

THE NAHDLATUL 'ULAMA AND POLITICS IN INDONESIA: A CASE STUDY OF AHL SUNNAH WAL-JAMA'AH IN JOMBANG REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to understand relations between socio-religious movement and political life in Indonesia. It focused on Jombang district of East Java province. This study applies a concept of Political Sociology to understand the struggle for power and survival of the political life at the local level. Elites in Islamic tradition able to use their authority to maintain values and norms of the religious ideas; but it will be difference when they face advantageous things from the secular of the modern world.

Key words: Socio-religious Movement, Traditional Islamic Boarding School, Political Sociology

Introduction

The Nahdlatul Ulama ' (NU) is a social-religious movements in Indonesia founded in 1926. The politics of Indonesia especially in the era of Soeharto regime characterized by hegemony of the State against political and social forces; State control over the network connection of the patron-client with an elite group of major actors of the bureaucracy, the military and the organization of State corporatism. This paternalistic model of political regime then undergoes a process of decay from its internal when it emerges that public resistance in a wide scale. This is the beginning of change in political life toward more autonomous, more dispersed and open; at the same time that social order is being altered for a new center points which more varied.

Community groups in the above conditions continue to move following the direction changes and political dynamics. One of the most important of which is the social religious movement, NU as a movement of Muslims in Indonesia's sunny *Ahl al-Sunnah wal jama'ah* (Aswaja) is a traditional, moderate and tolerant of the plurality of the reality of social, political and religious; it is also a performing the *jam'iyah* that anti violence and anti fundamentalism. Instead NU is more likely to uphold a life of harmony and peaceful co-existence with different groups. But in the context of local politics that often give rise two different groups. On the one hand still rests on traditionalism and religious teachings embraced conservatism; on the other hand base on actual issues and secular that there is no relationship at all with religious teachings. The process of dialectic between two different sides, this has given rise to internal dynamics that bring the implications on local political constellations.

Islamic social and political forces in Indonesia often faces conflict with the internal and external (Mochtar, 2011). Conflict and schism happened when the new order regime era (1967-1998) is part of an effort to de-politicking forces of political Islam in Indonesia (Ward, 1970). For example, when NU accept Pancasila as the sole principle for social and political organization (orsospol) as the process of de-Islamization of politics, de-politicking Islam, or de-Islamic formalism (Tamara, 1978: 50). NU back to the political arena through the establishment of the Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) in 1998, then KH Abdurrahman Wahid became an important figure of PKB's founder was later elected as fourth Indonesian President. NU's internal dynamics are driven by a variety of flaws that rises on the views and political attitudes that varies (Noer, 1988: 20). First, they are active but accompanied the attitude towards the principle of refusing is considered deviant (*uzlah*). Second, the group cooperated with authorities, whatever happens. Third, the who viewed Islam as a doctrine that is felt less or do not need to be accompanied by his involvement in politics. Fourth, those who absolutely reject political Islam with regard.

Understanding conflict NU can be traced through two levels: informal and formal. Informally referring to the influence of the elites or *Kyai* NU in rural areas, while at the national level often requires the formal portion of the part as far as possible its representatives understood them. But the Islamic elite vertical mobility much experience barriers when faced with the realities of practical politics — a relatively secular nature of the State and demanded a specific formal rules applicable in modern political life. NU leadership with the typical characteristics of the hierarchy is not vertical, but horizontal. In addition, there is a pattern of interlinked with one another, such as between the magnitude of the charisma and its effects on a layer of *Kyai* leadership scholars organizations, politicians and leaders of *muballigh*-liaison with the Government.

Based on the exposure of the background above, the question is: How does NU as a socio-religious movement face of the political dynamics at the local level, especially related to political life at Jombang Regency? Whether the crucial issues that trigger the onset of an internal shift of values and norms of the religious ideas and its implications on external relations?

Theoretical Framework

A political movement can be born as driven by the dynamics of the social organization of a religious elite in his capacity as interest group which involved the process input function. The intensity and capacity of this group in performing its function was strongly influenced by the internal dynamics and moral force that drives change. The political power of religious background can be understood by using the analysis of Political Sociology as this can give attention to balanced against existing differences within society, for example the differences based on race, ethnic origin, religion and regional flavors, culture and traditions. Moreover, it also can be obtained from concentration on the reality of that happening.

According to the thinking that in the Weberian 'religious behavior' are two different dimensions. First, certain Community actions may be predicted because they have a sense of solidarity and togetherness that is manifested through the ritual occasions. The second dimension, the presence of a community based on obvious religious activities in which they have the equation of interests and values that are embodied by the ritual event. The internal dynamics are affected by the condition, status and consciousness that exists in a particular community structure could encourage the creation of change. Condition of the elite within a social system is transformed into the framework that has political functions on elements of social importance that individuals become elite leadership. Thus certain elite group within the framework of social value systems of consciousness has gained recognition due to his followers or through a specific process.

The internal dynamics of the elite is the interaction of a small group of people (the minority) are not always formed explicitly because of the position they occupy, traits that served as the basis for their selection, social responsibility and getting rewards (Keller, 1984: 110). If it is associated with social functions externally and internally, the elite will be covering two things: the achievement of the goals and moral integrity, adaptability and social solidarity. The religious elite is strategic because of moral authority (exercising moral authority) (Shill, 1972: 27). In addition, religious elite also has the authority of the moral justification for his followers in doing a particular act of political choice (Willenius, 2014); in this case the real followers of his choice, there is a more rational consideration of independent and especially at grassroots level (Mochtar, 2014: 244 - 249).

Thus, the shifting view of the sense of community, the values and interests of the elite becomes critical. In this case the need to identify a range of indicators to understand the dynamics of the elite leadership with political cultures know more enclosing, dynamics or internal conflicts and issues of particular interest.

Research of Methods

This inquiry applies qualitative methods. Jombang Regency as a sample of this research with consideration of purposive methods; it is important to understanding relations between the NU as a socio-religious movement and political life in Indonesia. To collect the informations apply observation and documentation. To analyze the data, it is based on two main strands to the thesis: empirical and theoretical. The first strand involved the social and political issues. The second strand based on political sociology conceptual framework.

Socio-Political Setting

Jombang Regency is one of *Kabupaten* in East Java, as an autonomous district in the context of political system in Indonesia. Jombang is attracting attention because of three things, first, because of the presence of four large *pesantrens* are widely recognized by Islam as well as society in general. A large *pesantren* "Tebu Ireng" located on the South side, the *Pesantren* "Mamba'ul Ma'arif" in the village of Denanyar in the west, *pesantren* "Bahrul'Ulum" in the village of "Tambak Beras" is to the North and the *pesantren* "Darul 'Ulum" in the village of Rejoso in the East. Four great *pesantrens* exactly are the four corners in suburban counties. In total there are 165 *pesantrens* large, medium and small in this area (Kementrian Agama Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2013) and in fact they are the "clients" of the four great *pesantrens*. The existence of *pesantrens* became so important because this is where the cultural centre of schools of Aswaja that teaches as well as disseminate it themselves through a variety of formal or non formal education. Formal education starting from the level of *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) up to the University level. Second, the *pesantrens* as a 'think-tanks' of Aswaja, while the *Kyai* and their students are the agent of cultural transformation that developed such that it touches the practical political dimensions that cause the 'Ulama or NU elite as *Kyai* often feel disappointed, because the politics of it is not ideal for them; in addition, the political world does have laws that differ from the world and religiosity. Although it is aware of the close relationship, direct or indirect, between the teachings of the religion with political affairs. Third, within the framework of religious teachings that intersect with earthly things and the reality of politics is what has given rise to the elite of the cultural roots of the dynamics of the *pesantren* Aswaja.

Shove off from the three main considerations, the dynamics of NU as the *jama'ah* or *jam'iyah*, especially the 'Ulama/*Kyai* as elite that dominates and controls the NU. In a discussion of the dynamics of this elite NU stubs required as a representative example of concentrating on the development and emergence of internal conflicts, the dualism in the body of the NU pre and post-Khittah.

The Development of Internal Conflict of NU in Jombang

NU life traces back down in Jombang is not easy, because the written documents on the colonial period has not been arranged well. The founders and inspirators of NU a lot come from Jombang, in line with the development of the NU itself it can be said that NU in Jombang began performing as widening of "Consul" (a kind of regional representation). For the area of Jombang in 1938 led by KH Wahid Hasyim until 1952 when NU became the political party with the status of a branch which was later led by

KH Masduqi Zen (he is an alumni of *pesantren* Tebu Ireng) until 1963. In that period (1952 – 1963), he was also a member of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) during the Guided Democracy and Liberal Democracy.

Internal conflicts NU surfacing at the time, Masduqi Zen became Chairman of the DPRD Jombang to the moral issues associated with the economy of the region. In 1963, he be protested by his own supporters and he demanded resign from Office. The main issue is that when investors ask permission to open night markets, local governments that permit a failing grade on the recommendation with a variety of practical reasons, for example to increase per-capita income and local government revenue. The reason for this could not be accepted by the NU members, especially from among the elite of the *pesantrens*. The first alternative to resolve this issue is to dismiss him without violence. In a meeting of NU Branch Jombang consensus for reform (of the Board) at the end of that year. His successor then was KH Musta'in Romly, a prominent young NU from *pesantren* "Darul Ulum" in the village of Rejoso. He is a young protagonist seen to have broad relationships with politicians and military circles since he was the Secretary General of Youth Organization of Former Fighters (ex-*Sabilillah Hisbullah*); therefore, he is often in contact with the military cliques that exist in Jakarta, such as General AH Nasution and General Soepardjo Roestam. Another important factor he is the leader of *Thareqah Qadiriyyah wan-Naqsyabandiyah* Association. The office was then gave him legitimacy as a cleric or Religious. He as Chairman of NU Jombang Branch and the head of *thareqah* that has the support of the young generation and Kyai NU like KH Adlan Aly, KH Shobari, KH Ali Ridlo, and a young protagonist named Kholiq Hashim.

During the leadership of NU Jombang Branch in hand of Musta'in Romly, then emerging new conflicts with the presence of a group of elite NU did not enter as a result of the reform, the functionaries NU then set up a rival "NU", which is controlled by KH Azis Bishri (son of KH Bishri Syansuri), H Nawawi Machfudz, and KH Bayhaqi.

Conflict inside the NU continued, while the leadership after serving Musta'in Romly NU for three years, then he resigned from the post for then in 1973 he began crossing into Golkar. Other political events at the local level is when a political change process ongoing towards a single Islamic party that is the fusion of the PPP. This change is part of current political developments which occurred in Jakarta when the last political grouping in the Parliament.

The power that is in-force policy in the lower level trying to adjust the speeding with ape which was done in the DPRD are self-directed deal. In fact, something like the above is not an easy merger done with speeding. In the level of East Java Province, the fusion run faster with which takes place in Jombang the plodding in comparison. The signing of the joint statement in the level region, a marker of the functional-performed on January 1973 Islamic functional and the preparation of the new territories shall be functionaries of PPP on December at the same year, the following year it was also speeding. The continuation of the Islamic political party fusion process, there exists among young elite cannot accept the presence of an Islamic party that fusion results. Among others are the KH Musta'in Romly from *Pesantren* Darul 'Ulum who has not become a sysop NU and previously had contact with the military clique in Jakarta began his political career with a sign in become a member of Golkar. In 1977, he participated in a campaign to become a member of the DPR RI under the banner of Golkar.

With a background of interactions among NU elites, shows that there is relation of politics and the political situation of the Muslims at that time with the strength of political Islam in the elections. For example, the 1971 elections the Islamic political forces in Jombang gained for the 17.585 vote (or 42.80%) while gaining greater 205.487 Golkar (or 51.50%). Then in the elections of 1977, where the situation has eased, the acquisition of sound Islamic political force could still be said to be stable, i.e. Islamic political forces gained 183.461 vote (or 39.71%), Golkar with greater 255.401 vote (or 55.28%). But in the election of 1982, the position of the PPP as a political force Islam rising a bit, namely 198.634 vote (or 40.9%), and Golkar dropped to 246.606 vote (or 50.82%) (Kabupaten Jombang Dalam Angka, BAPPEDA, Jombang, 1982: 115].

In 1998 a succession of political regimes happened to the 'Reformation Regime'. In the same year, the NU people responding to this change by forming 'Team of Five' and 'Team of Assistancy'. This team is in charge of preparing the Declaration of the establishment of Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB). Some of the elite senior NU who was involved in the team which was KH Ma'ruf Amin, KH Agil Siradj, Rozy Munir, Mustafa Zuhad Mughni and Achmad Bagdja; whereas among elite young NU which is Muhaimin Iskandar and Arifin Junaidi. PKB is an 'open party' and not exclusive. The PKB was declared on 23 July 1998 in Ciganjur, Jakarta was then choose KH Abdurrahman Wahid as the Advisory Council Chairman, and Matori Abdul Djilil as Chairman of the Board *Tanfidzi*. These developments brought the implications at the local level where the reform era has given a wider space to the leaders of his political choices to determine the NU and escape from the trap of dichotomi *khittah* and non-*khittah*.

In Jombang Regency at the same year also declared the formation of PKB. The formation of new political parties was carried out in the branch office without encountering obstacles in the local NU. This is understandable because of the political situation in general is still covered by the euphoria of new freedom. The formation of a new party in Jombang mostly sustained by the members of NU is then chosen Cholid Makarim as Chairman of *Tanfidzi* and KH Amanullah as Chairman of the Advisory Council. Makarim is a successful agribusiness entrepreneur mainly associated with sugar cane plantations, he did not have a kinship with elite NU Jombang though he lived near the *pesantren* Tebu Ireng. While Amanullah was one of the elite the *pesantren* Bahrul 'Ulum at Tambak Beras, he has a kinship with KH Abdurrahman Wahid as elite NU is now the Chairman of the Advisory Board of the DPP PKB.

Makarim is a representation among the young politicians who have no kinship with the family of the founders of NU or does not have an educational background in fully boarding environment Jombang. Other people who like this for example are Tadjul Arifin, Arifin Junaidi, Subaidi Muhtar and so on. While Amanullah is a representation of the young elite circles who have a

kinship directly or indirectly with the '*Kyai sepuh*' the founders of NU, like Wahab Chasbullah KH and KH A Hashim Ash'ari. Other figures like this is Abdul Halim Iskandar, Fadlulloh Malik, Tamim Romly and Mujib Musta'in.

Dualism which appears among the NU Jombang post-Soeharto era is no longer based on dichotomy of *khittah* and non-*khittah*, but rather on the question of choice. First, it is a political option, this option refers to the Declaration of the PKB Jombang trying to accommodate the interests of the two main groups, namely the Group of elite genealogical ties with the founders of NU and the elite group has no relationship with the founders of NU genealogical. These two groups actually rests on the same one community: i.e. the elites (*kyai*) or head of Islamic boarding schools. Second, it is a cultural choice, choice is not to question the existence of a community which is influential, but more reference and lean on the cultural identity of NU. In addition, the phenomenon of conflict among the *nahdliyin* in the above Stubs can appear openly or closed. The conflict lasted open usually related to political expediency or the broader public interest. While the conflict that takes place usually covered are related to the existence of a cultural community of subordination in certain *pesantren* environment.

The conflict lasted open triggered by political interests, among others, related to the election of the Regent/Vice Regent. Election of the leadership of the Jombang region for 2003-2008 was held on 25 August 2003 the political setting has changed, the head of the election conducted by the Provincial election of 1999, an important political moment of in the first post-Soeharto Era. The first general elections in this reformation era resulted in the seat of Parliament for the party of Islamic-based, i.e. PKB 12 seats, PPP 3 seats, Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) 2 seats, the Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB) 1 seat and the Partai Nahdlatul Ulama (PNU) 1 seat. While the parties 'secular' i.e. Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P) 16 seats, the Partai Golkar (PG) 4 seats, the Partai Keadilan Dan Persatuan (PKP) 1 seat.

In the process of selecting while PKB split into two camps. The first was a group of Halim Iskandar in favor of a candidate from the coalition PKB and PG; the second group is Fadlulloh Malik which supports the coalition of PDI-P-PAN. In the vote in Parliament, noted that the Group did not support consistently for couples who proposed by PKB and PG but he supports the candidate of PDI-P-PAN who later won the election of the Regent/Vice Regent for the period 2003-2008. The conflict continues in the elections of 2004 whereas PKB won 15 seats of local legislative (while other political parties of PDI-P 12 seats, Partai Golkar 6 seats, Partai Demokrat 6 seats, PPP 4 seats and the PAN 2 seats), but elements of the PKB faction in extremely compact opposed-in the Council is still there.

Recent developments and political relations of NU on the local level relating to the election of the head of the region. In the election of the Regent/Vice Regent of Jombang implemented June 2013 there are three couple of candidates: Munir Alfani/Wiwik Nuriati acquire 38.039 (5.64%), Sumrambah/Soeparno 234.819 (34.82%), and Nyono Suharli/Munjidah Wahab 401.576 (59.54) (Komisi Pemilihan Umum Daerah Jombang, 2013). In the election that made directly to this Suharli/ Wahab backed by Golkar and the PPP won the most votes. This shows that there is a shift in the vote in which the family of Islam boarding school background and a capacity of Wahab as the elite Moslem NU into consideration for voters so that it becomes an important factor of this victory.

Conclusion

Based on exposure above, it can be concluded that the Islamic movement's Sunny in Indonesia, especially in the fight in the political arena at the local level will always experience the dynamics. So, to understanding relations between the NU as socio-religious movement and political life of Jombang Regency important as a sample to explain the *Ahl Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* as a strong Islamic Sunny's mainstream in Indonesia.

By applying Political Sociology point of view, I find the conflicts that take place in an environment of internal NU run parallel with the conflict taking place in the environment of organizations, groups, or communities that are dominated by those followers of NU in the sense of *jama'ah* and *jam'iyah*. In other words, if the internal environment within the NU leadership dualism happens, then it will spread to organizations, groups or other community there is the dominance of the culture of the NU. The spread of this dualism brings implications on the participation of actors and their respective followers as patron relationship forms the classic client. The contemporary issues that drive the conflicts often not resolved completely; this is related to a variety of interests comes from internal or external. The conflict is not resolved completely, often appearing back when there is a certain momentum. Thus it can be said that the conflict, friction or dualism which takes place in an environment of NU in the context of local politics in East Java, especially in Jombang may become reference for understanding the dynamics of the political background to understand the *Ahl Sunnah wal Jama'ah* followers.

Generalization I can say that organizations or communities in Indonesia that have same characteristics and apply same theoretical frame work with my research sample will find same dynamics. But it will be difference findings when some other researchers take place another sample and approach.

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