

Ideological Contestation of Islamic Organisations in Indonesia: A Case Study of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama

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Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas kontestasi ideologi antara Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) dengan Muhammadiyah yang berdiri pada awal abad ke-20. Lahirnya kedua organisasi massa (Ormas) tersebut tidak terlepas dari pengaruh pemikiran yang berkembang di dunia Islam pada masa tersebut, yang berdampak pada adanya perbedaan ideologi antara keduanya. Oleh karenanya, penelitian ini secara spesifik membahas tentang karakteristik kontestasi ideologi dari Muhammadiyah dan NU. Data pada penelitian ini dikumpulkan dengan metode kepustakaan terhadap dokumen-dokumen berupa buku, artikel jurnal, dan lain-lain. Ideologi yang menjadi objek material pada penelitian selanjutnya dianalisis menggunakan teori kontestasi ideologi. Teori ini akan mengungkap empat karakteristik kontestasi, yaitu; jenis norma yang berbeda, dua modus kontestasi, tiga tahap implementasi norma, dan empat siklus validasi. Kontestasi ideologi antara Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) tercermin dari pendekatan berbeda terhadap norma keagamaan, di mana Muhammadiyah menekankan purifikasi ajaran Islam melalui pendirian lembaga modern seperti sekolah dan rumah sakit, sementara NU mengadaptasi tradisi lokal melalui pesantren yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai keagamaan tradisional. Validasi keduanya pun berbeda, dengan Muhammadiyah memperoleh pengakuan formal dari pemerintah kolonial, sedangkan NU mendapatkan legitimasi budaya yang kuat di masyarakat pedesaan melalui tradisi ritual keagamaan yang mengakar. Kontestasi ini tidak hanya membentuk identitas sosial-politik umat Islam di Indonesia, tetapi juga berkontribusi pada pembentukan identitas nasional yang kaya akan nilai-nilai agama dan budaya.

Kata Kunci: Kontestasi ideologi, ormas Islam, pemikiran Islam

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Abstract

This article discusses the ideological contestation between Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), where Muhammadiyah was established in the early 20th century. The birth of the two mass organisations is inseparable from the influence of thought that developed in the Islamic world at that time, which has implications for the ideological differences between the two. Therefore, this research specifically examines the characteristics of ideological contestation between Muhammadiyah and NU. This research is a qualitative literature study that collects data from various documents, such as books, journal articles, and other sources. The ideology that becomes the material object in this research is then analysed using the theory of ideological contestation. This theory will reveal four characteristics of contestation, namely: variations in different norms, two modes of contestation, three stages of norm implementation, and four cycles of validation. This research shows that differences in basic norms, modes of contestation, and norm implementation are the main drivers of the dynamics between Muhammadiyah and NU. The ideological contestation between Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is reflected in their different approaches to religious norms, where Muhammadiyah emphasises purification of Islamic teachings through the establishment of modern institutions such as schools and hospitals, while NU adapts local traditions through pesantren that integrate traditional religious values. Their validation also differs, with Muhammadiyah gaining formal recognition from the colonial government, while NU gains strong cultural legitimacy in rural communities through deep-rooted religious ritual traditions. This contestation not only shaped the socio-political identity of Muslims in Indonesia, but also contributed to the formation of a national identity rich in religious and cultural values.

Keywords: *Ideological contestation, Islamic organizations, Islamic thought*

INTRODUCTION

Before Indonesia's independence in 1945, the wave of Islamic thought brought by Muslim scholars spread equally in Indonesia. There are three typologies of Islamic movements, each with the same purpose, but different basic principles, namely Wahabiyah from Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha from Egypt, and Ahmadiyya from India. Each carries an ideology that shapes the mindset and policies of the group and carries a distinct ideology of Islamic thought (Abdullah et al., 2012; Bush, 2009). This phenomenon resulted in various Islamic mass organizations (CSOs) that were born before independence. Even the authorship of the polarization of Islamic movements/organizations is very visible because an ideology can play and formulate the mindset and policies of a group (Fountain et al., 2015, p. 178). So, every idea absorbed gave birth to pre-independence Islamic mass organizations. The dynamics of the emerging mass organizations (read Ormas) were caused by ideology, political content, and even

the culture of “*verzuiling*” that the Dutch colonists passed down to Indonesia (Kersten, 2018, p. xiv). The majority of Indonesians know the Great Mass Organizations, namely NU and Muhammadiyah, even though from 1901 to 1945 many Islamic movements emerged, including Jam'iyatul Khair (1905), Perserikatan Ulama (1911), Al-Irshad (1914), and so on (Bhawono, 2018).

The background to establishing the Ormas of the era of colonialism has various dissemination purposes. Some Ormas are oriented towards economic growth, education, and mobilizers to fight the invaders. Among those initiated by economic interest is the Sarekat Islam (SI) dedicated to the welfare of the marginal people (Raharjo, 2019, p. 44). The mission of developing the education system in Indonesia carried out by Jam'iyatul Khair (Hasyim & Haryono, 2019, p. 166). Others act as political platforms such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) (Bush, 2009, pp. 33–34; Hosen, 2004, pp. 9–10). As well as those who have an interest and motivation to purify Islamic teachings and education, namely Muhammadiyah (Ananda & Fata, 2018, p. 33; Peacock, 1986a, p. 51).

The influence of these three currents of Islamic ideology pivots on the conservative/traditional thought patterns stamped on Wahabi (Aswar, 2016). Then moving forward to rationality/modernity referring to the Azharian modernity current, Egypt was initiated by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha (Abdullah et al., 2012; Abushouk, 2007, p. 301) and Ahmadiyya movement that emphasizes the use of reason/rationality (Wijaya, 2022, 2023, p. 112). So, the hypothesis that the researcher assumes is that the various mass organizations that developed in the early 20th century, from 1900 until before independence in 1945, referred to or were influenced by the three currents of Islamic thought simultaneously. Each of them was bound to one of these Islamic ideologies. However, there may also be some mass organizations that are not affiliated with the three Islamic ideologies such as Madrasah Al-Ihsan for the development of Islamic Education thought patterns in Palembang, South Sumatra (Suradi, 2022, p. 63). As stated by James L. Peacock, a movement needs to be carried out studies to find out the dynamics of changes in the pattern of society, so that it can be used as an intellectual (Peacock, 1986a, pp. 5–6).

Although many studies have been conducted on Islamic mass organizations, this research focuses on the aspect of ideological contestation between organizations. This contestation includes various forms of competition: intellectual,

political, and cultural. For example, Muhammadiyah with its modernity orientation often confronts NU, which maintains local traditions in religious practice (Bush & Fealy, 2014, p. 538). Meanwhile, Persis, which seeks to purify Islamic teachings, faces resistance from the traditions upheld by NU. This study examines how this contestation affects the formation of diverse Islamic identities in Indonesia. The formulation built on this research is How are the characteristics of ideological contestation between Islamic community organizations in Indonesia in the period 1900-1945.

Research related to Islamic Community Organizations (ormas) has been carried out by scholars, both Indonesian outsider scholars and Indonesian insiders. Rifki Abror Ananda and Ahmad Khorul Fata wrote an article about "*The History of Islamic Renewal in Indonesia*" alluding to community organizations that have an orientation to the reconstruction of Islamic teachings (Ananda & Fata, 2018). Rangga Satria (2019) researched "*From Surau to Madrasah: Modernization of Islamic Education in Minangkabau 1900-1930 AD*" exploring the transmission of modern education in Minangkabau, one of which was influenced by Muhammadiyah (Satria, 2019), besides Nur Rohmah Hayati reviewing the work of Ormas in education (Hayati, 2018). In addition, various studies focus on ideologies that appear in the body of Ormas (Bush, 2009; Farih, 2016; Federspiel, 1970, 2001; Hosen, 2004). Abd. Ghofur wrote an article on "*The Rise of Islam in Indonesia*" which also focused on Islamic Mass Organizations that developed in the early 20th century, but the conclusion given was to categorize groups of Islam becomes two, namely traditionalist Islam and modernist Islam (Ghofur, 2012). Meanwhile, this research describes the ideological contestation that occurred before the independence era. After conducting a search related to the theme studied, the researcher did not find research on the ideological contestation of Islamic Community Organizations (Ormas) from 1900-1945.

Therefore, this research focuses on the contestation of ideology and the influence of three currents of Islamic reformers, namely Wahabi, Egypt, and Ahmadiyya on Muhammadiyah and NU, that developed in the early 1900. Although there are many studies on the history of Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia, few have in-depth examined the ideological contestation between major organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU in the socio-political context of the 1900-1945 period. This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing the role of ideology in influencing social and political movements at that time.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative literature research that collects data from documents in the form of books, journal articles, and others (Wijaya, 2022, p. 33). This method was chosen because it is in accordance with the nature of the research which focuses on the analysis of historical documents and literature related to Islamic mass organizations in the period 1900-1945. In its implementation, this research was carried out through the following steps: researchers collected primary sources such as books, journal articles, archives, and documents relevant to Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia. Secondary sources, such as the results of previous research, were also used to enrich the analysis (George, 2008). The data obtained was classified based on the organization, its ideology, and the time period. For example, grouping data related to Muhammadiyah, NU, and Persis according to their ideological characteristics (Wiener, 2014).

The data were then analysed using a descriptive-analytical approach. In this stage, the theory of ideological contestation is applied to identify patterns of contestation, both in terms of norms, modes, and validations that occur in the dynamics between mass organizations (Wiener, 2014, p. 8). Application of Theory: Contestation theory is used specifically in the discussion section to explain how each organization's ideology influences their interaction patterns, both intellectually and politically (Peacock, 1986b, p. 5).

Primary sources are books that discuss Islamic Community Organizations. Secondary sources are articles, magazines, newspapers, and other documents that have similar research themes. Data analysis uses a descriptive-analytic method with a contestation approach. By exploring the ideologies that developed in 1900-1945 that were veiled in the bodies of Islamic mass organizations.

The main source is books or writings that discuss Islamic Community Organizations. There are several that the author finds regarding the Islamic ideology initiated by Wahhabis such as the writings of Spat, C. who mentions that Wahhabis want to undermine Pan-Islamism through restrictions on countries (Spat, 1925, p. 70). Snouck Hugronje recounted dogmatic debates such as grave pilgrimages, religious rituals, and so on. He emphasised that Muhammadiyah became the modern axis of Indonesian Islam in the early 20th century (Hugronje, 1939, p. 327). The theory used to analyze the material object is the theory of ideological contestation. This theory will reveal four characteristics of contestation, namely; different types of norms, two modes of contestation, three stages of norm

implementation, and four cycles of validation (Wiener, 2014, p. 11). Contestation is tightly related to the ideological hegemony of each contesting entity as well as rivalry over the ruling ideology (Homba & Dawa, 2015, p. 83).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)

1. Muhammadiyah

Muhammadiyah was formed by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and his colleagues in Yogyakarta on 18 November 1912 or simultaneously with 8 Dhulhijjah 1330 H (Ananda & Fata, 2018, p. 29). Muhammadiyah aims to maintain the syiar Islam comprehensively covering the fields of social, economic, education, and da'wah, health. Muhammadiyah established various regular schools, madrasas, medical centers, hospitals, and orphanages. Muhammadiyah universities are also spread in various cities. Muhammadiyah figures who are recognized as national heroes are KH Ahmad Dahlan, KH Mas Mansur, Hj Walidah Ahmad Dahlan, and KH Fakhruddin (Satria, 2019, p. 282).

Indeed, Ahmad Dahlan's main mission was to reform the principles of Islamic teachings toward modernism (Fitri, 2021, p. 87; Palmier, 1954, p. 257). Muhammad Abduh's reformist ideas reached Muhammadiyah through various newspapers/magazines such as *Islah Press*, *al-Munir*, and *al-Manar*. These print media offered a progressive vision orientation on Islamic teachings such as liberalism and the theology of reason (Amir & Rahman, 2021, p. 42). Muhammadiyah's thought pattern was adopted from Muhammad Abduh's thoughts on Islamic modernity. So that the projects undertaken by Muhammadiyah pivot on broad matters such as social problems, education, and so on, not fixated on religious affairs alone (Baso et al., 2017, p. 39).

2. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)

Nahdlatul Ulama, meaning the Awakening of the ulama, is an Islamic organization founded by Islamic scholars under the guidance of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, in Surabaya on 31 January 1926. K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's favorite student was Bung Tomo, who is said to have mentioned the name Bung Tomo at the end of his life (Baso et al., 2017, p. 7). NU has a large number of Islamic boarding schools scattered throughout Indonesia, as well as formal schools such as

elementary, junior high, high school, and university. NU has been in politics since the MIAI (A'la Dewan Islam Indonesia) finally became political.

However, the existence of MIAI did not last long, in October 1943 MIAI was finally dissolved and replaced by Masyumi (Muslim Shuro Council in Indonesia). At first, Masyumi was a non-political organization, but after Indonesia's independence, Masyumi was finally established as a political party and NU was decided as a pillar of Masyumi. In 1940-1950, Masyumi eventually became the largest political party in Indonesia. Masyumi was a party with heterogeneous members, so various political interests emerged within it. And this is the reason why NU left Masyumi and became a political party called NU. Lastly before deciding to return to the *khithah* of not getting involved in actual politics (Hafni, 2006, p. 430).

Kiai Ahmad founded the Muhammadiyah organization and Kiai Hasyim founded Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). When both were alive, the cults practiced in the community were generally the same, although there were differences that they did not dispute at all. The following are examples of similarities in worship practices today:

- a. *Tarawih* prayer is 20 raka'at in jam'ah. Kiai Ahmad Dahlan himself is said to have been the imam during the 20 rak'ah *Tarawih* prayer at the Syuhada Mosque in Yogyakarta.
- b. Talqin over the grave, even making pilgrimages to the grave and sending prayers in *yasinan* and *tahlilan*.
- c. *Qunut shubuh*.
- d. *Shalawat (Diba'an)*.
- e. Two *khutbahs* in the *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha* prayers.
- f. *Takbir* three times, "Allah Akbar", in takbiran.
- g. Repeating the *iqamah (qad qamat ash-shalat)* twice.
- h. And the most central is *hilal*, equally carrying *rukayah*. The last one is interesting to think about, not to judge what is good and what is bad.

All the practices mentioned above have performed successfully for decades in peace and kindness. Everything is contained in the book *Fiqh Muhammadiyah* in 3 volumes, by Muhammadiyah Part Taman Pustaka Jogjakarta, 1343 H. However, when Muhammadiyah established *Majlis Tarjih*, this is where the structuring of worship activities began, which seemed to be

sufficient with what had been determined and explained by its predecessors. Automatically also different from the Nahdhiyyin worship model.

3. The Ideology of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: Groundwork and Implementation

Muhammadiyah, founded in 1912 by KH Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta, is based on the ideology of *tajdid* (renewal). This ideology was influenced by Islamic reformist thought, particularly that of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, which emphasized the importance of religious rationalization, modern education, and the eradication of practices considered heresy (Alfian, 1980, p. 34). Muhammadiyah focussed its activities on educational reform through the establishment of modern schools and the renewal of ways of worship in accordance with a literal understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

In contrast, NU, which was established in 1926 at the initiative of KH Hasyim Asy'ari, espouses the ideology of *ahlus sunnah wal jama'ah*. This ideology is based on the Shafi'i school of thought and the legacy of classical Islamic traditions, which is reflected in the use of the yellow book as the main reference (Fealy & Barton, 1996, p. 45). NU defends local Islamic practices, such as *tahlil*, grave pilgrimage, and *barzanji*, which are considered part of Indonesia's Islamic cultural heritage. NU's approach aims to protect the community's religious traditions from homogenization efforts by modernist groups.

The ideology of the two organizations is the main identity that distinguishes their followers. For Muhammadiyah, the *tajdid* ideology asserts its identity as a modernist group that rejects traditions that do not derive directly from the Qur'an and Sunnah. In contrast, NU asserts its identity as the guardian of local Islamic traditions that are deeply rooted in the culture of the local community.

Dimensions of Contestation According to Wiener's Theory

a. Norm Types

According to Wiener (Wiener, 2014, p. 31), norms are divided into basic norms, organizational principles, and standard procedures. Muhammadiyah carries the principle of rationalization of Islamic education with the basic norm of purification of Islamic teachings. The establishment of a modern madrasa with a secular-religious curriculum is one of its implementations (Dhofier, 1994, p. 64).

In contrast, NU maintains a traditional-based norm with recognition of ulama and classical books as the main foundation. For example, Muhammadiyah initiated the establishment of Hoofdbestuur in 1921 to strengthen the modern education system (Alfian, 1980, p. 52), while NU established *Bahtsul Masail* as a collective decision-making mechanism based on the yellow scriptures/*turots* (Noer, 1990, p. 145).

b. Modes of Contestation

Wiener (Wiener, 2014, p. 42) identifies several modes of contestation, such as arbitration, social deliberation, and debate. Contestation between Muhammadiyah and NU often appeared in public debates, especially through mass media such as *Suara Muhammadiyah* and *Bintang Islam* in the 1930s (Noer, 1990, p. 132). Arbitration also occurred through attempts at compromise, although rarely successful, especially on issues such as *tahlil* and *qunut*. For example, meetings between Muhammadiyah and NU scholars often ended up reinforcing each organisation's identity (Dhofier, 1994, p. 75).

c. Norm Implementation

Norm implementation involves three stages: formation, reference, and execution (Wiener, 2014, p. 48). Muhammadiyah referred to the ideas of Abduh and Rashid Rida in educational reform and social charity. This implementation is seen in the establishment of modern schools spread across various regions (Alfian, 1980, p. 67). NU implemented traditional norms through the *pesantren* structure. The Jihad Resolution in 1945 is an example of how NU's traditional norms were mobilised to build a spirit of faith-based nationalism (Fealy & Barton, 1996, p. 112).

d. Validation Cycle

Norm validation in society occurs through three forms: formal, social, and cultural. Muhammadiyah received formal validation through recognition by the colonial government which appreciated its modernist approach (Alfian, 1980, p. 78). Social validation was reflected in the adoption of Muhammadiyah's educational curriculum by other Islamic schools. NU, on the other hand, gained cultural validation through the recognition of the *pesantren* tradition as the centre of Islamic education in the countryside (Dhofier, 1994, p. 93). Traditions such as *Maulid Nabi* and *Tahlil* became an important part of NU's cultural validation.

Ideological Contestation in Islamic Mass Organizations in Indonesia

This contestation is a social activity. While most are expressed through language, not all forms of protest involve expressive verbal discourse. Thus, among the different ways of arguing, including justification, deliberation, arbitration, or argumentation, in particular, the latter does not necessarily involve language. However, all forms of protest exclude violent acts, which play a central role in acts of defiance. In turn, as a challenge to social practice asks to oppose specific issues that are important to everyone. In international relations, disputes often involve many different social practices expressing disagreement with norms orally. The delay of the standard type, from the basic standards to organizational principles or standard procedures, this disagreement necessarily manifests itself in various ways. The dispute model, that is, the way in which a dispute is formed in practice, depends on the individual environment in which the dispute occurs (i.e. court, regime, society or university) (Wiener, 2014, pp. 8-9).

The theory of ideological contestation used in this research reveals four main characteristics; firstly, different types of norms: each organization has a basic norm that reflects their ideology, such as Wahabis who prioritize the literalness of religious texts versus Muhammadiyah who emphasize modernity (Federspiel, 2001, p. 87). Second, the mode of contestation, where contestation takes place through intellectual deliberation (such as public debates) and justification (such as the publication of religious works) (Peacock, 1986b, pp. 5-6). Third, the next stage of norm implementation is that organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah differ in the stage of religious norm implementation, from formation to social recognition (Wiener, 2014, pp. 8-9). Fourth, cultural validation cycles often become a means of legitimization, for example, through rituals that are adopted by the wider community (Bush, 2009).

Basically, this theoretical contestation consists of four main features: First, it includes different types of norms (i.e. fundamental norms, principles of organization, and standard procedures); second, four modes of contestation (i.e. arbitration, deliberation, quarrel, and justification); thirdly, three stages of implementation of norms (i.e. forming, referencing, implementing); and fourth, the three stages above the validation cycle (i.e. formal validation, social recognition, cultural validation). It is suggested that based on these four features of empirical research it is equipped to identify the legitimacy of the gap in each elected official of the global government (Wiener, 2014, p. 11). This ideological clash within Islamic

organizations is primarily a contradiction reflected in the influence of the Islamic reformers Wahabi, Egyptian, and Ahmadiyya.

Three main ideological streams - Wahabi, Muhammad Abduh and Ahmadiyya - have significantly influenced the character of mass organizations in Indonesia:

- a. Wahabi: Inspired purification movements such as Persis, which rejected local traditions considered deviant (Federspiel, 2001, p. 91).
- b. Muhammad Abduh: His modernist ideas became the basis for Muhammadiyah to reform education and religious teachings (Amir & Rahman, 2021, p. 42).
- c. Ahmadiyah: Although controversial, Ahmadiyah's thoughts on rationality attracted the attention of organizations such as Persis and Jong Islamieten Bond (Ropi, 2010, p. 282).

Hamka in his speech when he received the Doctor Honoris Causa degree in 1958 revealed that the pioneer who spread the principles of Muhammad Abduh's reformist teachings was Syaikh Tabir Jalaluddin. He was a Sumatran (Minangkabau) scholar descended from the blood of this heritage who had studied in Mecca, then in 1310 H/1892 M continued his studies to al-Azhar, Egypt, and studied Abduh's knowledge through Al-Manar. At that time, Abduh's name was well-known in various circles (Hamka, 1958, p. 9; Rosowulan, 2023, p. 100). Muhammadiyah as a group states that Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh, and Rasyid Ridha are the best modern reformers in the step of revitalizing Islamic teachings (Amir & Rahman, 2021; Federspiel, 1970, p. 60; Hefner, 2011, p. 142; Peacock, 1986a). The issue of redefining the meaning of monotheism and bridging between nationalism and Islam, which was promoted by Jamaluddin al-Afghani and developed by his disciples Muhammad 'Abduh and Rasyid Ridha, is one of the most important modern reformers (Azlan, 2022, p. 216).

Ahmadiyya literature with modernist nuances about Islam and using the language of the reader has been reviewed by modernist groups such as Persis, Muhammadiyah, Sarekat Islam, and Jong Islamieten Bond and entered the education system where English and Dutch were used (Lukman, 2022, p. 54). The closeness of Ahmadiyya thought to Persis can also be understood from the close relationship between Persis and Sarekat Islam (SI), especially in the 1920s and early 1930s (Federspiel, 2001, pp. 91-92). Ahmadiyya ideology focuses on the modernization and dynamization of Islamic teachings (Ropi, 2010).

In Indonesia, the clash of Wahhabi thought with the Indonesian population was observed in the 19th century. Abdul Wahhab's preaching thought is considered to have motivated Islamic scholars in West Sumatra called Paderi led by Tuanku Imam Bonjol. However, according to Martin Van Bruinessen, these historical facts are not strong enough to support the argument of Wahhabi influence in the Padri movement. In fact, there are still many other circumstances that do not support this argument. The Salafi-Wahabi mindset in Indonesia is also said to have infected the thinking of Sheikh Ahmad Syurkati, the founder of Madrasah al-Irsyad in the early 20th century (Aswar, 2016, p. 21). Wahhabis are also considered a fundamentalist group that understands Islam only passively, which can result in the birth of Islamic extremism (Najib & Fata, 2020, p. 118).

Nahdlatul Ulama is unique in its Islamic ideology, which tends to be moderate, as seen from the fiqh madhhab used which is more flexible because it does not oblige one madhhab. It is based on the ahlus sunnah wal jama'ah school of thought, which places God's power alongside human effort (*hasb*) (Harahap & Nasution, 2003, pp. 301–304). NU has the main target of realizing what is known as 'Islam Nusantara' (Lewis & Hammer, 2021, p. 111). But in the beginning, NU was a political movement if you look deeper from the beginning of its formation. Although this political movement was based on when NU joined Masyumi, then broke away to return to the PPP (United Development Party). Eventually, it left the PPP ranks again (Hafni, 2006, pp. 430–431). However, in the beginning, NU was still considered as a traditionalist movement (Feener, 2007, p. 17). They also elaborate the elements of Ulama, state, and Muslim community and even cultures (Bush & Fealy, 2014, p. 538).

Organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU show complex dynamics of contestation. Muhammadiyah focuses on modern education and healthcare, while NU emphasize the preservation of Pesantren traditions (Bush & Fealy, 2014, p. 538). Despite their differences, the two organizations also show tolerance on some common issues, such as Islamic education.

The various mass organizations do not show hatred for each other from their leaders, their participants carry out fanatical-anarchist attitudes such as hate speech between them. This is based on the tendentious, active, and intense culture of participants and the politicization of every discourse that emerges (Utami & Darmaiza, 2020, p. 126). Particularly, NU and Muhammadiyah both elaborate Middle Eastern teachings with modern scholarship (Yunanto, 2018, pp. 24–25). Even

between Wahabi, Azharian modernity, as well as Ahmadiyya rationality should show tolerance between them. The contestation between these ideologies often generates friction but also fosters rich intellectual discussion (Hefner, 2011).

In the early 20th century, Indonesia experienced the rise of Islamic organizations oriented towards modernization and the preservation of tradition. Muhammadiyah, founded in 1912 by KH Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta, brought a spirit of modernization based on the ideas of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida (Alfian, 1980, p. 34). In contrast, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), founded in 1926 by KH Hasyim Asy'ari, championed the preservation of local Islamic traditions based on the Shafi'i madhhab and the yellow book (Fealy & Barton, 1996, p. 45). This ideological contestation reflects fundamental differences in organizational strategy and the implementation of Islamic norms in society. Muhammadiyah focuses on *tajdid* (renewal), while NU is rooted in the concept of *ahlus sunnah wal jama'ah* with the adaptation of local traditions such as *tahlil* and grave pilgrimage (Noer, 1990, p. 112).

The contestation between Muhammadiyah and NU had a major impact on the development of Islam in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah contributed to shaping the urban Muslim middle class, while NU strengthened the traditional Islamic base in the countryside (Fealy & Barton, 1996, p. 121). During the preparation for independence, both organizations played an important role in building an Islamic-based national identity.

The contestation between Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama is a phenomenon that reflects the dynamic development of Islam in Indonesia. The ideological differences and approaches taken by these two organisations not only affect religious practices, but also have a significant impact on the social and cultural structure of society. Muhammadiyah, with its modernising spirit, has contributed to the formation of a progressive Muslim middle class, while NU has served as a guardian of tradition that maintains local identity. In the context of Indonesia's historical journey, both have become important pillars in building a national identity rich in religious and cultural values. As such, an in-depth understanding of the roles and contributions of each of these organisations is crucial to understanding the dynamics of Islam in Indonesia today.

Ideological Contestation of Muhammadiyah and NU: Dimensions and Impacts

Ideological contestation between Muhammadiyah and NU does not only take place at the level of ideas, but also extends to social and political practices. Analysis based on Wiener's ideological contestation theory shows four important dimensions:

1. Type of Norm

Muhammadiyah emphasizes the basic norm of purification of Islamic teachings, while NU puts forward the principle of adaptation of local traditions as an Islamic norm. This difference is seen in the approach to daily religious practice.

2. Mode of Contestation

Contestation often occurs through public debates, both in person and through print media, such as *Suara Muhammadiyah* and *Bintang Nahdlatul Ulama*. Both organisations also use educational institutions to extend their ideological influence.

3. Norm Implementation

Muhammadiyah established modern educational institutions and hospitals to promote their new norms. On the other hand, NU preserved the tradition of pesantren education that integrated traditional Islamic norms with community life.

4. Validation & Recognition

Muhammadiyah managed to gain formal validation from the colonial government through the recognition of their educational institutions. Meanwhile, NU gained strong cultural validation among rural communities, especially through its ingrained religious rituals.

The impact of this contestation can be seen in the formation of the socio-political identity of Muslims in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah succeeded in creating a modernist-orientated urban Muslim middle class, while NU strengthened the traditional Islamic base in the countryside. Although their ideological differences often created tensions, in some moments they were able to work together, especially during the independence struggle to build a national identity rooted in Islam.

According to Wiener's theory of ideological contestation, both organizations use deliberation and arbitration modes to convey their ideologies. Muhammadiyah,

with its modernist approach, often prioritizes rational debate based on Islamic literacy. On the other hand, NU uses more cultural approaches through community traditions to strengthen its influence. The cycle of norm validation in these two organizations shows that ideological contestation does not only stop at the internal level but also becomes a dynamic and continuous process in Indonesian society

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the ideological contestation between Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) reflected differences in normative approaches, social strategies, and implementation of Islamic teachings. Muhammadiyah focused on purification and modernisation, while NU maintained local Islamic traditions. Through Wiener's ideological contestation theory, it was found that normative differences, modes of contestation through public debate, and formal and cultural validation were at the core of the dynamics of both organisations. Muhammadiyah was more accepted by the colonial government and urban society, while NU managed to strengthen its cultural base in the countryside. This contestation shaped the socio-political character of Muslims in Indonesia, with Muhammadiyah leading modernist renewal and NU maintaining local traditions. This study highlights the importance of understanding the dynamics of Islamic organisations in shaping the socio-political development of Islam in Indonesia, although further exploration of external influences is still needed.

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