democracy Forum in April 1991, provide the background for understanding the long polemic between the NU (represented by Wahid) and politically oriented-Muslims which arose in the 1990's — partly as a result of the 1971 Islamic cultural movement — and interrupted the cultural strategy of the Islamic movement itself in Indonesia.

The Revitalization of Political Islam

Although the NU's superior insight on the decision for the return to the *Khittah* of 1926 — and accordingly towards the cultural strategy of community development — is more evident than in any Muslim social organization, it must be noted that the rise of the cultural strategy of the Islamic movement can be traced in its development to an Islamic renewal movement which spread in 1971. It was Nurcholish Madjid and his colleagues in the *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam* (HMI, Islamic Association of University Students) and *Pelajar Islam Indonesia* (PII, Union of Muslim Students) who advocated liberating Islam from any political symbolism, including the symbols of Islamic parties.¹² The main thesis of the movement was that, in order for Muslims to advance their roles in Indonesia, Islam should be presented as a cultural, not as a political force. For Madjid, by becoming a cultural force "Islam can no longer be identified with the performance of a certain Islamic party. But it would be identified with the Indonesian nation. Islam then belongs to the nation, not to parties."¹¹ The trend of Indonesian Muslims thereafter seemed to move in the line of what the renewal movement has come to approve.

The decade of the 1980s appears to be the key period of the bearing of fruit for the renewal movement, for it is the period when Islam in Indonesia developed the momentum to wipe out the negative image of the Muslim community and when new scholars, professionals, technocrats, and intellectuals were produced to form the basis of a modern Indonesian-Muslim society. All segments of the socio-cultural sector in which Indonesians ordered their lives were profoundly affected during this period by the extensive activities of a vastly enlarged group of Muslim scholars who founded new businesses, opened modern schools, brought modern technology, and introduced new

values and religious orientation. The course of cultural Islamization in the country was now largely determined by three interdependent factors: the continuing trend toward the expansion of liberating Islam from political symbolism; the spread of Muslims' new political articulation that was more oriented toward substantive religious doctrines such as justice, humanity and democracy; and the role of the New Order government's policies of disengaging religious communities — Muslim in particular — from their direct involvement in the political arena.

The significant development of the cultural strategy of the Islamic movement culminated in the rise of Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia (ICMI, All-Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals) on December 8, 1990.¹³ Initiated by a group of Muslim student activists from Brawijaya University, Malang, the formation of the ICMI was meant to be a social organization of Indonesian Muslim scholars. Prof. Dr. BJ Habibie, the Minister of Research and Technology, was unanimously elected as the ICMI's first chairman. Its main objective, as stated by its prominent figures, was to increase the participation of Muslim scholars in the elaboration of the strategy for national development.

The great interest taken in this new Muslim organization is attested by the fact that the formation of the ICMI gained huge support from most Muslim scholars and most Muslim organizations, as well as high-ranking government officials and representatives. Most important of all, its creation was approved by President Soeharto who was later appointed as the patron of the ICMI. Within a short period of time, the ICMI rapidly developed its organizational structure and started establishing some institutions in order to promote its mission and activities: *Republika Daily* (1992), the Center for Information and Development Studies (CIDES, 1992), the *Afkar Journal* (1993), and *Ummat Magazine* (1994).

It can be inferred from these phenomena, therefore, that the central social characteristic of ICMI members is its bureaucrat and politician elements. Very little of anything of political importance that goes on this organization is not influenced by the political orientation that is to be found among its almost 3 million members. Within that population one hundred percent are, of course, Muslims, and the vast majority of these are social elite of Indonesian scholars and intellectuals. For the ICMI community, at least that presented by its main actors for the time being, it is almost unthinkable to do any-

thing without considering its political ends, and official structures and agenda are established to protect that link. Not only is it strange to attempt to disengage the ICMI from political roles, but the ICMI's most important leaders are themselves the top officials of political centers. Within ICMI communities, there is an integrated perception of Islam, cultural values of the strategy for national development, and politics. In the end, it is difficult for the ICMI to disentangle Islam from the whole.¹⁴

There are no doubt a few members, such as Nurcholish Madjid, Emil Salim, Muladi and Sutjipto Wirosardjono, who have genuinely attempted to bring the ICMI into its line as a social and intellectual Muslim organization. There are also few others who are interested in developing the ICMI as a constructive organization for Muslim professionals, scholars and businessmen. Yet, in this respect, these communities are and have been crippled when the politician elements have dominated the ICMI's orientation. This domination has really an impact, for soon only those statements articulated by ICMI's politician wing represented its members and communities.

While the political orientation of the ICMI developed, the political legitimation of the New Order government was being tested by a sort of unharmonious relationships among the elite government officials, especially between Golongan Karya (Golkar) and the Armed Forces. A number of events — such as the declining support for Soeharto's political and economic policies from top Army Commanders known as L.B. Moerdani's link and so forth — occurred in that time which revealed the map of political conflict within the New Order elites. The ICMI, for its part, was then becoming a political basis for Muslims that played the balancing role for the legitimation to the New Order. In this case, the "crisis" of legitimation of the late New Order government really provided a smooth road for Muslims to revitalize political Islam by organizing the intellectuals in the ICMI, without using any particular Islamic party. In other words, the formation of the ICMI was in fact a milestone in the revitalization of political Islam. This organization, with its own support from the bureaucrats and, later, from Muslim military officials, was so successful that it quickly eclipsed most of the power centers that had ever existed in the New Order regime, i.e., Ali Moertopo's Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Sudharmono's Golkar and Moerdani's Armed Force. Thus, starting in 1993 replacements were made for some government officials, without doubt, Muslims were

predominant amongst them. The most obvious of these changes is in the result of the General Assembly of the Council of the People's Consultative (MPR), which reelected Suharto as President who, in turn, recruited a good number of "ICMI representatives" to fill some important positions in ministerial offices in the Fifth Development Cabinet announced in April 1993. All these developments enhanced the political prominence of the ICMI, as well as political Islam, in the Indonesian political constellation.

A critical response and somewhat controversial attitude towards the revitalization of political Islam in Indonesia was the standpoint adopted by Abdurrahman Wahid, general chairperson of the *Thanfidziyah* of the NU. From the early period of the foundation of the ICMI, Wahid declared that he neither supported nor opposed the creation of the new Muslim association, but he refused to join because in his view "such an association would lead to the re-emergence of Islamic sectarianism and fundamentalism in the country. Also, as an independent entity of civil society, intellectuals should not organize themselves according to narrow categories such as their Islamic faith, let alone collaborate themselves with the state."¹⁵ There were also other smaller political entities that reflected criticism of the ICMI's political orientation, and quiet opponents to the ICMI such as the non-Muslim lobby, especially the powerful Chinese business community and the circle of the former Partai Sosialis Indonesia (PSI, Indonesian Socialist Party).¹⁶

This criticism is mainly encouraged by the commitment of these political entities to social change and the struggle for a democratic society. In addition, it is also generated by the major expectation that the ICMI, which represented an awakening of Indonesian civil society, should act as the main agent of the process of democratization. In Wahid's view, for instance, the process of achieving democracy must begin with the strengthening of democratic attitudes in society through cultural and educational strategies, not by creating a group of political elite which proposes religious faith as the solution to the problem of democracy. In connection with this view, Wahid is not entirely convinced about the genuineness of the Muslim intellectuals' commitment within the ICMI to the issues of democracy. Expressing his fear that the ICMI would move towards the emergence of neo-Islamic fundamentalism, Wahid recalled the story of the Muslim role in the anti-communist purge of 1965 and the role of Islamic parties — especially Masjumi — in weakening the fabric of constitu-

tional democracy in the 1950s. Therefore, Wahid believes that the first step towards a democratic society is to create an awareness of democratization among the civil society:

We have to have socio-economic transformation as the first step in the long-term process of democratization. That's why I am working to create an awareness of democracy within the NU ... I am convinced the silent majority in Indonesia is pluralistic in attitude. If we can get the government to loosen its grip on society, Indonesians will take it in their hands to counteract the sectarians and maintain the unity of the nation.¹⁷

Wahid's commitment to create an awareness of the need for democracy among Indonesian civil society is more evident in his leading role in establishing the Forum Demokrasi (Democracy Forum) in April 1991, an alliance of 45 leading Indonesian figures. It includes Muslim intellectuals, academics, journalists, NGO activists, lawyers and Catholic priests. Although the Forum is not intended to have a political role, its goals were broadly political in nature. Observers have noted that the Forum is seen as a way of offering both Muslims and non-Muslims an alternative to the ICMI's conception of Islam and politics. Therefore, for most Indonesians, Wahid's establishment of the Forum was in fact projected as placing an obstacle in the path of the ICMI's political prominence, in the sense that it attempted to show the government that some of the country's most respected figures, including Muslims, are concerned about wider democracy as a more urgent need than increasing the influence of a particular religious community in politics.

But the Democracy Forum is not the only means of Wahid's struggle to gain support for his view of the need for a cultural strategy in the Islamic movement. While Indonesians find, on the one hand, a multi-communal alliance in Wahid's Forum protecting cultural Islam, on the other hand, the more fundamental basis for such a movement comes from within Indonesian Muslims themselves, namely, the NU community. Hence, as a way of showing legitimate support from them, Wahid had the NU hold a *Rapat Akbar* (mass rally) in Jakarta, in March 1992. The purpose of this rally was to show Indonesians that the NU, as one of the largest mass Muslim organizations, has continued to share Wahid's view of a cultural-oriented Islam, despite him having come under pressure because of his critical stance towards the ICMI and the government. Also, the rally displayed that the NU communities would not defy their commitment to national ideology, Pancasila, especially concerning the prob-

lems of religious freedom, justice and democracy.¹⁸

Thus, the situation has been one in which Wahid and the NU, representing the standpoint of the cultural strategy of the Islamic movement, and the ICMI community have diverged in perceiving Islam and Indonesian politics, and each has taken its own road respectively. The former is less concerned with instituting a formal political presence for Islam and more with updating it as a social and ethical guide for living in contemporary Indonesia, whereas the latter took an opinion that Islam can be made into a political force and Muslims should act as the political agent representing Indonesian Muslim aspirations. On the political scene, because of the ICMI's political nature, it has organized progressive campaigns to absorb all segments of the Muslim force for the purpose of advancing its political roles. The NU is not excluded. However, against this background of the ICMI's political expansion, at the NU's twenty-ninth Congress in December 1994, there developed a political move to shake Wahid's nomination as a candidate for the chairman of the *Tanfidiyah* of the NU and, in a larger context, to examine the NU's commitment to the cultural strategy of the Islamic movement.

The Cipasung Congress and Its Aftermath

In contrast to the two previous congresses since the return was made to the *Khittah*, many political issues and tensions emerged in the NU's twenty-ninth congress on December 1-5, 1994, in Cipasung, Tasikmalaya. As we shall see, the question as to who would lead the NU for the period 1994-1999 seemed to dominate the congress, but this was no doubt due to the fact that the Cipasung congress was a momentum in which the politician wing of the NU — partly as a result of the revitalization of political Islam — revived and has exhibited a more powerful force than before. Hence, the Cipasung congress was actually a battle field for the political wing to destabilize its *khittah* counterpart.

Analyses dealing with the political tensions at the congress generally refer to two categories: the *khittah* wing, and, hence, inferentially the defenders of cultural Islam, and the politicals. These analyses, however, merely focus on the internal problems of the NU which casts serious doubts on their conclusions. Yet, in spite of the paucity and problematic nature of the NU's political attitude during Wahid's leadership, they have drawn a clear sketch of the political conflicts within the NU.

As the days approached the Cipasung congress, the main political actors in the congress could be identified. KH. Ilyas Ruhiyat, the chairman of the Syuriah who replaced Siddiq in 1991, was reconstituted as the leading candidate to retain this position; KH. Sahal Mahfudz was also considered to be an important figure to be placed below Ruhiyat due to his close relationship with Wahid as the defender of the *Khittah*, but he merged with Ruhiyat to form the basis of the 'ulamâ' supporting Wahid.¹⁹ The most important political actor was, of course, Wahid himself, the chairman of the Tanfidziyah. Although it was reported that Wahid's nomination would face many difficulties from the government, partly because of his critical stance towards the ICMI and the New Order regime, his supporters were still able to control his candidacy. It was reported that 60,000 NU members held mass rally in Surabaya just a week before the Cipasung congress declaring that the NU members pledged to re-elect Wahid as chairman of Tanfidziyah for the next period of board.²⁰ Wahid Zaini, the chairman of the NU Eastern Java province (Dewan Pimpinan Wilayah Jawa Timur), was nominated as an alternative candidate to replace Wahid if the latter faced difficulties, but he was also prepared to resign if the nomination for Wahid went smoothly. A non-'ulamâ' scholar, Fahmi Saifuddin, was also nominated by several branches to unseat Wahid, but Saifuddin's supporters still shared the same vision of the NU as that of Wahid. The problem was that Saifuddin's supporters were found among the *Khittah* wing who displeased with Wahid's controversial performance in religious and political issues. Therefore, although they defended the actualization of the *khittah* as the main target of the strategy of NU development, they will let Saifuddin control the coming period of the Tanfidziyah.

The politician wing was also emerging as a political group, but less than united one. A general distinction can be drawn between two candidates. On the one hand, there were those among the branches who supported Chalid Mawardi, an Idham Chalid sympathiser since the Situbondo Congress in 1984, to compete for Wahid's nomination.²¹ This group was best typified by the purely politician wing, called *Kelompok Cipete* (Cipete circle), under Chalid's control. But, ironically, Chalid's blessing and support were given to another candidate. On the other hand, there was the new rising group of Abu Hasan, a successful businessman from Jambi and one of Wahid's board members as the coordinator for *Pesantren Development*, who took the view that the NU's commitment to the

Khittah of 1926 does not necessarily lead to its disengagement from politics. This group principally included most of non-Javanese provinces and tended not to favor Wahid and the *khittah* domination. In the early days of the congress, this group (led by KH. Teuku Ali Aziz from Aceh), consolidated its force among the non-Javanese branches (Dewan Pimpinan Cabang, DPCs) which later became the major element that was anti-Wahid's leadership within the NU communities.²² It was reported that this group was supported by "external factors" and was helped to push Wahid and most of the *khittah* defenders into greater difficulties with the New Order government.

On the day of the congress opening ceremony on December 1, 1994, the pressures began to increase on Wahid and the *khittah* side. During the ceremony, Wahid did not present himself to be seated in the main balcony together with the other important leaders of the NU board to host the President. Also, besides his absence when the President hit the drum (*bedug*) to symbolically open the congress, Wahid's reporting on the program and activities during his leadership was also cancelled, although it was reported that until early morning of that day his presentation was perfectly scheduled. The head of the congress committee, KH. Munasir Ali, then presented an unprepared speech replacing Wahid.²³ Observers noted that these unusual events which had not occurred at the two previous congresses of Situbondo and Yogyakarta marked the displeased relationship between Suharto and Wahid. Therefore, for the NU community these events were a signal from the government that NU should search for a replacement for Wahid's leadership.

During the congress, most of the people from the *khittah* wing were meanwhile under increasing political pressure. Opponents of their position, especially the followers of Abu Hasan, advocated that, although the government continued to want the NU to be committed to the Khittah, the support for Wahid would inevitably lead to a more unharmonious relationship between the NU and the government. This is because, according to them, some important figures in the government opposed Wahid's re-election. Meanwhile, the role of Ruhiyat and Mahfudz in guiding the congress to elect Wahid was also meaningless. It was reported that when they attempted to follow Wahid's accountability speech addressed to the participants of the congress, Ruhiyat and Mahfudz were seriously threatened by several people in the committee not to enter the congress hall. These people were recognized as the supporters of Abu Hasan.

As the pressure on the *khittah* side mounted, there were rumors which in essence tried to shake Wahid's re-election. The first is regarding Suharto's willingness to approach Wahid not to nominate himself to be elected as chairman for the coming NU board. Being the target of this serious rumor, Wahid clarified that:

This is not true. It is just a rumor from the people who play at gambling for money in the NU congress. I have an affirmation from the Minister of State Secretary, Moerdiono, that the government will not intervene in the problem of the NU's chairmanship election, including that there is no such figure to be nominated as the chairman. If there are people who have expressed such rumors and terrors, be aware that these are just their claims in order to pass their personal interests. They will not benefit the NU.²⁴

Secondly, concerning the strategy undertaken by Abu Hasan and his group, it was reported that Hasan's method of recruitment of his supporters was by offering some monetary gifts and by violence towards several participants.²⁵ This method seemed to be effective in destabilizing the loyalty of Wahid's supporters, especially that of the non-Javanese branches. Hasan himself rejected denied that his action was meant to buy the participants' votes. He said, "it is just a gift. It is normal for candidates to call a gathering, then we spend some money on cigarettes or transport expenses. I did not mean this to buy vote."²⁶

However, the third and most important rumor was that Hasan was said to be supported by external political interests. It was reported that the major campaign carried out by Hasan's group was possibly supported by certain interests which tried to create an obstacle in Wahid's nomination. The report referred to the fact that most of Hasan's supporters were sponsored by DPWs and DPCs where the ICMI members and representatives were dominant. The DPW branches of North Sulawesi, for example, definitely opposed Wahid becoming the leader of the NU, due to Wahid's critical stance towards the ICMI and the government. Therefore, the rumor said that the slogan *Asal Bukan Gus Dur* (ABG, as long as it is not Wahid) that emerged during the congress was actually a well planned agenda to create destabilizing motions against Wahid's re-election.²⁷

However, the politician wing under Hasan, which has become the progressive one in the congress arena, faced a serious challenge from Wahid and Saifuddin who were, at the grassroots level, considered to be much more committed to the *Khittah*. Wahid and Saifuddin were among those who formulated the vision of the *Khittah* of 1926

in Situbondo congress in 1984. It is difficult to know the exact answer as to why those candidates competed against one another. Wahid himself preferred to nominate Saifuddin and was found in the last few years for his commitment to create a regeneration within the NU board. Saifuddin, too, was a figure whose commitment to the actualization of the *khittah* was undoubted and was supported by several respected 'ulamā'. Given the importance of this strange composition it is useful to comment upon it at this time.

There are two explanations that may be put forward. One simple explanation is that Wahid's nomination was just an attempt to place an obstacle in the path of any possibility of the revival of the politician wing under the leadership of Idham Chalid.²⁸ At the other end of the scale, Wahid's supporters were considered to have had little to do with the political rivalry with Saifuddin, let alone challenging the latter to be placed in a lower position. This explanation is in line with Wahid's explanation in an interview the day before the election:

I would prefer to vote for Fahmi [Saifuddin], because this has been my intention since my second victory as the chairman of the NU at the Yogyakarta congress. I think this reflects how we are committed to the regeneration process. I believe Saifuddin is the right person to secure the *khittah*. But, they [the participants] came to me and strongly requested that I be nominated in the election. Their reason was that they heard Idham Chalid was still willing to take the chair as general chairman. According to them, Idham had already gained huge support. I was surprised. For me, if Idham came back to his previous position, the NU's political orientation would be revived. And this is dangerous for the NU itself. That is why I am prepared to go to the nomination, but I would not nominate myself.²⁹

This first explanation is generally maintained among the participants who believe that there was no split among the *khittah* defenders. Above all it is supported by the fact that immediately after Saifuddin gained third position after Wahid and Hasan in the first step of the election, his supporters turned to Wahid.

On the other hand, it was reported that Wahid's action of facing Saifuddin's nomination was simply motivated by the unintended developments during the congress which resulted in a worst situation among the participants. Some, for example, believe that it was a political plot hatched by a number of respected 'ulamā', including Mahfudz and Ruhiyat, to ensure that they would not vote for the wrong person, while the Abu Hasan group used unsympathetic and

violent methods in the political game. Others believe that Wahid had to be involved in the game, competing with Saifuddin and others, because the participants would not allow violent and terrorizing practices to continue among the NU communities. Yet others maintain that, at any rate, Wahid's nomination was inspired by the rumors that Abu Hasan was politically supported by external factors. An interview with KH. Wahid Zaini concluded:

"It is only Gus Dur [Wahid] who can bring the NU to the commitment to the *khittah* and, as a result, as an independent organization. I am sure that there is an external interest behind Pak Abu's [Hasan] nomination. I cannot say who, yet still there is..."³⁰

For the time being we may reach at the conclusion that Wahid was indeed aware that his nomination would create the split among the *khittah* defenders, especially with regard to Saifuddin's supporters, although the question remains as to whether both candidates took the initiative to confront their politician counterpart or if they only followed the plot created by the 'ulamâ'. In favor of this conclusion it may be acknowledged here that within the NU political tradition, the position of the 'ulamâ' or religious figures strongly influences many aspects of life of the organization.

In the early morning (1:00 AM.) of December 5, the election started. The first session was for the election the chairman of the Syuriah. Without any difficulty Ruhayat was re-elected as the chairman of the Syuriah and Mahfudz became his deputy via an acclamation vote. No branch or participant objected to their re-election. The second session was for the Tanfidziyah election. Here the battle between the *khittah* and the politician wings came to the fore. In the preliminary election for the candidates to determine who was eligible to go on to the final election, it was decided that a candidate should obtain at least 40 to have the right to go on to the following round. Wahid led with 157 votes at this step, and was followed by Hasan with 136 votes, Saifuddin with 17, and Mawardi with 6 votes. The two latter candidates were definitely not able to proceed to the final election, due to their failure to obtain the minimum number of votes. With increasing political tension between Wahid and Hasan sides, in the final election Wahid remained to win with 176 votes defeating Hasan with 142 votes. It is apparent that the former supporters of Saifuddin with 17 votes turned to Wahid, whereas Mawardi's supporters turned to Hasan.³¹

The victory of Wahid at the Cipasung congress illustrated well that the main social and political facts of life among the NU communities since the return to the Khittah are and have been the commitment to safeguard the cultural strategy of the Islamic movement from the revival of the politician wing; the other, and somewhat religious point, must be the privileged role of the 'ulamâ' and religious bodies (such as Syuriah) to govern the life of the organization.

There are three factors which explain why the attraction to the NU's political tendencies will always be enlivened in the NU: firstly, NU communities gained a romantic glory by being involved in practical politics, especially when the NU became an independent party during the NASAKOM regime; secondly, with nearly 30 million members who are rural Muslims, the NU would easily be used as a powerful political force by certain interest groups; thirdly, the NU's pattern as a socio-religious organization is an easy road for manipulation of its members for political ends. These complicated factors when combined with the political tensions within the NU during the Cipasung congress, have helped to achieve the feeling of being threatened into letting Hasan's politician wing lead the Tanfidziyah, as felt by the congress participants. They were relatively convinced of the external intervention that was found among Hasan's supporters as an impact of the revitalization of political Islam, and in reality that was to be found among the DPCs dominated by ICMI members.

Against this consideration of the threat of the revival of the politicians in the NU, when the new central board of the Tanfidziyah for the period 1994-1999 was announced on December 15, Abu Hasan was excluded from the composition. In an exposition addressed to the Indonesian media, Wahid declared that this composition was intended to unify the aspirations from the NU members to form united central Tanfidziyah board without 'external intervention'. Most of the NU communities generally accepted this newly created board. The government also, through the Minister of Domestic Affairs, Yogie S. Memet, immediately gave legal recognition to the board. But, Fahmi Saifuddin, Wahid's associate who was placed as the chairman deputy of the Tanfidziyah, decided to resign from the board for several reasons. Firstly, Saifuddin observed that, during the congress, there was an unusual trend among the NU communities of ignoring the principles of Islamic attitudes (*Akblaqul karimah*). Secondly, there was political intervention from external interests especially regarding the chairmanship election which greatly tried to oppose Wahid's re-elec-

tion or otherwise. Thirdly, he was disappointed by the demands from the 'ulamâ' that he resign from the nomination in favor of Wahid's leading position. Finally, it was hard for him to be active in the deputy chairmanship of the NU due to his personal duties. In consideration of these personal reasons, Saifuddin decided to resign.³²

In fairness to these personal concerns, it must be admitted here that although he is known as a senior political figure among the NU communities, Fahmi Saifuddin is a man with little feeling of political intrigue. Therefore, his decision to resign from that controversial composition can be well understood. It is unthinkable that a person like Saifuddin would confront the progressive attitude of Abu Hasan.

Hasan himself, as well as his main supporters, was disappointed with this composition. How is it possible, as he declared that, "a candidate with 142 votes and in the election has no seat on the board. It is difficult to understand their [Wahid's group] attitude."³³ A member of representatives from Hasan's side, Teukue Abdul Aziz, shared this opinion. It was Aziz who tried to clarify the issue but unfortunately made the problem more critical. He said that the reason for excluding Hasan from the board was not based mainly upon the political consideration as Wahid stated, but upon a personal problem for Hasan with regard to his moral conduct. Abu Hasan was accused of being involved in the manipulation of project which cost around \$ 18 million for the improvement of the port at Tanjungpriok.

Being the victim of this, Hasan then — besides suing Wahid in court — established Kordinator Pusat Pengurus NU (KPPNU, Coordinators for the Executive Board of the NU) as a vehicle for dialogue. This forum, which included most of the respected figures and 'ulamâ' of the NU such as Yusuf Hasyim and KH. Abdul Hamid Baidhawi, was not intended to be a rival NU board. But, after a number of events in 1995, it became a stepping-stone to the birth of a rival board which really presented powerful political pressures towards Wahid's legitimate board.

The KPPNU and the Genesis of a Rival NU

Abu Hasan announced the formation of the KPPNU in Jakarta, on December 27, 1994, just few weeks after Wahid's board was formed.³⁴ Even though some leading 'ulamâ' declined to be included in the structure, the arrival of KPPNU appeared to mark the beginning of the actual opposition to control Wahid's political and religious influence within the NU communities. Its political articula-

tions in fact determined the course that Wahid's leadership in the NU was not welcomed by, firstly, a number of NU communities and, secondly, some important high-ranking government officials.

The most abrupt move towards the opposition to Wahid came in the form of definite support from DPWs and DPCs of the NU for the KPPNU, principally from the 142 votes.³⁵ On January 11, 1995, the KPPNU held its first general meeting and declared that the DPWs and DPCs rejected the decisions resulting from the 1994 Cipasung congress including that of the chairmanship election for the Syuriah and the Tanfidziyah. Consequently, they also opposed Wahid's PBNU, resulting from the meeting on December 13, 1994, and assumed the right of Hasan's KPPNU to appoint or depose all the programs and structures of the NU. But above all, despite their unwillingness to receive the PBNU, the DPWs and DPCs found ways to impose upon these two conflicting boards to reconcile (*islâh*), i.e., through a meaningful dialogue within a limited circle and government. The statement concluded that if this effort is not able to bring those two boards into the *islâh* forum, the DPWs and DPCs left it up to Hasan's KPPNU to hold an extraordinary congress.³⁶

The KPPNU's pressure upon Wahid's PBNU and its seizure of most of the 'ulamâ' who attempted to defend the result of Cipasung congress had a devastating effect upon the supremacy of Wahid's position in the NU community. It was on January 12, when Idham Chalid and his Cipete circle declared their affirmation to support the KPPNU, that numerous NU 'ulamâ' arranged a special meeting in Jombang, East Java. This meeting reached at the agreement that, in order to end the conflict, there must be a reconciliation between Wahid and Abu Hasan. Then, on January 16, a delegation was formed consisting of four 'ulamâ', i.e., KH. Cholil Bisri (Jombang), KH. Abdullah Abbas (Cirebon), KH. Abdullah Fakhri (Lamongan), and KH. Badri Masduki (Probolinggo). The main task of the delegate was to persuade both Wahid and Hasan to accept each other and to come to a reconciliation forum. The delegation went to Chalid's house and sought him as a mediator for the reconciliation. Meanwhile, from Wahid's position there was an attempt at improvement to include Hasan in the new board of the PBNU. It was reported that Hasan would be placed in the Dewan Pleno (Consultative Council) of the PBNU; a position that has no influence on the board.

In the mean time, Wahid's PBNU found that it was meaningless to respond seriously to Hasan once he had insisted upon imposing

his will upon the NU. The best that could be done by Wahid was to consolidate the PBNU officials and start working with them to actualize the programs commissioned by the congress. Wahid was strongly convinced that that NU community would reject the KPPNU:

We believe that all the problems of the NU have been solved. The PBNU has been formed, we just consolidated and, then, worked to realize to the NU's programs. I believe that the NU community will reject Hasan's KPPNU, because it does not reflect their commitment to follow all the decisions made by the congress.³⁷

It was difficult, of course, to successfully destabilize Wahid's PBNU at the community level, when most of the supreme 'ulamâ' of the NU were behind him. Hasan did not openly challenge the legality of the 'ulamâ' nor did he totally ignore the basic position of those who came along with Wahid, although some of these 'ulamâ' were included in the KPPNU composition. More significant still, Hasan made no attempt to oppose Wahid's moral appeal in society, and his control of young intellectuals of NU.

One of the most important elements that emerged in this conflict was the attitude of the government. Almost all the comments made by top officials of the government accept the legitimacy of Wahid's executive board and, accordingly, rejected the existence of the KPPNU. Minister of Domestic Affairs, Yogie S. Memet, maintained that "the PBNU executive board is legal. If there is a problem concerning with the perfectness of the personnel, that is an internal problem among them."³⁸ Some other officials shared this attitude to the issue. This kind of acceptance was increasingly seen as a major factor in the political legitimacy of the PBNU and Wahid.

The crucial problem arises from the fact that, although the PBNU was legally accepted, its formation was not yet accepted by President Suharto. This is in fact implied by the fact that the PBNU led by Wahid has not been officially welcomed by the President up until today. In connection with this explanation, it must be noted that there is a conventional rule within the Indonesian political system that to be considered a legitimate organization, the official board of an association (whether social, political, religious, or professional) must meet the President and, thus, gain an affirmation from him. This is seemingly superficial, but appears to have major significance for the existence of the organization. Wahid's PBNU had so far not been welcomed as the official board of NU to be received by the

President. Hence, this factor is seen as an obstacle to the existence of the PBNU.

There has also been an increasing opposition to destabilize Wahid's PBNU on a variety of issues, although this has occurred at a more underground level. It was reported that during 1995 some top military officials and government representatives visited Abu Hasan's house in Simprug, Jakarta. Among the points discussed in that unofficial meeting were the need for increased support for the KPPNU, demands for greater articulation from its leaders, and enhancement of political control in the NU community. Some of these methods seemed ineffective, such as reports that a number of 'ulamâ' in Central and Western Java were advised to support the KPPNU, or that Wahid was favorable the protection of Shi'ah sect in Indonesia, and so forth. Yet the efforts to destabilize Wahid continued.

These effort are seen by many observers as an illustration that Hasan's KPPNU had close ties with external political interests which that greatly endangered the NU's commitment to the Khittah of 1926. It became obvious that Hasan's efforts to use the KPPNU as a vehicle for dialogue culminated in the creation of a rival board of the NU. It was on January 17, 1996, that the KPPNU held its informal gathering in the Hajj Dormitory of Pondok Gede, Jakarta.³⁹ This gathering, which was meant to be a conference, developed into an extraordinary congress of the NU. Attended by some 500 participants claiming to represent 23 regional branches, the gathering established a new formation of a board which was similar to Wahid's PBNU. Abu Hasan was elected chairman of this rival Tanfidziyah board, and KH. Hamid Baidlawi (Lasem) was widely accepted as the chairman of the Syuriah board. The congress proceeded smoothly, although reportedly there were attempts by the police to stop the gathering.⁴⁰

The most interesting and one of the most important political phenomena to note was that the congress was approved by General R. Hartono, the Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces, who has a close relationship with Muslims in the ICMI circle.⁴¹ There were some signs from certain individuals in the bureaucracy of supporting the KPPNU holding the congress. At the same time, there began a series of acknowledgements to the newly created NU executive board among government representatives. At least, some provided special permits for the birth of a rival board of the NU. In its administrative procedure, for instance, the congress lacked police permits. Yet it proceeded without facing difficulties from the police authority. It

seems that some high-ranking military officers were willing to sharpen the conflict between the parties and, in turn, to aid Hassan in unseating Wahid.

Such a situation — that some accepted Wahid's PBNU, and some permitted the KPPNU extraordinary congress — reflected the government's ambivalent treatment of the solution of the NU internal conflict. On the day of congress, on the one hand, the government, represented by the Minister of Domestic Affairs, Yogie S. Memet, and the Minister of Religious Affairs, Tarmizi Taher, definitely reaffirmed the existence of the PBNU which resulted from the Cipasung congress, although this affirmation did not result ending the conflict. They argued that the government would not affirm NU board outside the Cipasung congress, because that was the legitimate one. But, on the other hand, there were naked attempts from the bureaucracy to give certain privileges to Abu Hasan's rival NU board, which made one assume that the government supported him. This appeared principally in the fact that the government did not prove its exact position by banning KPPNU individuals from setting up the rival executive board.

It was therefore believed that there were interests from a group of political Islamics within the ICMI circle, as well as some high-ranking military officials, who tended to co-opt the NU into their political base by favoring Abu Hasan's leadership. In other words, as some observers noted, the government's ambivalent attitude to the NU crisis was actually a well-planned scenario arranged by these individuals to bring Wahid's leadership into decline and, finally, to control the NU.⁴²

Along with this explanation is the fact that ICMI's efforts to unseat Wahid in the NU is not a recent development. A month before the Cipasung congress was held in December 1994, Habibie, the general chairman of the ICMI, had commissioned his associates to arrange a replacement in the NU leadership instead of Wahid. Then, Sutjipto Wirosardjono, a member of the Expert Council of the ICMI, and two middle-ranking army commanders, were appointed to persuade Wahid not to nominate himself in the congress chairmanship race. In their meeting at Wahid's house just a few weeks before the congress began, he politely declined their request. He argued "I would not nominate myself, of course. But, if the participants of the congress want me to lead the NU, what can I say? I leave the congress and the NU community free to elect a nominated body." This story

was then retold by Wirosardjono as the ICMI exposition with regard to the NU internal crisis in February 1996. Wirosardjono argued:

The story [of the ICMI's approach to Wahid to resign] is true. But, this is not merely Pak Habibie's concern alone. It was our concern that the NU under Wahid had a problem of communication with the government. The NU is a big organization. We thought at that time that if the NU did not have a problem with the government, it would be better. That is why we considered requesting Wahid to resign. This is a fact. You know what I mean by the problem of communication.⁴³

Habibie himself re-affirmed that there were efforts among ICMI officials to replace Wahid with another NU leader.

It is related to this kind of political pressure that Wahid clarified his stance regarding external intervention within the NU crisis: the NU faces political conspiracy.⁴⁴ According to Wahid, the NU is being undermined by a political scenario to bring its 30 million members to enter practical politics. This meant that the Khittah of 1926 was under a serious challenge. Wahid pointed out that several parties which represented the revival of political Islam were demanding more political legitimacy from Muslims, and the NU was one of the targets. Therefore, Wahid asserted, the main aim of extending the crisis in the NU was to create an obstruction among the conflicting NU leaders, in order to absorb the NU community:

This is not new. I know exactly where the scenario will go. The plot was to create an obstruction because the two leaders [Wahid and Hasan] would have to be reconciled through mediation. I believed that after both of us had been made to step down, a third person would emerge as leader. Then, the so-called 'peace maker' would be able to force their will on the organization.⁴⁵

According to Wahid, there was a candidate from the NU Eastern Java Province, Wahid Zaini, who had been approached to be an alternative leader.

Therefore, the situation was one in which the NU was facing a political crisis which had no precedence in the NU's history. Both Hasan's and Wahid's PBNU boards refused to be reconciled by mediation. In the political sphere, there were repercussions on Wahid's PBNU in terms of political articulation, permits for religious activities, etc., partly bring about to decline in Wahid's influence in the NU community. Conversely, there were reports, particularly in the

NU Western Java Province, of demands to affirm Hasan's PBNU and more recently there were efforts to destabilize Wahid's leadership by questioning his moral conduct, such as his allegedly accepting Rp. 600 million from the Kompas-Gramedia group, a leading publishing house dominated by the Catholics. Yet, the NU has its own nature and political tradition which until now operated within a pattern of cooperation between the 'ulamâ' (*kyais*), political leaders, and the masses. The crisis has had no effect on the NU at all, because Wahid still retains strong support both at the 'ulamâ' and the mass level.

The NU's Khittah in a Time of Trial; Concluding Remarks

When the KPPNU held its extraordinary congress in Pondok Gede, Jakarta, and brought with it the new executive board of PBNU, many could have predicted the ambivalent response of top Indonesian officials. Almost immediately, all government representatives commented that the government only recognized the PBNU resulting from Cipasung Congress led by KH. Ilyas Ruhiyat (the Syuriah) and KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (the Tanfidziyah). The Minister of Religious Affairs, Tarmizi Taher, after his meeting with President Soeharto, made a long statement with regards to the future existence of the NU. He was reported to have declared that the government would not intervene in the NU's domestic crisis. But, he said, if the people who were involved in the conflict let the government become a mediator in resolving the crisis, the government would welcome this. Yet, it seems that the government let Hasan's rival NU continue to exist, even to expand its organizational structures.

The questions to be asked are: why did top government officials respond in this ambivalent way? What does this tell us about the government elites' perception of the NU in particular, and Islam in Indonesia in general?

To sketch the analysis, it can be observed that the formulation of political policy of the late New Order (in the 1990s) is dominated by elements within high-ranking Muslim army officers and the rising politically-oriented Muslim intellectuals in the ICMI, broadly known as the ICMI circle. This circle gave high priority to the development of a "special relationship" between Muslim and the government (the state) as a means of increasing Muslims' roles in the strategy of national development in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the state also gains some political legitimacy from the majority of its population.

The basic assumptions underlying this approach are: 1) that Muslim Army officers are more likely to have an influence over the New Order government and they are considered to be favorable and sympathetic to the Muslim community; 2) that the declining trends of political support for the government from Suharto's close assistants such as Soedharmono and LB. Moerdani in the late 1980s have brought about a situation of a legitimacy crisis over the New Order and the prospect of an increase in the power of Muslim intellectuals, especially after the rise of the ICMI in 1990. Therefore, as these Muslim intellectuals would perceive, Muslims' long term interests are best served by an accommodative attitude of support and sympathy for the current Indonesian government.

As a consequence, it is argued that those who are concerned with increasing Muslim power in the state have not taken into account the complex, serious political and economic problems facing Indonesia. In particular, it is alleged that – due to calculation of their political interests – the Muslim intellectuals in the ICMI are no longer concerned with the state's social and political problems over such issues as social justice, human rights, corruption, and democracy.

In the meantime, after declaring its return to the *Khittah* of 1926 in December 1984, the NU under Wahid became a powerful segment of the Islamic community which empowered its political bargaining in the Indonesian political constellation by developing the modern discourse of politics. By the early 1990s, although it was no longer in practical politics, the NU represented a considerable political power which greatly contributed to the development of civil society and the struggle for a more democratic state. However, these significant contributions confront the two political changes in the course of the New Order government presented above. There are two major areas in which a conflict of interest between the NU (represented by Wahid) and its ICMI counterpart, as well as the state, is taking place. Firstly, the NU has demanded a greater democracy as an urgent need in Indonesian government and has failed to generate the expected changes in the political culture and super-structure, a situation which prompted moves towards a clash between the NU and the state, especially related to the problem of military domination. This was facilitated by Wahid's leading role in the establishment of the Democracy Forum which gave access to non-Muslim communities and secular-minded intellectuals. The second area concerned the NU's refutation of the presence of certain religious (Muslim) communities in politics which

is conducive to the growth of sectarianism and fundamentalism. This refutation led to a conflict of interests between the NU and rising Muslim politicians in the ICMI; a series of obstacles to then be placed in the NU leadership in order to weaken its political articulation.

Nevertheless, the NU's tension with both the government and the ICMI intellectuals can not necessarily be followed by the argument that the NU represents a political opponent to the official government. This is because the NU's commitment to the state ideology, Pancasila, and the national constitution, UUD 1945, is apparent. It is well-known that the NU was the first Muslim organization which accepted Pancasila as its basis after the New Order government decided that Pancasila should be the sole ideological basis of all social and political organizations in Indonesia. In addition, the NU is an 'ulamâ' organization with political attributes of loyalty to the government and the constitution. NU communities and aspirations, drawn largely from the traditional Muslim mass, are substantially integrated into the system of the constitution, and are committed to national development. Therefore, the capacity of the state to respond to the NU's critical stance towards the political atmosphere in Indonesia must follow the logic of a fair political game. That is to say, the government cannot in any way abandon the existence of the NU. The best the state can do is to destabilize the NU's leadership, i.e., KH. Abdurrahman Wahid.

The NU Cipasung congress in December 1994 was the best moment to destabilize Wahid's influence in the NU. A scenario developed of unseating Wahid and replacing him with Abu Hasan. Although Hasan was strongly supported by the participants of the congress, he finally lost. This scenario continued after the congress: to push Wahid towards a greater problem. The NU was then divided into two sides, Wahid and Hasan. The former was more concerned with community development based on the Khittah of 1926, the latter tended to be a part of the revitalization of political Islam. In the end, two NU different boards were created.

It seems that the roles of the state and the ICMI in providing the roads for the NU leaders to split was apparent. The fact that ICMI's huge campaign to include all segments of the Muslim community into its political base and the state's demand for political support from the majority, ensured a place for them to co-opt the NU into the line of state control. In particular, the integration of the ICMI and the state in the political articulations provided a political weapon

in which the cooperation between the state power and intellectuals was to attack the NU's commitment to the *Khittah*. The coming General Election in 1997 also raises a new agenda for the state and the ICMI in destabilizing the NU community. The alleged "domination" of ICMI officials in the Golkar central board in 1994 was essentially a call to strengthen the state legitimacy by obtaining political support from Muslim voters; in its broadest context, to include the NU which has 30 million members into Golkar's political base which would be effective and would be a powerful force to defeat the other two political parties, the United Development Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). Therefore, the ambivalent response of the state to the crisis over the NU leadership well illustrated that there is a different strategy from the government circles in approaching the Muslim community. First, some are more concerned with allowing the NU to be committed to its *khittah*, and not being involved in practical politics. Others believe that, by gaining political supports from the NU community, the special relationship between Muslims and the state would be greatly stabilized.

Today, the NU community has two conflicting PBNU's: Wahid's and Hasan's. It is believed that there are two possibilities whereby this crisis can be resolved. First, there may be a reconciliation forum to bring these conflicting boards to resign and, then, another candidate will be appointed to lead the NU. Second, the government may let these two boards continue to exist until one of them collapses, with the qualification that neither PBNU should make trouble for the political legitimacy of the state and the ICMI.

Notes

1. For a complete view of the NU's religious and political background, see Ali Haidar, *Nahdlatul Ulama dan Islam di Indonesia: Pendekatan Fiqh atas Politik* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1995). See also, Mitsuo Nakamura, "Nahdlatul Ulama," in John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of The Modern Islamic World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 218-223.
2. Martin van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradisi, Relasi-relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru* (Yogyakarta: LKiS dan Pustaka Pelajar, 1994), p. 34. It was KH. Ahmad Siddiq who introduced the term *khittah* when, at the end of 1960s, he started generating the NU community in the Eastern Java province to reflect the NU's original character and mission.
3. *NU: Tradisi*, pp. 45-8.
4. For the discussion on the NU and Masjumi, see *Nahdlatul Ulama*, pp. 39-44.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
6. *Nahdlatul Ulama*, p. 61. (table). See also, M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, (New York: Macmillan Publications, 1981). p. 167.
7. *Nahdlatul Ulama*, p. 68.
8. *NU: Tradisi*, p. 89.
9. For the activities described here, see Darul Aqsha and Johan Meuleman (eds.), *Islam in Indonesia: A Survey and Development from 1988 to 1993* (Jakarta: INIS, 1994). pp. 213-25.
10. *NU: Tradisi*, p. 97.
11. Fachry Ali and Bahtiar Effendi, *Merambah Jalan Baru Islam*, (Bandung: Mizan 1985), p. 71.
12. *Ummat* (interview), February 22, 1996.
13. *Islam in Indonesia*, p. 321.
14. For a political analysis to the ICMI, see Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia in the 1990s* (New York: Allen and Unwin, 1994), p. 176-183.
15. Interview with *Editor*, December 1990.
16. *Indonesia*, p. 179.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
18. For an explanation of Wahid's struggle for a democratic society, see Saiful Mujani, "Politik Indonesia Tahun 1990an: Kebangkitan ideologi?" (Book Review), in *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 3. No. 1, 1996.
19. *Merdeka*, November 25, 1994.
20. *Media Indonesia*, November 19, 1994.
21. *Media Indonesia*, December 1, 1994.
22. *Media Indonesia*, December 2, 1994.
23. *Kompas*, December 2, 1994.
24. *Kompas*, December 4, 1994.
25. *Kompas*, December 3, 1994.
26. *Media Indonesia*, December 3, 1994.
27. *Merdeka*, December 4, 1994.
28. *Merdeka*, December 3, 1994. *Kompas*, December 3, 1994.
29. *Kompas*, December 4, 1994. *Media Indonesia*, December 4, 1994.
30. *Media Indonesia*, December 3, 1994.
31. *Republika*, December 6, 1994.
32. *Kompas*, December 14, 1994.
33. *Media Indonesia*, December 17, 1994.

34. *Media Indonesia*, December 18, 1994.
35. *Kompas*, January 11, 1995.
36. *Kompas*, January 12, 1995.
37. *Jakarta Post*, January 17, 1995.
38. *Media Indonesia*, January 17, 1995.
39. *Merdeka*, January 18, 1996.
40. *Jakarta Post*, December 18, 1996.
42. The report did not appear in any Indonesian media. My informant, who was on the committee of the extraordinary congress, confirmed the event.
42. The view expressed by Riswanda Imawan, Afan Ghaffar, and Ghafar Rahman, in *Jakarta Post*, December 20, 1996.
43. *Merdeka*, January 26, 1996.
44. *Jakarta Post*, January 30, 1996.
45. *Jakarta Post*, January 30, 1996.

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