

The Manifesto of Nahdlatul Ulama: Understanding Its Meaning, Political Integration, and Identity

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the political values of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) from Khittah's perspective and its position in political practice. The debate occurred because Nahdlatul Ulama was considered to be playing practical politics. On the other hand, the Nahdlatul Ulama Khittah was always discussed, saying that Nahdlatul Ulama should not enter into practical politics because of the 1926 NU Khittah. The type of research used was library research. Researchers studied documents, books, journals, magazines, and various literature related to NU's position on politics in the 1926 NU Khittah and its position in political practice. The results of the research show that there are two meanings of khittah: the "khass" (far'i-juz'i), namely the NU Khittah text resulting from the Situbondo Congress, and the "am-kulli," namely all the himmah, ideals and guidelines for NU's struggle for religion and nation. NU politics is part of the broad set of Khittah substance, which includes all the service and dharma of devotion to the nation in two strategic domains: social-national development and socio-economic-political dimensions, which are based on justice and benefit.

Keywords: Politics, Khittah, Nahdlatul Ulama

Khittah Nahdlatul Ulama: Pemahaman Makna, Integrasi Politik dan Jati Diri NU

Abstrak

Artikel Ini bertujuan menganalisis nilai-nilai politik Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) perspektif Khittah dan posisinya dalam praktik politik. Perdebatan terjadi dikarenakan Nahdlatul Ulama dianggap memainkan politik praktis, dan di sisi lain Khittah Nahdlatul Ulama yang selalu menjadi perbincangan bahwa Nahdlatul Ulama tidak boleh masuk ke dalam politik praktis dikarenakan Khittah NU 1926. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan adalah library research (penelitian kepustakaan). Peneliti mengkaji dokumen, buku, jurnal, majalah, dan berbagai literatur terkait posisi NU tentang politik dalam Khittah NU 1926 dan posisinya dalam praktik perpolitikan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan, terdapat dua pengertian khittah: yang "khas" (far'i-juz'i) yakni naskah Khittah NU hasil Mukhtamar Situbondo, dan yang "am-kulli" yakni segenap himmah, cita-cita dan pedoman perjuangan NU bagi agama dan bangsa. Politik NU adalah bagian dari himpunan substansi Khittah yang am-kulli, mencakup segenap khidmah dan darma bakti bagi bangsa dalam dua ranah strategis: pembinaan kemasyarakatan-kebangsaan dan dimensi sosial-ekonomi-politik yang bersendikan keadilan dan kemashlahatan.

Kata kunci: Politik, Khittah, Nahdlatul Ulama

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A. Introduction

Nahdlatul Ulama politics is now a very interesting discussion in the political year of the Indonesian nation. The stigma that states that Nahdlatul Ulama is trapped in "practical politics", the issue has a relationship with two issues, namely the basis of interest (interest) and time (community). From the issue of interest, political interests bring out differences. Meanwhile, regarding the period (community), the voice of Nahdlatul Ulama (nahdliyyin) has always been a fight for political actors in election years.¹

Meanwhile, Nahdlatul Ulama (nahdliyyin) residents have their own party, the National Justice Party (PKB), but this is the impact of conflict which has an impact on dualism and bad and prolonged conflicts.² Moreover, there is a disparity stating that according to the attitude of PKB politics depends on the attitude of PBNU, ³ It is also in line with the statement of the Chairman of PBNU, Prof. H Said Agil Siraj, Lc. The Supreme Court said, "PKB is NU, NU is PKB." this is based on the fact that it was the founder of PBNU who founded PKB with the idea of forming Team Five.⁴ However, this attitude is very different from the response of the chairman of PBNU, KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf stated unequivocally that the National Awakening Party (PKB) did not represent Nahdlatul Ulama.⁵ Moreover, through the Mukhtar forum, PKB is not a representation of Nahdlatul Ulama, and now it is a decision that has determined that Nahdlatul Ulama takes a stance and distance from practical politics.⁶

Historically, it was a matter of political conflict in Nahdlatul Ulama, which was very high. When Nahdlatul Ulama left Masyumi through the 19th NU Congress

¹Antaranews, NU Votes and NU "Politics" in the 2024 Elections [*Suara NU dan "Politik" NU Pada Pemilu 2024*]. September 11, 2023.

² Zainuddin, NU, Politics and PKB [*NU, Politik dan PKB*]. UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, 11 November 2013.

³ Romahurmuzy's statement on one of the Podcasts in Indonesia; Gelora.co.id, Romahurmuzy Reveals 3 Figures Who Failed Mahfud MD to Become Jokowi's Vice President, Who Are They?, May 4, 2023.

⁴KH. Said Aqil Siraj (PBNU Ketum Demisioner) at the 14th Gus Dur haul event held at the DPP PKB Office in Central Jakarta on August 4, 2023. Team 5 consists of: Kiai Ma'ruf Amin, Said Aqil Siraj, Rozy Munir, Bagja and Kiai Dawam Anwar.

⁵Statement of KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf (Chairman of PBNU) at the ASEAN Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue Conference (IIDC) at The Ritz Carlton Jakarta, Monday, August 7, 2023.

⁶*Ibid.*

in Palembang in 1952, Nahdlatul Ulama finally became its party called the NU Party, which followed the first elections in 1955. Evidently, the NU Party was ranked 4th, and eventually, many NU figures occupied important positions in the government. The steps were the same when Nahdlatul Ulama merged into the still active PPP (1973-1984), returned to Khittah in 1964, and after the New Order government in 1998-2003.⁷

Nahdlatul Ulama's political stance is in fact very important, and not without a basis for argument. Based on the survey results, it is stated that (nahdliyyin) Nahdlatul Ulama residents will experience a significant increase in 2023, reaching 56.9% from the previous one in 2005, which was only around 27%.⁸ Therefore, in every election, political actors in the legislative and executive fields always fight for the votes of Nahdlatul Ulama (*nahdliyyin*).

The voice of Nahdlatul Ulama members is the fulcrum of hope for victory in every political contestation of this country. Even though, in fact, at every election, the Nahdlatul Ulama (*nahdliyyin*) vote always spreads everywhere and is not even centered on the PKB itself as it is stated that the party is a party of *nahdliyyin* citizens. From 56.9% or equivalent to more than 140 million *nahdliyyin* every year, it was always the target of the political elite. Nahdlatul Ulama's political attitude is always in the spotlight and public discussion at every election event.⁹

Implementing and actualizing the essence of Nahdlatul Ulama *khittah* will minimize friction from Nahdlatul Ulama's supposed political attitude. The term of the word "return to *khittah* Nahdlatul Ulama". The idea of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) returning to *khittah* arose and sank since the 23rd Congress in 1962 in Solo, the 24th Mukatamar in 1967 in Bandung, the 25th Congress in 1971 in Surabaya, and the 26th Congress in 1979 in Semarang. The culmination of the 27th Congress in 1984 in Situbondo established *khittah* NU with the understanding that

⁷Akhmad Zaini, NU, and Politics (Study of Internal Political Conflicts in NU 1952-2003) [*NU dan Politik (Studi Tentang Konflik Politik di Internal NU 1952-2003)*], Thesis of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia in 2004.

⁸Denny JA's Indonesian Survey Circle (LSI) survey results in August 2023.

⁹Kompas TV, Fighting for NU Votes in the 2024 Presidential Election, How Influential [*Berebut Suara NU di Pilpres 2024, Seberapa Berpengaruh*], September 13, 2023.

khittah is the basis for thinking, actions, and attitudes of nahdiyyin based on the Aswaja understanding applied by people in Indonesia.¹⁰

The Khittah Nahdlatul Ulama of 1926 contained an organizational spirit to break away from the bonds of practical politics. Many consider that Nahdlatul Ulama's involvement in practical politics has been so excessive that there has been a shift from the basis of its commitment, which was originally a popular social organization.

The shift in the journey of Nahdlatul Ulama khittah, which is the spirit and basis of reference for Nahdlatul Ulama administrators in carrying out their organizational activities, is almost obsolete, along with the involvement of many of the Nahdlatul Ulama management elites politically in the current reform era. The facts on the ground state that ghiroh returns to khittah, which is easily manipulated by arguments and arguments. Therefore, de jure Nahdlatul Ulama may not be political, but de facto, the movement of Nahdlatul Ulama is full of practical political nuances.

Failure to understand Nahdlatul Ulama *khittah* might harm the understanding of Nahdlatul Ulama (nahdiyyin) citizens, both from structural and cultural aspects. Placing Nahdlatul Ulama's position in actual politics will save Nahdlatul Ulama itself from taking the wrong step in exploring its journey in every development and progress of Indonesia. Therefore, it actualizes the basis of attitude, thinking, and acting as Nahdlatul Ulama (*nahdiyyin*).

B. Method

This article results from a long, enduring study conducted using the library research method. The main focus is analyzing documents and related literature, including Khittah NU manuscripts, books, journals, magazines, and political literature. The study begins by identifying relevant literature sources that include official NU documents, scientific papers, books, journals, and other related literature. In addition, it is also carried out by selecting high-quality sources that

¹⁰Jombang.NU.or.id, Understanding Khittah NU and Gawe Politik 2024, 6 March 2023.

follow the focus of the research. Selection criteria involve relevance, credibility, and depth of information.

This study explores NU's official documents, books, journals, and literature. Content analysis was conducted to understand NU's political values, interpretation of the 1926 Khittah NU, as well as NU's position in political practice. The findings from the literature are categorized and grouped based on key themes, such as NU's political values, Khittah's concept, and NU's political practices. The study focuses on analyzing two notions of Khittah, namely "khas" (far'i-juz'i) and "am-kulli," to understand the concept and its implications for NU's political practice. This methodology provides a foundation for exploring and comprehensively analyzing NU's political values from the Khittah perspective, as well as evaluating whether NU's political practices are following the foundation of the 1926 NU Khittah.

C. Results and Discussion

1. The Meaning of Khittah

Discussing the meaning and significance of Khittah NU is the first step in conducting the study. The reason is that whatever perception a person has about NU and khittah must have implications for that person's views and absorption of political meaning. On the contrary, any perception and action of a person about politics concerning NU, kiai, or santri will inevitably involve all memories, ideas, or perceptions, whether in superficiality or depth, related to khittah. The words "khittah NU " have become a free market object that anyone can access and buy if they want to assess NU and all its actions concerned about power relations, religion, state, kiai, power, people, and state benefit.

Therefore, with the above considerations, we need to know a lot first about Khittah, and then, we need to know how the great political building of NU is. It includes knowing where the Indonesian clerics are heading, aiming, and vision of political life in our country. Especially in the management of the affairs of people and citizens. It is also important to clarify a number of terms, vocabulary, and understandings that have been milling around here and there regarding the meaning and significance of Khittah and NU politics because it is now commonplace

and easy for people to talk about Khittah but not know the content and real intention of decision number 2 of the 27th NU Congress in 1984 in Situbondo.¹¹

Some parties still often contradict khittah and politics, stating that NU does not need to be political and does not need to participate in support. Many misconceptions are now recycled into "truth" Unfortunately, it is used as a trap for the aims and objectives of "depoliticization" or "apoliticization" of NU. That is, to distance NU from politics or make it blind and unaware of politics, a favorite theme of scholars since the era of Snouck Hurgronje to become the object of other people's games with unclear goals.¹²

For this reason, it is necessary to see the problem of khittah and political relations. Namely, do not get carried away by politicizing the "truth" of politicians, buzzers, and influencers. Let us look at the data and facts: at the same time, map more macro and breadth of every data and fact while asking why there are "politics in NU. What is politics? What is the nature and character of NU politics? What was he born in this country almost a hundred years ago for? What is his perception and attitude towards reality outside of it, especially in the power relations between the powerful and the ruled?

¹¹ In this article, the term "*khittah*" is defined as follows: *Hittah NU, Khitiah, khittah*. If it is written Khittah NU, it means referring specifically to the results of the official decision of the 1984 Situbondo Congress entitled "Khitthah Nahdlatul Ulama", from the results of the Khittah Commission and Organization Session. Suppose it is written *Khittah* with a big K, without NU. It means all the official decisions of the 1984 Situbondo Congress, both from the results of the Khittah Commission and from other commissions. Meanwhile, if written *khittah* with a small k, it refers to a broad sense, namely the articulation of a person or group, both in ideas, perceptions, and attitudes or actions, about NU 1926, about the results of the Situbondo Congress, or things that are thought together that are in line or different and fight for the meaning of *khittah* for other purposes and then claim to be in line with the substance of the results of the Situbondo Congress, both those thought before the conference and afterward.

¹² As mentioned in the signal KH. Hashim Muzadi in 2009: "Some of these understandings of khittah are right, some are wrong, and some are twisted for the benefit of others". On another occasion, the Chairman of PBNU (period 1999-2010) emphasized: "Not a few parties outside NU deliberately use NU for the benefit of their groups. Usually they (parties outside NU) 'shout' about Khittah NU, as if to remind NU not to do politics, but they are using NU" See in "Khittah Used by Others, NU in Danger" NU Online, May 14, 2009:

<https://www.nu.or.id/post/read/17174/khittah-dimanfaatkan-orang-lain-nu-dalam-bahaya> (accessed February 21, 2020); "NU's 32nd Congress to Discuss Tafsir Khittah". NU Online, May 11, 2009: <https://www.nu.or.id/post/read/17130/muktamar-ke-32-nu-akan-bahas-tafsir-khittah> (accessed February 21, 2020).

KH A. Mustofa Bisri (Gus Mus), in one of his writings, also mentioned that the phenomenon of Khittah twisting arises "more because of other interests, other than the interests of NU or let alone the interests of Indonesia" See Gus Mus, "The Caring Exemplar". in Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, et al. (editors). Fahmi D. Saifuddin. NU's Doctor, p. 66-7

The effort of the term "return to khittah" clearly obscures views and insights in studying this issue clearly. Scientific and objective. The slogan khittah is too cheap to be sold everywhere. Some used to participate in practical political activities under the name NU, later speaking out for khittah. Vice versa: some have spoken khittah and criticized PBNU for campaigning in the Presidential Election (Pilpres), now doing practical politics, entering the Success Team (Timses), and then enjoying the soft seat of the presidential election results thanks to PBNU. The khittah debate was drawn into a clash between camps within the NU elite due to differences in candidate choices in the Regional Head Election (Pilkada), Presidential Election, and Congress. For example, after the conference, the losing side in the nomination market raised the issue of the importance of "NU returning to Khittah".

In its secularization campaign from Snouck's Company era to the present reform period, NU was directed to avoid needing to know about the economic games of cross-country financiers. Religion and politics need to be separated. Scholars were kept out of politics. The link between NU and its masses needed to be fixed. After that, a liberal political system of the "one man, one vote" model was introduced in the democratic party every five years in the presidential or local elections. A number of global and neo-liberal capitalist agendas are even infiltrated into NU's political secularization and liberalization agendas! For example, the importance of NU campaigning for pluralism and tolerance, but not national-ummah tolerance, but tolerance for feudal-capitalist political-economic sector actors or tolerance on the agendas of "moderate Islam", "war against radical Islam", to invitations to kiai-kiai not to need to do politics (meaning: leave it to the experts, "our" cadres).

In the past, studies of NU Party politics have been brought into the realm of capitalist expansion or American modernization. This is as shown by some American-Australian researchers' penchant for Sukarno-era Masyumi political Islam who supported the idea of an "Islamic state" and an "Islamic" justification for American expansion and separatism, while "nationalism" was considered ashabiyah (translated "group and tribal fanaticism"). Outside of that sectarian framework, you are not allowed to think strangely. NU's religious tradition, rooted in centuries of historical experience from the era of Islamization at the hands of the Wali Songo to

the era of the NU Party, is not considered, even just looked down upon as a scrap that will rot. Indonesian politics is, he said, rational, modern, and enlightenment politics. At the same time, the NU tradition from the time of Wali Songo to the era of the NU party is full of superstition, myth, stoicism, and khurafat. The NU will only be appreciated when it speaks in its colonial context in 1926, i.e., in its colonized position as a subject of the Company. The implication is that speaking khittah will also be appreciated when referring to 1926 when NU existed as a colonial subject, not as a free man, nor as an aspiring nation that wanted to rise and be politically literate.¹³ Speaking of politics as benefit and maqashid, NU wanted to rectify the politics of the feudal-capitalist system, which is more inclined to value politicians, bureaucrats, and financiers more than the ulama-kiai;¹⁴ At the same time, it wants to direct how precisely the politicians, bureaucrats, and financiers can support achieving the goals of benefit and maqashid to the archipelago.

The word *خطة* (*khittah*) in Arabic literally means line, something marked and demarcated, marker or marker. Then, in terminology or terms, the meaning develops into a straight line, signs, or something that is guided and followed. If the word is strung together with Nahdlatul Ulama, it means "the lines of establishment, struggle, and personality of Nahdlatul Ulama"¹⁵ "guidelines or lines of struggle that NU people follow and follow in moving or running something".¹⁶ The word khittah, which is the meaning of this term, was used in 1951. As read in the statement of the Masyumi Party's stance (at that time, NU was still part of it) regarding the Darul Islam rebellion in West Java, there is the word "Perjuangan Khittah".¹⁷ After NU

¹³ Martin van Bruinessen, NU ; Tradition, Relasi-Relasi Power, Search for New Discourse, Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1994.

¹⁴ For example, Karl D. Jackson & Lucian W. Pye (editor), Political Power and Communications in Indonesia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); dan. Donald K. Emmerson, Indonesia's Elite Political Culture and Cultural Politics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

¹⁵ The Formulation Team for the Concept of Khittah Nahdlatul Ulama Socialization PWNU East Java, "Explanation of Khittah Nahdlatul Ulama Point by Item", in Basic Insights of Nahdlatul Ulama (Nahdliyin Citizen Handbook) (Surabaya: PWNU East Java, 1994), p. 32. Rais Syuriah and the Chairman of PWNU East Java, KH formed this team. Imron Hamzah and KH. Hasyim Muzadi, on January 5, 1994, based on the decision of the NU Confederacy in Lampung, January 21-25, 1992.

¹⁶ KH. Muchith Muzadi, Mengenal Nahdlatul Ulama, p. 15.

¹⁷ "It is mainly for the Masjumi, particularly Indonesian Muslims generally are more aware of the demands of the situation in filling the struggle for the khittah with deeds that are not more organized and closer to the real goal". See Kepartai- an in Indonesia (Jakarta: Ministry of Information, 1951), p. 27.

formed its party in 1952, the word khittah no longer appears within the Masyumi Party."¹⁸

2. Khittah NU: From Global-Holistic to Partially-Particular

In the phrase Kiai Muchith Muzadi, Khittah NU means "the usual line, which is always taken by NU, by NU people in their work to realize their ideals and be guided by their religious understanding, to form the distinctive personality of Nahdlatul Ulama. Officially, he referred to the text of Khittah Nahdlatul Ulama, decree No. 2, of the 27th NU Congress Situbondo. However, Kiai Muchith also reveals something more global-holistic ('am-kulli) than the above understanding: NU khittah's nature existed long before. That was before it was formulated as a text in the Situbondo Congress.¹⁹ It indicates a broader universal sense of khittah and does not include only textual aspects. It includes a spirit, soul, or ideal (himmah) of struggle that has become the hallmark of the character of NU since its establishment in 1926.²⁰ Thus, the meaning of khittah, in this reflective-historical-global sense, is not just the result of decision No. 2 of the 1984 Situbondo Congress but the entire totality of NU's history, which was spoken in the past with the term "khittah struggle NU from time to time" or "*Khittah Nahdliyah*" in Kiai Siddiq's terms. Khittah's "totality-holistic".

The two positions above can be met by looking at the logic of comparison between buildings and stilt houses (now popularly called traditional houses). When viewed from the foundation, the first one symbolizes something sickle, fixed,

¹⁸ It can be seen in the profile of the Masyumi Party in the Indonesian Party and Parliament (Jakarta: Ministry of Information, 1954).

¹⁹ Muzadi, Getting to know Nahdlatul Ulama, p. 15, based on one sentence in point 2 part c of the Khittah NU text, which reads, "Khittah Nahdlatul Ulama is also excavated from the essence of its solemn journey from time to time".

²⁰ "Kiai Muchith's position continues the spirit that KH once expressed. A. Wahab Chasbullah, in the 25th NU Congress in Surabaya, December 1971, welcomed voices who wanted to return to the NU 1926 era:

Our chairman has warned us Nahdliyyin no-dliyyat people that we should return to the Nahdlatul Ulama of 1926. Of course, it means that even though we fought in 1971, we must still have the spirit of Nahdlatul Ulama in 1926. That is that. We will forever remain loyal to the 'aqidah and himmah (ideals) of Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah, not only in imam and worship but also in political, economic, and social affairs broadly.

See KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, "Defending NU as the Largest Party: Khutbah Iftitah Rais Am", in Political and State Rules (editor: Abdul Mun'im DZ) (Depok: Langgar Swadaya Nusantara, 2015), p. 95.

constant, and unchanging. While the second likens the variable of change, which is to transcribe the formation of "something that remains in the house into "something historical and changing". However, the totality of the house building itself was not destroyed. The walled house building's structure differs from the stilt house (such as the Bugis-Makassar stilt house). The former has an invariable, fixed, and permanent foundation. If the foundation of the building were replaced or moved, the building of the house would be completely destroyed. This is anarchist deconstruction, not constructive. Different from the second type of house. Bugis stilt houses have foundations but are not fixed or flexible and can be moved elsewhere, while the houses remain intact and undamaged.

Kiai Muchith and Cak Anam contended that Khittah is both the foundation of NU, with its pillars Muqaddimah Qanun Asasi, Qanun Asasi, the Articles of Association or Statutes, and the results of the Situbondo Conference and Yogyakarta Congress. Nevertheless, there is a difference in the way of looking at the foundation: Kiai Muchith sees the foundation as more historical, that is, more flexible while maintaining the integrity of the totality of NU building structures, such as the way of thinking of the Bugis-Makassar stilt house model. This historical view allows Kiai Muchith to comprehensively see various aspects of Khittah and NU's journey so that his insight is not rigid and jumud. From the Situbondo Conference, he saw that there are two levels of khittah meaning: first, the meaning of *'am-kulli* (totality-holistic); and, secondly, the meaning of *juz'iy* (partial or particular). The first meaning includes "the soul of NU" or "khittah perjuangan NU" from time to time, which takes several forms of struggle: through mass organizations, joining certain political parties, becoming their political parties, returning to being mass organizations, then facilitating the birth of certain political parties for their citizens. While the second meaning, the *juz'i-furu'i*, includes the particular question of "returning to the status of NU to its original function when it was founded in 1926", namely as a mass organization or religious-social organization (*jam 'iyah diniyah ijtimah 'iyah*), and not as a political party. From this historical-contextual understanding, it is not wrong if, in the post-Suharto era, Mbah Muchith became a reader of the text of the declaration of the establishment of PKB in Jakarta in July 1998 while maintaining NU's status as a mass organization resulting from the Situbondo Congress.

3. Return to Khittah, i.e., to the "soul" of NU.

Return to Khittah NU 1926 or, abbreviated, return to khittah, is a slogan that often appears when talking about khittah. In an interview with the author, Gus Mus said it was necessary to distinguish between Khittah NU and "returning to khittah."²¹ Khittah NU, as mentioned in the terminological sense of Kiai Muchith above and also used by Gus Mus, refers to the results of the Situbondo Congress, as something written from decision No. 2. While the meaning of returning to khittah refers to several ideas and efforts to restore NU's identity to its original function when it was founded in 1926 as a social religious organization (*jam'iyah diniyah ijtima'iyah*), not as a political party.

The term "return to the soul of NU 1926" was used in the 26th Conference of NU in Semarang in 1979, then adopted in the 1983 Situbondo Munas, but almost drowned in decision No. 2 of the Situbondo Congress. Namely, it was the spirit of NU's struggle since its establishment in 1926. This understanding is derived from KH's speech. A. Wahab Chasbullah at the 25th Congress in Surabaya, December 1971. The 2nd Rais Am of PBNU considered that returning to the 1926 NU khittah was a partial return to what it was in the past in 1926. There are differences in the situation, from the colonial state of the Dutch East Indies to the condition of the Republic of Indonesia, which was independent and belonged to the Indonesian nation as a whole. What is meant back to NU 1926: "remain loyal to *aqidah* and *himmah* (ideals, spirit) of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah*, not only in the field of faith and worship but also in political, economic and social affairs in general".²²

The difference between the two, between the meaning of returning to the text of the NU khittah and returning to the "soul" of NU 1926, has its implications. The first wants NU to abandon politics and return as a religious-social organization and not as a political party, including relinquishing its attachment to any political party. This meaning later culminated in the Khittah NU in the textual formulation of the

²¹ Interview with KH. Mustofa Bisri (Gus Mus), Rembang, December 22, 2019.

²² "Defending NU as the Largest Party: Khutbah Iftitah Rais Am", in KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, *Rules of Politics and State*, p. 95. I changed the word "priest" in the text to "faith," which is more appropriate for the context of the above sentence.

Situbondo Congress by the Khittah Commission. Then, on the other hand, the second view still wants NU to be political, even though NU is no longer recognized as its political party after the 1973 fusion.

The next impact of the difference in meaning of the two is on the level of thinking and the perception of seeing the past. The first look above, on the one hand, sees the past as something compartmentalized, in fractures and pieces; Then, each of the faults or pieces was made to fight each other: NU 1926 versus NU Party, khittah versus politics, NU "original" versus NU "deviation". These pieces then explain the meaning of khittah and NU's political position. So came the Khittah Recovery Team 7, Cak Anam, and the Khittah Committee, who picked up the pieces. Then, among the pieces are those placed as steady, unchanging "foundations,"; while others are considered appendages or troublemakers who should be discarded. The meaning of khittah that is understood is its textuality, like building concrete, as stated in the sound of the text "Khittah NU" basil formulated by the Khittah Mukhtar Situbondo Commission²³

4. Practical Politics and National Politics

The understanding of politics is the next effect of the difference in understanding of khittah and the meaning of returning to khittah, as alluded to above. However, of these two views, one gives positive meaning to the nature of politics, namely the second view of khittah above, which sees politics as part of the collective spirit and mission of NU's struggle from time to time.²⁴ Other views are

²³ The Team 7 Recovery of Khittah. Cak Anam has a "past" with NU politics, with party politics, from the beginning of the formation of the century. Political parties of NU members from the Rembang meeting joined the PKB to establish their political party (named PKNU or Ulama National Awakening Party). PKNU was supported by several seniors but failed to get the blessing of Rais Am PBNU, KH. Sahal Mahfudh, ahead of the 2009 elections. After the 2015 Jombang Congress, Cak Anam formed the Khittah Nahdliyah Adherents Movement (PPKN), then established the Khittah Committee with several kiai, including Kiai Hasyim Muzadi and Gus Solahuddin Wahid, in 2018. We do not know how Cak Anam's "past" is perceived in the "present" Khittah Committee ahead of the 2019 presidential election. In an interview with Cak Anam in Surabaya on December 25, 2019, he pointed out that "[It is all] for. The NU during that time and the [Khittah Committee] had nothing to do with the presidential election."

²⁴ The understanding of the "collective spirit and mission of struggle" is illustrated, for example, in the NU Party Profile in 1954, which described the scope of NU's charities, including its political aspects, as follows: "in its efforts not only on questions relating to ubudiyah but also on matters directly related to the life of Muslims in particular and Indonesian society in general", "as well as to foreign issues that directly have direct relations the problems of Indonesian Muslims". See in Indonesian Party and Parliament, p. 410-1.

more negative towards everything that "smells" of politics, to the point of putting fences and barriers between NU here and politics on the other side. The latter will not lead us to a healthy and productive understanding of Indonesian political science *manhaji* or the study of the Islamic archipelago.²⁵

From the basis of this positive view of politics, the following questions can be asked:

- What kind of political meaning do NU people understand in the context of their religion and nation?
- Does politics like this have a "curriculum vitae" to its roots in the history of the totality of the archipelago?
- Is there a contribution to NU's understanding that will enrich our civilization and increase our insight into the world of Indonesian politics? Including those who beautify our knowledge of the Islamic politics of the archipelago without getting caught up in the counterproductive debate about the "Islamic state" or "darul Islam"?
- How is the methodological formulation of *manhaji* the meaning of politics from the scientific treasures of the Ahlussunnah Waljamaah school, so that we are not trapped in the way of the external paradigm alone in reading and assessing the politics of Indonesians, especially NU scholars? It means the external paradigm is only used to enrich our conceptions and insights about the NU political paradigm, not replace it.²⁶
- How is it different from the external political constructs taught to Indonesians themselves as part of the political "modernization" agenda of imperialism's center?

The five points of the question above will be discussed in the section on the meaning of "politics" and partly in the discussion of the meaning of "NU politics". To answer the first point, we quote the statement of an NU political intellectual, Kiai Saifuddin Zuhri, in 1984, who summarized the substance of political meaning in NU:

²⁵ As evidenced later, after the Situbondo Congress, this second view of political affirmative speech won the struggle over the meaning of *khittah*: at the Yogyakarta Congress in 1989, the term "national politics" emerged; after Suharto's overthrow emerged a political party from the PBNU, namely PKB, in July 1998; Then, in the 1999 Lirboyo Kediri Congress, there was a growing appreciation for NU politics along with the formal inauguration of PKB's presence. Gus Dur is more inclined to agree with this second party's view. Not only did it facilitate the formation of PKB, but it also stated that returning to *khittah* meant choosing PKB.

²⁶ Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara*, volume 1.

Islam supports politics and places it as a collective obligation (*fardlu kifayah*).²⁷ In Islam, the concept must be implemented through the principles of togetherness and deliberation (*shuro*), based on mutual need, honesty, and truly practicing morality and noble mentality (*al-akhlaqu-l-karimah*).²⁸

In other words, politics, in this sense, refers to the act of management or management of the embodiment of "principles of togetherness and deliberation". There are two keywords for this political meaning: collective or togetherness and deliberation. This "collective" reflects the piles of shared experiences in the history of this nation bound by one soul and one body of the archipelago.²⁹ The deliberation in question is the practice of consensus among experts in their respective fields (*musyawarah ahlu-al-halli wa-al-'aqdi*), namely deliberation with truth and experts.³⁰

In this sense, there are two elements of meaning given by Kiai Saifuddin to the above political meaning: one is normative (collective), Others are practical (deliberation). The latter concerns how politics in the normative sense is realized or delivered. These two elements of meaning are inseparable. The first provides the foundation for the political activities of NU members. The second elaborates on the real situation of politics and strategizes the relations of the state and members in the context of giving a voice to the people and people in national politics. For someone who fixates on the second element of meaning and ignores the first meaning, it is easy to fall into the superficial caricatural assessment that NU is only an opportunist seeking seats or patronage (protection and material support from above).

Conversely, one focuses only on the first element of meaning and ignores the second element of meaning. In that case, one will see NU at a fanciful, old-fashioned level, a scholastic product of the Middle Ages, not concrete, even sectarian. Yes, it is

²⁷ The term "*fardlu kifayah*" here indicates that politics, both in its normative element and in its tasharruf element (delivery of that normative aspect), is neither done by all nor is it abandoned by all. In the context of NU, some people who work at the state level and in the political-social movement must be qualified to do politics for the benefit, and some take care of *ubudiyah* and social-social issues.

²⁸ KH. Saifuddin Zuhri, "Key Weaknesses, Leadership Issues: Interview". Prism, April 1984, p. 72-3.

²⁹ On the meaning of one soul and one body of the archipelago, see below for this ideological construction of the "collective" meaning of politics.

³⁰ Zuhri, "The Ultimate Weakness," p. 73.

mainly because he does not see the element of realization of the normative vision in real life from the embodiment of the second element of political meaning above. At the normative level of the first element of meaning, Kiai Saifuddin mentions the words "collective" and "togetherness" for the political meaning of the archipelago. It was summarized from the substance of the meaning given by Kiai Wachid Hasjim in 1952 in the language of "collective", "cooperative, and "integral" for the normative-internal political foundation of NU. Then, at the level of the second element of meaning, the external aspect-implementation or tasharruf in politics is spoken "division," "equity" and "protection" based on the principle of deliberation.

Next, to answer the second point is that it is necessary to see that the meaning of "politics," as stated by Kiai Saifuddin above, has its roots and origins in *ijtihad* and the experience of the Wali Songo in realizing the benefit or "mercy for the entire universe". The experience of Islamization found by the saints in Arabs, Persia, and India directed religion more toward the seizure of power and economic assets by the force of the sword than the way the Sufis spread benefit and mercy to the population—locals who wanted to be Islamized. As a result, the process of Islamization in India, for example, was more called war, so the population became traumatic, and Muslims became synonymous with spreading violence but eventually marginalized. Muslims are also a minority even though there were approximately seven centuries of sultans and caliphs ruling in the country of Hindustan.

The *waliyullah* (saints) who spread Islam are "*angajawi*" and claim to be "*wong jawi*". It is not a mere claim. They proved that character when spreading and preaching Islam to the population: on the one hand, there was a recognition that their Islam was thanks to the services of the scholars descended from the Prophet SAW. However, on the other hand, they also raised the importance of voice or barakah to the archipelago, even becoming a new force driving Islam rahmatan lil'alam. They mean total living together with our nation, defending the interests of our people. Even when they died, they were buried in this land of the archipelago. For these saints, Nusantara is the future of Islam, and in this archipelago, Islam will develop better and even more advanced than in its own home country, the Arab

country. They want to display the down-to-earth teachings of Islam on fertile soil. From that fertile land were born superior humans and just civilization. Namely, the chosen Nusantara Muslims who will be a model of *ummatan wasathan* (chosen people) for Muslims in the world.

Here, the political direction and orientation of the Nusantara scholars are clear: they are built on that relationship of togetherness and collectivity. It is the meaning of Islam's function for Indonesia's people and nation. Talking about the benefits and mercy of Islam for the universe would not be possible without considering the foundational practice of the totality of this "*angajawi*". This Nusantara totality was then continued by the scholars, filling in the political meaning in the context of their functions, namely collectivity and togetherness, as well as deliberation in managing these benefits.³¹

Furthermore, to answer the third point of the question above, it is necessary to enter the second part of the political meaning above, namely the practical or operational aspect. Here, politics is formulated as *siyasah* or *tasharruf*, in the sense of managing and distributing things that are best for or that benefit the people based on collectivity and togetherness. The contextual language of the archipelago on a normative principle in the tradition of the Aswaja school that "a leader in all his operational actions and policies seeks to continue to guarantee the benefit of the people" (*Tasharrufu l-imam ala-r-ra 'iyah manuthun bi-al-mashallah*).³²

³¹ Ahmad Baso, *Pesantren Studies* 4a; and, *Islam Nusantara*, vol. 1.

³² The rule is often quoted by *kiai* from the book *al-Ashb ili wa-n-Nazhair* written by Imam Jalaluddin as-Suyuthi (died 911 H./1505-1506), the great scholar of Mazhab ash-Shafi'i. See Imam Jalaluddin as-Suyuthi, *al-Ashbah wa-n-Nazhair* (ed. Muhammad Hasan Muhammad Isma'il ash-Shafi'i) (Beirut: Darul Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, Lt), 5th, p. 185.

Politics as *siyasah* for benefit and justice is described with the Nusantara perspective on the definition of *siyasah* that is often quoted by *kiai*, especially *Kiai Sahal Mahfudh*, in his book *Nuances of Social Fiqh*, from Abu al-Wafa' Ibn 'Aqil al-Hanbali in his book *al-Funun ath-Thuruq al-Hukmiyah*, edition al-Askari, p. 15: "Imam Abu al-Wafa' Ibn Aqeel [died 1119 CE] said: *Siyasah* is an action, attitude or behavior that involves the community, which brings them closer to the benefit and keeps them from mafsadah or damage even though it has never been done by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Nor has revelation been revealed upon it" (*Ma kana mina-l-afali yakunu-n-nasu ma'ahu aqraba ila-sh-shalahi wa ab'ada 'ani-l-fasadi, wain lam yasyra'u-r-Rasul sallallahu alaihi wasallam wa la nazala bihi wahyun*).

Politics in the sense of Nusantara is a benchmark or foundation that underlies all political buildings in Indonesia in general and NU politics in particular because it is impossible then to be plastered or stepped over for a specific purpose outside this principle. For example, to sell this

So, *siyasah* is *tasharruf* (delivery), delivering benefit and justice to all people. If there is no *tasharruf*, then it is not *siyasah* but dictatorship and unjustness because it hurts people's sense of justice despite using the label "Islamic state", as Kiai Saifuddin Zuhri mentioned in an interview with the journal *Prisma* in 1984.³³

Ultimately, this idea of *siyasah* goes to the notion of "practical politics". Practical politics does not mean winning seats, buying and selling votes for elections or regional elections, and then annexing assets. If that is not necessary, it is not necessary to call it politics, but the act of theft or robbery by the perpetrator in a tie. Politics is a matter of behavior and practice of normative teachings for an ideal goal: the people's benefit. All the behaviors and actions make *tasharrufu-l-mashlahah*, or the distribution of benefit and justice, possible, whether carried out within state institutions or outside them, structurally or culturally. Among them, facilitate access to the doors of distribution of benefits and justice in government policies and at the social-community level.

D. Conclusion

There are several important conclusions and findings in this study, namely, that Khittah NU is the totality of the journey of the Nahdlatu Ulama organization, starting from its establishment in 1926 to the reform era, in its service for religion, state and nation based on the teachings of Islam Ahlussunnah waljamaah and the insight of nationality to the archipelago as built by the guardians of songo and the next generation of archipelago scholars concerning the foundation of Nahdlatul Ulama's thinking and attitude to runs the wheels of his organization according to his breath.

There are two definitions of khittah: the "*khas*" (*far'i-juz'i*) and the "*am-kulli*" while the "distinctive" (specific) is the text of Khittah NU formulated by the khittah commission, which was passed in the Situbondo Congress. The "*am-kulli*" (universal-holistic) is all the hymns, ideals, and guidelines of NU's struggle for religion and nation from the time of its establishment until now, including lessons

country to colonizers or foreign capitalists across countries or to divide the children of the nation or between tribes.

³³ Zuhri, "The Ultimate Weakness", p. 72.

learned from the time of Wali Songo to the work of scholars before Nahdlatul Ulama was established. The results of the Situbondo Conference on Khittah, from commissions 1 to 4, are part of the totality of the meaning of this *am-kulli* Khittah NU.

NU politics is part of the set of substances of the Khittah *am-kulli*, which includes all the services and darma bakti NU for the country and nation of Indonesia in the vulnerable time of living with the Republic of Indonesia. It covers, on the one hand, the ideological-spiritual dimension of Islamic nationalism, which is described in two strategic domains: community development and strengthening the political aspects of statehood-nationality and, on the other hand, the socio-economic dimension of politics as evidenced by the creation of the economic and political system of the archipelago that is jointed with justice and fame.

The substance of Khittah and NU's "*am-kulli*" politics also includes the dimensions of organizing, institutionalizing, and regeneration of NU's ideals and himmah of struggle and service from time to time, both in the form of *jam'iyah* (mass organizations) such as from 1926 when it merged with one of the existing parties (to the Masyumi Party), then became its political party (NU Party) and in facilitating the establishment of a political party for NU citizens (PKB). All this is done within the scope of the Khittah's two dimensions: "to ensure the continuity of the ideal" (ideological-spiritual dimension) by taking its sovereignty into a stand-alone organization (organizing, institutionalizing, and regeneration dimensions).

Khittah and NU politics is the totality (*kulliyah*) of the insights of scholars who place their positions, roles, and functions as *faqihun fi mashalihi khalqi* (who are very sensitive and understand the welfare of humanity). These positions, roles, and functions then gave birth to four supporting characters of Khittah and NU politics: its people, its religion, its politics, and its clerics. Kiai Achmad Sidiq then described the character of humans and scholars into the four pillars supporting NU's Islamic-national politics: ulama, masa, employees, and the younger generation. While its religious and political character became "ideological pillars".

The study of Khittah and NU politics is a science (*ma'rifah*) or knowledge system (*nizham ma'rifi*) of the archipelago that provides a scientific-epistemological basis at the methodological level (*manhaji*) through the *al muhafazah* method to

bring up the perspective of the "principle of sustainability" in the formulation of the program commission in the 1984 Situbondo Congress. This insight of the *manhaji*, in turn, contributes to providing a broad and rich thinking reference in understanding the meaning of Khittah and NU politics so as not to get caught up in a superficial analysis that still sees dichotomously between Khittah and politics, between the original NU that is not original. This insight also helps scholars see NU's history in its holistic macro unity rather than greeting fragmented or pragmatic units, which were pitted against each other. For example, the NU was divided in the 1926 and 1950s. The significance of the perspective of the "principle of continuity" of the Situbondo Congress and its contribution to Khittah studies and NU politics lies in the historical basis given to the politics of scholars from 1926 to the present by referring to the foundations of Nusantara Islamic politics since the time of Islamic formation as introduced by the Wali Songo in the era of Islamization of the archipelago.

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