

Conceptions of Islam in Indonesian Public Life: A Study of The Nahdlatul Ulama's Journal Tashwirul Afkar (1997-2016)

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini untuk menunjukkan pandangan Nahdlatul Ulama terkait dengan peranan Islam yang tepat dalam kehidupan publik Indonesia. Pandangan Nahdlatul Ulama tersebut direpresentasikan dalam jurnal yang diterbitkan oleh Nahdlatul Ulama yaitu Tashwirul Afkar. Penelitian ini akan menelusuri diskusi dalam jurnal Tashwirul Afkar dengan mengambil fokus pada tiga area: sejarah, intelektualisme dan syariah. Tiga area ini telah dipilih karena menunjukkan pandangan NU terkait dengan peranan Islam yang tepat dalam kehidupan publik Indonesia. Hubungan Islam dan Negara dikonsepsikan dengan membedakan nilai-nilai Islam dan formalitas Islam. Dalam kehidupan bernegara Islam dijadikan inspirasi bukan sebagai aspirasi bernegara sehingga NU menggambarkannya dengan negara yang didasari nilai-nilai Islam bukan formalitas Islam. Keengganan NU dalam menerapkan formalitas hukum Islam (syariah) memiliki dasar fikih, sehingga walaupun NU mendukung hukum negara, selama tidak bertentangan dengan hukum syariah, maka NU akan menerima hukum nasional. Singkatnya, jurnal Tashwirul Afkar telah mengartikulasikan seperangkat sudut pandang dari dalam NU tentang peran Islam yang tepat dalam kehidupan publik Indonesia. Penelitian ini berupaya untuk menambah pemahaman kita tentang keragaman suara dan aspirasi di dalam Nahdlatul Ulama di Indonesia masa kini.

Kata Kunci: Tashwirul Afkar; Nahdlatul Ulama; Intellectualism; Islam; Indonesia.

Abstract

This research aims to show Nahdlatul Ulama's views regarding the proper role of Islam in Indonesian public life. The views of Nahdlatul Ulama are represented in a journal published by Nahdlatul Ulama, namely Tashwirul Afkar. This research will explore the discussion in the journal Tashwirul Afkar by focusing on three areas: history, intellectualism and sharia. These three areas have been chosen because they reflect NU's views regarding the proper role of Islam in Indonesian public life. The relationship between Islam and the state is

conceptualized by differentiating Islamic values and formalities. In the life of an Islamic state, it is used as an inspiration, not as a state aspiration, so NU describes it as a state based on Islamic values, not Islamic formalities. NU's reluctance to apply the formalities of Islamic law (shariah) has a fiqh basis, so even though NU supports state law, NU will accept national law as long as it does not conflict with sharia law. In short, the journal Tashwirul Afkar has articulated a set of viewpoints from within NU on the proper role of Islam in Indonesian public life. This research seeks to add to our understanding of the diversity of voices and aspirations within Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia today.

Keyword: *Tashwirul Afkar; Nahdlatul Ulama; Intellectualism; Islam; Indonesia.*

Introduction

The reality of modern nationhood poses an essential question for Muslims on what is the most appropriate role for Islam today. There are numerous answers to this question, ranging from perceptions of “the system of Islam” (nizam al-Islam) as the only legitimate form of governmental system, to attempts to harmonize Islam with the prevailing model of the nation-state. Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, has adopted the second option. The plural character of Indonesia which consists of hundreds of ethnicities and languages is acknowledged by Nahdlatul Ulama. The organization recognizes the necessity of articulating a kind of Islam that can accommodate the Indonesian reality, coining concepts such as Islam Indonesia, Islam Nusantara and Islam Pribumi characterized by the marriage between Islam and local traditions, preferring an Indonesian Islam to an Arabized Islam and a Westernized Islam. The accommodative character of Nahdlatul Ulama is perhaps one of the distinguishing features of NU in the Indonesian context.

It is nevertheless clear that not every formulation that NU produced on the relationship between Islam and the state has gone smoothly. Questions about the extent to which Islam can accommodate local customs and what role Islam may play in the political arena are recurrent ones in Indonesia. The transformations of modernity and the emergence of new ideas about democracy, civil society and human rights have added even greater complexity to these longstanding historical issues. Furthermore, the ability of younger generations within the NU accessibility of the younger generations to access modern forms of knowledge and discourses have made their way of thinking about Islam significantly different from that of their seniors. The journal Tashwirul Afkar published by Lakpesdam NU in 1997 is meant to address precisely these issues. Lakpesdam NU is an autonomous body

affiliated with NU and it is important to note that the journal offered one of many voices within NU namely the voice of Young NU Intellectuals. This research explores the discussions that have taken place in the journal with a focus on three areas: history, intellectualism and sharia.

Previous research related to the topic of Nahdlatul Ulama has been extensively researched. However, no one has examined NU's representation in the conception of religion, in this case, Islam, in public life in Indonesia. Regarding the author's observation, previous research related to Nahdlatul Ulama has been examined in 3 categories. First, research related to Nahdlatul Ulama in the world of education.¹ In this category, Nahdlatul Ulama together with Muhammadiyah as the largest religious organization plays a very important role in the world of education in Indonesia.² This role extends to the design of religious moderation in the educational curriculum³ and also social media⁴. The second category is related to the role of political Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia.⁵ The third category is research related to the role of

¹ Wasehudin Wasehudin and Imam Syafei, "Religious Moderation-Based Islamic Education Model by Nahdlatul Ulama at Islamic Boarding Schools in Lampung Province," *Tadris: Jurnal Keguruan Dan Ilmu Tarbiyah* 6, no. 1 (June 2021): 53–61, <https://doi.org/10.24042/tadris.v6i1.8622>; Tasman Hamami, "Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama Education: Two Main Pillars of National Education in Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 18, no. 2 (2021): 307–30; Ahmad Suaedy, "Muslim Progresif Dan Praktik Politik Demokratisasi Di Era Indonesia Pasca Soeharto," *Tashwirul Afkar* 16 (2004): 6–25.

² Hamami, "Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama Education: Two Main Pillars of National Education in Indonesia."

³ Wasehudin and Syafei, "Religious Moderation-Based Islamic Education Model by Nahdlatul Ulama at Islamic Boarding Schools in Lampung Province."

⁴ Maemonah Maemonah et al., "Contestation of Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia: Content Analysis on Social Media," *Cogent Education* 10, no. 1 (December 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2164019>.

⁵ Muhammad Turhan Yani et al., "Advancing the Discourse of Muslim Politics in Indonesia: A Study on Political Orientation of Kiai as Religious Elites in Nahdlatul Ulama," *Heliyon* 8, no. 12 (December 2022): e12218, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e12218>; Ahmad Zainuri, "Doktrin Kultural Politik NU," *Al-Tsaqafa : Jurnal Ilmiah Peradaban Islam* 18, no. 2 (December 2021): 176–90, <https://doi.org/10.15575/al-tsaqafa.v18i2.15075>; Nasruddin Yusuf, Abd. Latif Samal, and Nurlaila Harun, "The Deliberation System in Islamic Politics and Leadership of Islamic Organizations in North Sulawesi Province, Indonesia," *Khazanah Sosial* 4, no. 1 (March 2022): 107–18, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ks.v4i1.17140>; Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "Ulama Dan Pesantren Dalam Dinamika Politik Dan Kultur Nahdlatul Ulama," *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 13, no. 1 (September 2013): 95–111, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v0i0.2377>; Greg Fealy and Robin Bush, "The Political Decline of Traditional Ulama in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 42, no. 5 (2014): 536–60, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04205004>; Greg Fealy and Katharine McGregor, "Nahdlatul Ulama and the Killings of 1965-66: Religion, Politics, and Remembrance," *Indonesia*, no. 89 (2010): 37–60.

Nahdlatul Ulama in tackling religious intolerance and radicalism.⁶ Of the three categories, no one has examined more deeply the role of Nahdlatul Ulama in conceptualizing the role of Islam in public life in Indonesia.

This research will begin by providing an overview of the journal. It is very important to know what the objectives of the journal are and what has been its impact in order to understand the position the journal occupies in the wider context of Indonesia. In this part I will also highlight the profiles of the contributors and the readers of the journal. The following section will shed light on the place of history in the eyes of these young Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals. This section will also address the relation between Nahdlatul Ulama and nationalism and the nation-state in Indonesia. The next section will explore a modern phenomenon that I hinted at earlier, namely the expanding sources of knowledge of Young NU Cadres, which go beyond classical Islamic traditions to include modern intellectual debates and approaches. The exposure of NU Youth to broader forms of knowledge has brought new interpretations of religious texts and new readings of Islamic teaching that distinguish them from their seniors. This section will present in particular the concept of an Islamic Post-Traditionalism proposed by NU youth and discuss some responses by senior Ulama. The last section will turn to one of the main contentious issues of Islam in the modern era, namely the appropriate role of Islam in the context of the modern nation-state. This section approaches this question by presenting the debates in Tashwirul Afkar around sharia application in Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

1. The Journal Tashwirul Afkar

In order to provide a proper understanding of the journal *Tashwirul Afkar*, it is important to present the Institute for the Research and Development of Human Resources (Lakpesdam) that publishes it. Lakpesdam

⁶ Wahyudi Akmaliah, "Reclaiming Moderate Islam in Nahdlatul UlamaA: Challenging the Dominant Religious Authority in Digital Platform," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 16, no. 1 (June 2022): 223, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.223-248>; Wachid Ridwan, "The Dynamics of Islamic Mass Organisations in Preventing Violent Extremism," in *Countering Violent and Hateful Extremism in Indonesia*, ed. G. Barton, M. Vergani, and Y. Wahid (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 215–31, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-2032-4_10; Ali Masyhar et al., "Digital Transformation of Youth Movement for Counter Radicalism," in *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 2022, 030010, <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0109-808>.

is part of Nahdlatul Ulama and has two objectives: First, to campaign for a moderate, tolerant and just religious outlook. Second, to empower the community from local to global level in consonance with the dynamics of national life. Ideologically, Lakpesdam NU adopts an inclusive and tolerant Islamic outlook that promotes justice and appreciates diversity. The journal *Tashwirul Afkar* is the icon of Lakpesdam NU, disseminating inclusive and progressive ideas among academic circles, activists and the general public. This periodical journal seeks to increase the knowledge about Islam and the understanding of *ahlussunnah wal jama'ah* (aswaja) within the NU community (*Nahdliyyin*) and the larger Indonesian public.

2. The Categories of the Journal

I have established seven categories which I deem to be most relevant for representing the themes addressed in the journal.

Table 1 Article Theme Category in the journal *Tashwirul Afkar*

Categories	Edition
Nahdlatul Ulama	1, 17, 19, 21, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30
Society and Culture	6, 11, 22, 23, 24, 33, 34, 35
Politics	2, 3, 4, 7, 12, 16, 20
Religion	8, 9, 10, 13, 18, 31, 32
Indonesia	14, 26
Women	5
History	15

As can be seen in table 1, the categories of the journal consisted of religion, politics, Indonesia, women, society and culture, history and Nahdlatul Ulama. Although topics frequently overlap (for example, the journal can discuss both the politics and the religion at the same time), these categories help to illustrate the themes that became the main focus of the journal. The categories also show how Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals who work on this journal are not only concerned with religious questions narrowly understood but also engage many other issues. However, there are

some themes that I found to be rarely discussed in the journal such as science and terrorism.

3. The Objectives of the Journal

Each edition of the journal stated the following objective: "This journal published to take part in stimulating the development of thinking which in line with aspiration for social transformation". However, I found that the journal later modified their stated objective to: "This journal published to take part in stimulating the development of *religious and cultural* thinking which in line with aspiration for social transformation *toward democratic society by means of civil society*. I think the addition "religious and cultural thinking" aimed to specified the field that the journal wish to develop. Whereas the inclusion of concept "democracy" and "civil society" are reflection of the goals that Nahdlatul Ulama try to achieve.

When being asked about the place of Islam in the journal's stated objective, the editor of the journal, Rumadi, argued that Islam function as an inspiration, not as an aspiration. He said that "*there is no need to ask about the islamicity of the journal, because the conviction on Islam is already there.*" Therefore, the journal consider Islam as an inspiration in the effort for social transformation. For Rumadi, knowing that the *Tashwirul Afkar* journal is originated from NU, the journal serves first and foremost as an intellectual channel of NU. In this regard, the journal function to record NU's response on the social and political development of Indonesia. Furthermore, the journal aspires to make NU's thought be brought up as a public discourse. It can be seen, for example, in how the journal bringing up the thought of Abdurrahman Wahid or KH Achmad Siddiq to the fore.⁷

Khamami Zada, the editor of the journal, has explained about the invocation of concepts "civil society and "democracy" on the stated objective of the journal. He argued that the context of Indonesia at that time was under the authoritarian and non-democratic government. Indonesia in 1997, at the time of the first publication of the journal, does not have a strong civil society and democratic government. Therefore, the objective of the journal served as a form of resistance to the authoritarian government. Moreover, the moderate Islamic group behind the journal with its Islamic intellectual basis, aspire to change the political system in Indonesia from authoritarianism to

⁷ Rumadi, Komar (Chairman of Lakpesdam), interviewed by Wijaya, April 5, 2017.

democracy. I have also asked Zada's personal opinion on the objective of the journal. He said that the *Tashwirul Afkar* journal aimed to spread the idea of progressive Islam and Indonesia-ness. Here, the idea of Indonesia should be emphasized, because "*we don't want to be an Arab muslim or a westernized muslim, but we want to be an Indonesian muslim that accommodate local traditions.*"⁸

4. The profile of the Writers

There are four main categories of scholars whose voices are being represented in the journal: young NU intellectuals, senior *Ulama* of NU and Foreign Writers. It is interesting to see how the journal juxtapose the opinion of young NU intellectuals who are more open and critical in opposition with the perspectives of their senior who are more normative and unbending (see chapter 3). Other than the three previous categories, it is also worth to mention that there are other figures who are present in the journal such as prominent Christian leaders, Christian scholars and member of other Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). The insights from scholars outside NU's circle often enrich the discussion which make the journal as a space for contestation of ideas. There are two examples to note here. First, when talking about the codification of sharia in the national law of Indonesia, the journal invited and interviewed the leader of Islamist groups; Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with Islamic Worlds (KISDI) and Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), to present their vision and strategy for the implementation of sharia in Indonesia. The insights from these leaders are confronted with perspectives from the leader of Muhammadiyah and NU intellectuals who have different vision on sharia. Second, the journal provide a space for Muhammadiyah's member who explain why Muhammadiyah emphasize the importance of *ijtihad* instead of *taqlid* and attempted to purify Islam from ritual traditions that do not have ground in Qur'an or Sunna. At the same time, the journal presented -what seems to be a common fact- the belief of NU to accommodate local traditions and customs in formulating the ideal Islam. It is also known that NU is adhere to *madhab* and quite skeptical on the reformist slogan "return to Qur'an and Hadits". As mentioned previously, there also also Christian voices in the journal. Among them are Romo Benny Susetyo and St. Sunardi.

⁸ Zada, Khamami (Editor of *Tashwirul Afkar*), interviewed by Wijaya, April 3, 2017.

5. The Impact of the Journal

Regarding the impact of the journal for the readers, Khamami Zada⁹ divided the impact of the journal in two stages. First, the two-thirds of the journal's age from 1997 to 2010. This period witnessed the great impact of the journal to the young people. This can be measured from the line of thought that is spreading among the youth at that period, particularly the circle of youth in the state Islamic universities and the circle of youth in *pesantren*. The journal has been able to introduce and stimulate a progressive Islamic line of thought. Based on his observation, Zada saw that young generation was very serious and enthusiastic to discuss the topic in the journal. The new perspectives on Islam that the journal introduced is very progressive and it received positive respond and acceptance amongst the youth. They discuss and spread progressive Islamic thinking that they gain from the journal in their intellectual discussion. The concrete achievement of the journal was the journal's ability to drive the development of Islamic intellectualism and create a dynamic intellectual movement among the circle of *pesantren* students, Islamic universities' students and within the circle of NU.

However, the last one third of the journal's age, around the last ten years, the impact of the journal is decreasing. What the journal offered fails to attract and gain positive respond from today's young generation. According to Zada, there are two reasons for this change. First, this is because today's young generation is no longer fascinated by serious intellectual discussion, they are more attracted to practical world such as the world of politics or business. Being a politician or an entrepreneur has become a trend amongst the youth today. It almost difficult to find a young man that is passionate in serious intellectual discussion. Consequently, the topic that the journal discuss does not really impact their lives. This is not only happened to the journal *Tashwirul Afkar*, almost all Islamic journal experience the same difficulty such as the journal of Paramadina or the journal of LP3ES.

Second, the changing trend of Islamic thought in Indonesia from progressive to conservative. Zada saw that since 2005, the development of Islamic thought in Indonesia have become more conservative. There are many Islamic movements who collaborate with conservative and radical Islamic groups. Consequently, Islamic groups that have progressive thinking

⁹ Zada, Khamami (Editor of *Tashwirul Afkar*), interviewed by Wijaya, April 3, 2017.

are defeated and marginalized. The contest is no longer a contestation of ideas because the conservative and radical Islamic groups do not mind to resort to violence. Since 2005 in Indonesia, the accusation of deviation is rampant, Ahmadiyya, Shia and Liberal groups are accused of deviation. Any group that the conservative groups considered as outside the boundary of sharia does not escape such accusation. This has been the reason of the marginalization of progressive groups, they always being prevented to appear in public, such as in Friday sermon, seminar or religious gathering. Indonesia today witness the rise and dominance of Islamic hard-liner such as Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and Islamic Community Forum (FUI) in public. They have become the locomotive of radical movement that is successful in gathering other conservative and radical Islamic groups to control the movement of Islamic organizations in Indonesia. Moreover, in today's public intellectual arena, the presence of prominent figures such as Nurcholish Madjid or Abdurrahman Wahid who speak boldly in expressing their liberal and progressive ideas are absent. Zada lamented the fact that the progressive Islamic movements have been defeated and its ideology has been defeated as well. As a result, progressive Islamic thought in any form including in a form of a journal is not very much welcomed by the society. This is why, according to Zada, *Tashwirul Afkar* journal in the last ten years has lost its appeal.

In addition, the changing mood of Islamic trend in Indonesia has been a serious obstacle for the journal. The line of thought of the journal is *Islam Indonesia*, that is, Islam which is grounded on the local context of Indonesia. The national context of Indonesia today is dominated by conservative Islamic groups who are *Arabized* and it became difficult for *Tashwirul Afkar* to spread the *Islam Indonesia* way of thinking. Moreover, the changing direction of Indonesian Islam has forced the journal to be careful to criticize the conservative and radical groups because direct criticism can provoked an accusation of deviation and even be brought to the court. It has created the culture of fear and intimidation that made the journal need to be mindful in articulating their progressive thinking to avoid being stigmatized as liberal or deviated.

6. History of Nahdlatul Ulama in the Tashwirul Afkar journal.

This section will analyze the history of Nahdlatul Ulama as reconstructed in the *Tashwirul Afkar* journal. The construction of Nahdlatul Ulama's history from the journal will tell us how NU's followers voice their perspective on the

organization, their focused interest and concern. Consequently, this will contribute to our understanding of the self-representation of Nahdlatul Ulama in the journal.

The extensive writings produced by foreign scholars about NU on the topic such as NU and its relation with the state, socio-religious activities of NU, NU's political trajectory in national stage, and the thought of some NU's prominent Kiai, do not escape the attention of NU activists. In fact, the writing of Ahmad Baso, one of young intellectuals NU, explicitly shows how the insider of NU are very much aware that NU continuously being observed, discussed and written by foreign scholars. In an article entitled "NU Studies, Writes Back", Baso argued the imperatives of "writing" as an act of claiming the "authority". When foreign scholars writing about NU, they act as the "author" who possess the "authority", and thus making NU as site of "experiment" of Western theories, making NU as object.

Baso openly raising concern on how NU is not the locus of knowledge production but rather a passive receiver, a mere provider of information and data for researchers coming from eminent universities in US or Europe doing research about NU, who through their works articulating "the characteristics of NU". For Baso, this especially worrying because NU voices and identities emerged only after being represented by these researchers. Baso thus saw the importance of "changing the subject" and making NU as the researcher, the articulator of its own discourse. Instead of letting "NU being written", Baso proposes that "NU writes". Baso suggests the construction of "NU Studies" by making NU the Subject of knowledge. By writing about NU by NU, the authority is switched from NU as object to NU as subject and thus detaching itself from domination and giving itself the ability to dominate.

7. Formative Period of Nahdlatul Ulama

a. Indonesia Context

The birth of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia cannot be separated from the framework of Indonesia's struggle to gain its independence. The founding fathers of NU, KH Wahab Chasbullah, KH Hasyim Asy'ari, KH Bisri Sansuri¹⁰ considered that colonialism was the main reason behind Indonesia's poverty

¹⁰ KH is abbreviation of *Kiai al-Haji*, an honorable title given for *Ulama* who studied in Haramain (Mecca-Medina), respected among community because of their Islamic knowledge and are, in NU case, the leaders of pesantren.

and backwardness. In 1916, KH Wahab Chasbullah aspired to unite muslim among the pesantrens' circle to fight colonialism. KH Chasbullah desired the empowerment of muslim especially in rural areas to free themselves from the shackles of poverty and ignorance. He then formed a social movement organization named *Nahdlatul Wathan* (The Awakening of the Nation).

Immediately after, in 1918, an education institution named *Tashwirul Afkar* (Portrait of thought) also known as *Nahdlatul Fikr'* (The Awakening of Thought) was formed by KH Wahab Chasbullah together with KH Mas Mansur and KH Ahmad Dahlan.¹¹ *Tashwirul Afkar* was a place for students to study Islamic sciences and social political education. In the same year, an organization dedicated to people's economic empowerment named *Nahdlatut Tujjar* (The Awakening of the Merchants) was founded. These organizations received a positive response and enthusiasm from the community. The development of these organizations made possible the opening of branches in many cities. These three organizations were the precursors of the birth of Nahdlatul Ulama.¹²

b. International Context

The formation of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia was also connected with International events, especially in Middle East. The abolition of Caliphate in Turkey and the proliferation of Wahhabism in Mecca are international dynamics that stimulated the birth of Hijaz Committee (which later become Nahdlatul Ulama). Hijaz Committee was formed as a delegation to meet the new King of Saudi Arabia with the mission to defend ahlu Sunnah wal jamaah and the freedom of following the four madzhab for muslims who come to Hijaz.

Driven by concern on the purification –destruction of Islamic heritage building such as the prophet's tomb which often visited by muslims- the new Saudi regime and Ibn Saud's desire to make Islamic world based on sole foundation, that is Wahhabism, KH Hasyim Asy'ari, KH Abdul Wahab Hasbullah and the association of Ulama from various pesantren in Java deliberate to produce two decisions in January 1926.¹³ First, formation of

¹¹ Because of differences in religion understanding, KH Mas Mansur and KH Ahmad Dahlan later left Tashwirul Afkar to join Muhammadiyah organization.

¹² Slamet Effendy Yusuf, "Perumusan Negara Masa Khittah: Pancasila Sebagai Ideologi Final," *NU Dan Politik Ketatanegaraan* 27 (n.d.): 7–34.

¹³ Slamet Effendy Yusuf, "Perumusan Negara Masa Khittah: Pancasila Sebagai Ideologi Final,"

Hijaz committee as a delegation to Ibn Saud and second, the establishment of Nahdlatul Ulama (Awakening of Ulama) as an Ulama association with the purpose of leading the umma' who adopt *ahlus Sunnah wal jamaah* to achieve '*izzul islam wa al-muslimin*' (the triumph of Islam and Muslims). Regarding the result of the meeting with Ibn Saud, Hijaz committee received a written response from the Ibn Saud in which he promised to guarantee and respect the teachings of four madzhab (Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i, Hanbali) and the teaching *ahlus Sunnah wal jamaah* within the territory of Saudi Arabia.¹⁴

It is also worth mentioning that NU chose nation-state instead of Caliphate system. The editor in chief of Tashwirul Afkar journal Khamami Zada has argued that although NU initially followed the international debate on post-Ottoman Caliphate, the idea to re-establish Caliphate is no more attractive for NU. According to Zada, the notion of Pan-Islamism as continuation of Caliphate idea propagated by Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh was absent from NU's internal discussions. Conversely, such ideas gained popularity among the modernists group such as Muhammadiyah and Sarekat Islam (Islamists Union). Zada further argues that *kebangsaan* (multi-ethnic nationalism)¹⁵ has been a trademark of NU's political thought. During the formative period, NU's Ulama defined their practice of Islam within the framework of nationality. Hence, NU adopt what so-called Islam Nusantara (Islam of the archipelago), Indonesian Islam within the framework of the nation-state.¹⁶

c. Nahdlatul Ulama and Nationalism

One important NU's historical event during the independence period of Indonesia is the issuance of Jihad fatwa. NU's history in Indonesia cannot be separated from the struggle to repel the Dutch military that want to regain control over Indonesian archipelago. In 22 October 1945, KH Hasyim Asy'ari issued a fatwa which later be called "NU Resolution of Jihad". The fatwa stated that repelling the invaders –NICA (Netherland Indies Civil Administration)

Tashwirul Afkar 27 (2009): 7–34.

¹⁴ Sri Mulyati, "Pertarungan Pemikiran NU Dan Kelompok Islam Lain," *Tashwirul Afkar* 21 (2007): 7–19.

¹⁵ Carool Kersten translates *kebangsaan* as Multi-ethnic nationalism. But if his translation requiring explanation, here *kebangsaan* can simply be translated as nationhood. See Carool Kersten, *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values* (London: Hurst and Company, 2015).

¹⁶ Khamami Zada, "Khittah Politik Kenegaraan NU," *NU Dan Politik Ketatanegaraan* 27 (n.d.): 2–6.

troops- ruled as *fard ayn* to people who are within a radius of 94 km from the enemy, this will be considered as *Jihad fi sabilillah* for the sake of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and for the religion of Islam.¹⁷

For NU, Indonesian independence proclaimed in 17 August 1945 that has been gained through struggle and sacrifice has to be safeguarded and this is the purpose of Jihad fatwa. KH Hasyim As'ari and the fatwa are said to have gathered thousands of *kiai* (religious leaders) and *santri* (Islamic students) to wage tremendous resistance to Dutch invaders. Hasyim Muzadi, the chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, argues that NU Resolution of Jihad is NU's outstanding contribution for the state and the nation. The spirit of nationalism has been incorporated in NU's religious thought. NU has always combine the interest of Islam with the interest of the nation. Muzadi further argues that there is no need to separate religion from nationalism.¹⁸

It seems that not only NU who saw the Jihad fatwa as historic. Recently in October 2016, Indonesian government under the presidency of Jokowi declared 22 October as "National Santri Day". Although the reason behind the chosen date did not explicitly mentioned, Jokowi said that the declaration meant so that "the nation always remember to emulate the spirit of jihad from our predecessors in the context of Indonesia, the spirit of nationalism, as well as the spirit to sacrifice for the nation and country".¹⁹ One cannot but immediately recall the context behind 22 October revolves around NU resolution of Jihad to resist against the colonialists. Therefore, this declaration denotes a nation-wide recognition of *santri* and *kiai*, particularly the contribution of NU for Indonesia.

d. Islamic Post-Traditionalism

The cultural heritage and traditional legacy of religious thought have long been considered as sacred, absolute, do not accept criticism or change. However, to make Islam relevant and responsive to the current development would require critical examination on tradition (*turats*). The project of engaging the heritage (*turats*) with a critical attitude, that have been developed in the Arab world, are now fascinated Indonesian intellectuals.

¹⁷ Marzuki Wahid, "Sumbangan Pemikiran Politik NU: Negara Pancasila = Negara Islam," *Tashwirul Afkar* 29 (2010): 14–45.

¹⁸ Hasyim Muzadi, "Nahdlatul Ulama Mengabdikan Untuk Bangsa," *Tashwirul Afkar* 27 (2009): 35–41.

¹⁹ "No Title," n.d.

There are various articles and works of Middle East thinkers on this project that have been translated to Indonesian language. The project that focus to critically assessed the Islamic classical tradition by employing modern approaches has been introduced by young NU intellectuals as "Islamic Post-Traditionalism". Recognizing the importance of explaining Islamic Post-Traditionalism and its place in the wider history of Islamic thought, the 9th edition of *Tashwirul Afkar* journal published in 2000, bring forth the discussion on ideology and methodology of Islamic Post-Traditionalism. The discussion includes what makes Islamic Post-Traditionalism different from Islamic Neo-Modernism, Islamic Traditionalism and Islamic Modernism.²⁰

Islamic Post-Traditionalism, also called as *postra*, is a new discourse in Islamic religious thought in Indonesia. Unlike the notion of "Islamic neo-modernism" that has been explicitly introduced by Fazlurrahman in 1979, the notion of "Islamic Post-Traditionalism" has not been clearly coined by any thinkers before. Therefore, there has not been a clear and concrete formulation of Islamic Post-Traditionalism. Khamami Zada argued that Islamic Post-traditionalism are deeply inspired by Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri's "fantastic ideas on making Islamic tradition (*turats*) as the basic foundation of Islamic epistemology". Al-Jabiri has a consistent attitude to maintain the continuity of the heritage (*turats*) and Islamic classical heritage because he concern on Islamic studies that only revolved around the rational and empirical pole of modernism but void of the rich tradition of classical Islamic intellectuals. Furthermore, Islam possessed the legacy of an enlightening rational and critical traditions inherited from the rationalism of Ibnu Rushd in Philosophy, the rationalism of Syatibi in Ushul Fiqh and the rationalism of Ibnu Khaldun in Sociology and History which are important to awaken and advance Islamic intellectualism. In order to critique complete acceptance and rejection of tradition between Islamic traditionalism and Islamic modernism, Islamic post-traditionalism presented itself as a middle road, a new genre of thought that appreciate heritage (*turats*) in a critical and rational manner.²¹

²⁰ Editorial Team, "Memupuk Kajian Atas Tradisi," in *Post-Tradisionalisme Islam: Ideologi Dan Metodologi*, vol. 9, n.d., 1.

²¹ Khamami Zada, "Mencari Wajah Post-Tradisionalisme Islam," in *Post-Tradisionalisme Islam: Ideologi Dan Metodologi*, vol. 9, n.d., 2-5.

e. NU Youth and Postra Community

Ahmad Gaus described *postra* as the community of Young NU intellectuals who are concern about the fact that NU as an old Islamic organization founded in 1926, has become less responsive toward contemporary issues. The *postra* community saw the importance of adapting NU's tradition to the modern world and make it compatible with the modern progress. In doing so, there should be an internal critics or re-examination of the tradition. Ahmad Gaus considered *postra* and Muhammadiyah's Young intellectuals' networks (JIMM) as the successor of NU and Muhammadiyah's legacy who committed on the modern values of pluralism, democracy, tolerance, freedom of religion, and human rights.²²

Similarly, Ahmad Suaedy argued that Islamic Post-Traditionalism or *Postr*a is a favourite nickname for young activists who are of NU and *pesantren* background. Against the backdrop of authoritarian and repressive nature of new order era, *postra* activists organized various projects aimed to strengthen civil society and stem the tendency of Islamic fundamentalism in *pesantren*, grassroots communities, and universities. These activists worked in NGOs in different regions in Indonesia: LKiS (Institute of Islam and Social Studies) in Yogyakarta; Lakpesdam NU (Institute of Research and Human Resources Development), DESANTARA (organization for community empowerment), ISIS (Institutes for Social Institutions Studies), Rahima (Centre for Education and Information on Islam and Women's Rights), and Puan Amal Hayati (organization for women and children empowerment) in Jakarta; eLSAD (Institute for Religious and Democracy Studies) in Surabaya; Averrous (group of cultural studies and research) in Malang; LKPMP (Institute for Pesantren and Community Development) in Makassar; YPKM (Welfare and Community Development Foundation) in Lombok. The aforementioned organizations are also routinely conduct a group discussion that usually take place in *pesantren* or Islamic universities.

Ahmad Suaedy explained that those involved in the social and intellectual movement of *Postr*a are concern on the development of tradition of classical Islamic intellectuals and the tradition of *Islam Nusantara* (Islam of the Archipelago). Engagement with classical Islamic literatures in *pesantren* as

²² A F Gaus and Ahmad, "Islam Progresif: Wacana Pasca Arus Utama (Peta Pemikiran Dan Gerakan Islam Di Indonesia)," in *Inisiatif Perdamaian: Meredam Konflik Agama Dan Budaya*, vol. 22, n.d., 96–113.

well as familiarity with contemporary Islamic studies and philosophies, made *postra* activists saw the significance of making *tradition* as a starting point for revival. Their knowledge on Islamic tradition have been translated to practical and immediate social activities in grassroots communities. They give social and political education as well as community advocacy for people who are disadvantaged by the state system. They make Islam not only as a belief but also as a foundation for real social actions.²³

Marzuki Wahid noted that the focus of NU youth is to make Islamic teachings oriented toward humanity and social justice. Young NU cadres attempted to revitalize Islamic doctrine and have a strong desire to liberate people from backwardness. The preoccupation of young NU cadres with social realities of grassroots society have stimulated them to produce new interpretation of religious texts that are responsive to address contemporary issues. The notion of liberation that they advocate are not only in social and practical levels, but also liberation from irrelevant Islamic doctrines and obsolete cultural traditions. According to Wahid, contemporary Islamic thinkers such as Muhammad Arkoun, Muhammad Abid Al-Jabiri, Hasan Hanafi, Abdullahi Ahmed an-Naim, Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, Ziaul Haque and Ashgar Ali Engineer is very influential for Islamic Post-Traditionalism movement. These thinkers are not only appreciative toward the classical Islamic tradition but they also have high social commitment and this is the reason why they became the reference for NU young cadres.²⁴

8. Debate on Codification of Sharia in Indonesia in the Tashwirul Afkar Journal

The beginning of *reformasi* era in post-Soeharto period which has opened the door to democracy has stimulated the revival of muslim *umma'* to voice their Islamic aspiration, especially related with state enforcement of sharia. For certain groups, the codification of sharia in the national law is imperative. The editor of *Tashwirul Afkar* journal Khamami Zada argued that the emergence of a number of Islamic parties and organizations which call for sharia application in Indonesia illustrated this reality very well. According to Zada, there are two approaches that Islamic movements adopted in their struggle for the implementation of sharia in Indonesia: top-down approach

²³ Suaedy, "Muslim Progresif Dan Praktik Politik Demokratisasi Di Era Indonesia Pasca Soeharto."

²⁴ Marzuki Wahid, "Post-Tradisionalisme Islam: Gairah Baru Pemikiran Islam Di Indonesia," *Tashwirul Afkar* 10 (2001): 7-23.

(through political power) and bottom-up approach (through cultural up to political power). The first one fight for sharia by lobbying the politician in People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), People's Representative Council (DPR) and some political parties. The first model exemplified by groups such as FPI, KISDI and MMI²⁵ who galvanize their support for political parties that fight for the sharia implementation in Indonesia. In fact, MMI has created their version of the 1945 Constitution²⁶ which according to them is more consonant with sharia. Furthermore, their activities are usually political such as conducting demonstration in front of the government building. The second approach strived for the sharia implementation with strategy of preaching the masses and muslim communities about sharia with assumption that once society has been Islamized, the state will eventually be Islamized too. Warriors of Jihad (Laskar Jihad) is the example of this approach. They saw the importance of preaching the masses about Islamic sharia to make people aware that implementing sharia is incumbent upon muslim. They believed that when this is achieved, the state will inevitably follow people's aspiration.²⁷

The 12th issue of *Tashwirul Afkar* journal entitled "Deformalization of sharia" which published in 2002 explored the debate on sharia implementation in Indonesia. In the foreword of this edition, the editorial team stated that by discussing this crucial theme, it is hoped that people will be able to understand better what is Islamic sharia and whether the implementation of sharia in Indonesia is necessary. Eventhough the stance that the journal took on the issue seem to favour *deformalization of sharia* – as the title of the journal suggests –, the opposing arguments which support the *formalization of sharia* can also be found in the journal. The opposing views are presented in article and interview with Islamist groups such as Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with the Islamic World (KISDI) and Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) who are industrious in their campaign for the comprehensive state enforcement of sharia.

²⁵ FPI (Islamic Defenders Front), KISDI (Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with Islamic Worlds), MMI (Indonesian Mujahedeen Council)

²⁶ Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 (Indonesian National Constitution)

²⁷ Khamami Zada, "Wacana Syariat Islam: Menangkap Potret Gerakan Islam Di Indonesia," *Deformalisasi Syariat* 12 (n.d.): 27–38.

The Secretary General of KISDI²⁸ Adian Husaini discussed how the struggle for application of sharia in Indonesia is the example of problem faced by contemporary muslim societies. Husaini began his article by quoting the survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) UIN Jakarta in which 61,4 percent of the respondents agree on the implementation of sharia in Indonesia. To ask whether sharia should be enacted in Indonesia or not, Husaini argued that according to this survey, the answer is *yes*. The demand for state-enforced sharia in Indonesia is not new. The history of Indonesia record the recurrent debate on sharia application in Indonesia. Husaini drew attention to the story of “seven words” omission of Jakarta Charter²⁹ from Pancasila and from preamble of Indonesian Constitution. This phrase was omitted because Christians and Protestants in eastern Indonesia threaten to separate themselves if Pancasila contained direct connection to Islam. In discussing this event, Husaini borrowed the vehement argument of Indonesian scholar and politician Muhammad Natsir (1908-1993) who described Christian’s demand as “*ultimatum* to not only Muslim citizen of Indonesia but also to the newly 24-hour independent Republic of Indonesia”. Natsir condemned the way Christians threaten to separate from Indonesia and the absence of dialogue about this matter at that time. Furthermore, Natsir described 17 August 1945 as a historical *Proclamation Day* of Indonesia and 18 August 1945 as a notorious *Ultimatum Day* of Christian from eastern part of Indonesia. He then reminded the *umma* to do *tahmid* (praising God) for the former and do *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness from God) for the later. By recalling this history, Husaini appeared to subscribe to Natsir’s perspective.

In addition, Husaini argued that “pro-sharia” groups will always continue to fight for their beliefs through various ways. Eventhough the demand for insertion of Jakarta Charter has failed at the National level, a number of Islamic law have been successfully accommodated in Indonesian Constitution related with marriage, pilgrimage, zakat, Islamic education and sharia banking. There are continuous attempts to insert elements of sharia in

²⁸ KISDI (Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with Islamic Worlds)

²⁹ The question on formal implementation of Sharia first appeared during independence period when Muslim leaders propose that Pancasila as preamble of 1945 constitution should include the seven-word phrase: *dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluknya* (with the obligation carrying out Islamic shari’a for its adherents). Despite the initial acceptance from all parties on the discussion table, this phrase was withdrawn from Pancasila the next day after the proclamation of Independence on August 18th 1945.

Indonesian law. Moreover, Husaini mentioned that decentralization and regional autonomy has provided the opportunity for many regional government to implement sharia in their regions, such as in Aceh and South Sulawesi. Husaini has also commented on the accusation that the demand for sharia application is merely a political manouver. He argued that such accusation is not completely wrong since there are many politicians who vociferously campaign for sharia application but whose daily lives, family and political parties do not practice sharia. However, Husaini asserted that to accuse all pro-sharia movement as a political maneuver is not correct either because pro-sharia movement is driven by muslims' ideological beliefs and there are many muslims who believe that sharia is incumbent upon muslim and a "*haq* and *bathil*" matter. In order to show how the application of sharia is obligated on muslim, Husaini quoted many Quranic verses and *tafseer* that command Muslim to carry out Islamic law.³⁰

Husaini saw there are also global challenges that hindered muslim to implement sharia, namely the spread of western secularization and democracy. Husaini argued that the west consider the application of sharia as a threat to their global hegemony. On the other hand, Husaini believed that as long as there are many muslim who consider sharia as Islamic law as well as God's law that have to be implemented in their lives, the demand for state-enforced sharia will never stop. For Husaini, the notion of "privatization of religion" for contemporary muslim society does not seem probable. This is because even the application of Islamic private law regarding marriage or inheritance required state intervention. Therefore, Husaini assert that as long as muslim umma' continue to live under the hegemony of western secularism, the tension between pro-sharia movements and those who oppose it will remain. In addition, the attempt to implement sharia became more difficult after 9/11 events which put sharia as a sensitive global political issues.³¹

Other Islamist group, Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) has also offered the pro-sharia perspectives in this discussion. FPI and its leader Habib Rizieq Shihab is well-known for their hard stance to combat immoral acts among societies such as gambling, prostitution and the sale and consumption of alcohol. This group has continuously fight for the application of sharia in

³⁰ The verses that Husaini quoted which command Muslims to enact sharia are Sura Al-Maidah verses 44, 45, 60 and 65.

³¹ Adian Husaini, "Syariat Islam Di Indonesia: Problem Masyarakat Muslim Kontemporer," *Deformalisasi Syariat* 12 (n.d.): 57-73.

Indonesia by proposing the insertion of Jakarta Charter to the amendment of the 1945 Constitution. *Tashwirul Afkar* Journal managed to interview Habib Rizieq about his vision and aspiration for the application of sharia in Indonesia. Rizieq saw Islam as consisted of *aqeeda*, *sharia* and *akhlaq* as one unity that can not be separated. Similarly, the formalistic and substantialistic elements of sharia can not be separated from each other. Rizieq disagreed with the naming of one group as “substantivists” and other group as “formalists”. He call for the unification of these two: *formally* fight for the incorporation of Sharia in the national constitution and *substantially* practice Sharia in everyday lives. Rizieq submit to Ghazali’s saying that “religion is a foundation and *khilafah* is its guardian. Any thing that does not have foundation will collapse and any thing that is unguarded will be lost.” Rizieq has commented on this saying and concluded that the *substance* can only be practiced if *formally* guarded. He gave example to show how the union of these two is important: if *Ulama* command the umma’ to avoid drinking alcohol and adultery and at the same time *Umara* protect the umma’ by prohibiting the mill liquor and close the localization of prostitution, the cooperation between *Ulama* and *Umara* will be effective to uphold both the substance and formality of Sharia.

Rizieq suggested a gradual step to implement sharia in Indonesia so that “Islam abangan”³² group will not be afraid of sharia and *run away* from Islam. The first important thing to do is to *formally* include sharia in Indonesian constitution. However, sharia only need to be implemented for muslim whereas non-muslim can still use the existing conventional or positive law unless they voluntarily want to submit to sharia. Regarding the mechanism for sharia application, Rizieq proposed four necessary steps: formalization of sharia, regional mapping, socialization of Islamic law and preparation of legal instruments. Rizieq recognized the different situation and condition in each region of Indonesia and therefore he saw that each region may be differed in their readiness to implement sharia. He gave examples that Aceh may be 100% ready to implement sharia but West Sumatra only 50% ready. Rizieq saw there is no problem how long the time that each region needs to apply sharia as long as each region strives to implement sharia.³³

³² A nominal muslim

³³ Habib Rizieq Shihab, “Jika Syariat Islam Jalan, Maka Jadi Negara Islam,” *Deformalisasi Syariat* 12 (n.d.): 97–104.

Contrary to Hussaini and Rizieq who agree on comprehensive state-enforcement of sharia, NU and Muhammadiyah are two organizations that do not join the campaign for insertion of Jakarta charter or state-mandated sharia in Indonesia in early Post-Soeharto period. An interview with chairman of Muhammadiyah, Syafi'i Ma'arif, regarding the issue shows that NU and Muhammadiyah have a common vision in understanding sharia. Sharia is not merely law and jurisprudence but rather values and ethics that encourage justice, equality, civility and humanity. Different with Habib Rizieq, Ma'arif asserts the importance of internalizing Islamic values where Islamic teaching is expected to guide the way muslim act, think and feel even if without being formalized by the state. It is essential to view sharia as ethics rather than the law, the fundamental thing in sharia is to uphold justice. Moreover, Ma'arif saw hard-line Islamist group as having a weak understanding of sharia. He argued that the persistence of hard-line Islamist for the formalization of sharia in Indonesia is unrealistic. Islamist hard-liner is more likely to create conflict because they do not represent muslim majority and they will have to deal with NU and Muhammadiyah's large constituencies. Moreover, Ma'arif is pessimistic about the potential success of Islamic hard-liner in realizing their goals because they lack parliamentary support and there is no political mechanism that can accommodate them.

Furthermore, Ma'arif saw that the intellectual foundation of Islamic hard-liner and their reading of national problems are weak and fragile. There are more pressing national issues to think about such as high number of unemployment and social economic crises which threaten the nation's survival. Ma'arif affirms that *"only if these issues have been properly addressed then we can talk about sharia"*. He saw that Islamist groups only want the shortcut to solve Indonesia's massive multi-dimension crises. As if once sharia is implemented, all the crises will magically disappear. Ma'arif suggests that there has to be an open dialogue and intensive discussion between Islamic hard-liner and NU-Muhammadiyah in understanding the meaning of Islam and sharia. What is important for Ma'arif is for muslims to nurture the kind of pluralist, inclusive and tolerant Islam. Because Islam is not about "dare to die" but "dare to live".³⁴

In order to understand the journal's support for *deformalization of sharia*, there are three articles that attempted to show what are the potential problems with

³⁴ Syafi'i Ma'arif, "Menawarkan Substansi Syariat Islam," *Tashwirul Afkar* 12 (2002): 105–10.

the idea of formalization of sharia. The articles came from two NU young intellectuals Khamami Zada and Zuhairi Misrawi and one from foreign scholar Abdullahi Ahmed an-Naim.

Khamami Zada asked *"isn't the concept of formalization of sharia in Indonesia imagine the creation of Indonesia as an Islamic state?"* Because once sharia is comprehensively enforced by the state, sharia will be the formal and substantial reference for all statehood matters. Consequently, the application of sharia will establish an Islamic state. Zada borrowed the explanation of Hasan al-Turabi of what constitutes an Islamic state. First, Islamic state submit to the doctrine of *tawheed* which required religiosity and rejection of secularity. Second, Islamic state does not allowed the ethnic and territorial loyalty, a kind of *limited loyalty*, because the main allegiance is given only to God and the *umma'*. Third, Islamic state is not a sovereign state because it submit to the higher norms of sharia which represent the will of God. Zada predicted that the struggle for sharia application is a long-term struggle to establish an Islamic state. It will be problematic if Indonesia is intended to be an Islamic state. It will raise question related with democracy, the fate of women and non-muslims in a state which apply the *literal* sharia. If that is the case, Islamic system (*nizham al-islam*) will be more preferable than democracy, the rights of women may be neglected because literal understanding of sharia might put women in a weak and disadvantage position, and non-muslims might become a second-class citizen and might be discriminated in terms of opportunity to hold a leadership position.³⁵

Conclusion

This study finds the right conception of Islam in the state's public life in contemporary Indonesia from the perspective of Nahdlatul Ulama. The main argument NU Ulama often used to formulate the ideal relation between Islam and the state is the differentiation between Islamic values and formalities. NU has been portrayed in the journal as a group that prefers to bring Islamic values to the state instead of Islamic formalities. It is claimed that NU believed that the five principles of Pancasila; Belief in One God, humanity, unity, democracy and justice; contained Islamic values. In this regard, Islam is

³⁵ Khamami Zada, "Wacana Syariat Islam: Menangkap Potret Gerakan Islam Di Indonesia," *Tashwirul Afkar* 12 (2002): 27-38.

positioned as the source of inspiration, not as an aspiration to bring about social and intellectual transformation.

In addition, the journal has offered insight from NU members who argued that NU's reluctance on the idea of comprehensive state-enforced sharia in Indonesia has a fiqh basis. It is said that NU acknowledged Indonesia's plural character and accepted that Indonesian law should be able to accommodate everyone. For example, NU does not prefer the application of sharia-commanded punishment such as hand-cutting or stoning because NU believes in contextualising fiqh to Indonesia. It is argued that NU will accept the national law if Indonesian law does not contradict sharia.

To sum up, the journal *Tashwirul Afkar* has articulated a set of viewpoints from within the NU on the appropriate role of Islam in Indonesian public life. Writers in the journal have mobilized specific understandings of history, knowledge (intellectualism), and Islamic law to persuade their intended audiences. From the perspective of history, the journal attempted to show that Nahdlatul Ulama has a strong sense of nationalism and does not reject the reality of Indonesia as a nation-state because the history of Nahdlatul Ulama is interrelated with the history of Indonesia. The journal highlighted how Nahdlatul Ulama has been involved in the national struggle for independence and participated in laying the constitutional foundation of the state and in the nation-building projects.

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Interview

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