

NU'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION A Convergence of Ideological and Pragmatic Motives

**Firman Noor, Lili Romli, Ridho Imawan Hanafi, Mouliza Kristhopher Donna
Sweinstani** | National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) – Indonesia
Anders Uhlin | Lund University – Sweden

Corresponding author: moulizadonna@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper analyzes Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) involvement in Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election, focusing on the convergence of ideological and pragmatic motives. The study examines how different factions within NU align with various presidential candidates, driven by both the desire to protect Aswaja values and the need to maintain relevance in the political sphere. Using qualitative methods by conducting in-depth interviews with several NU circle and political party elites at national and local levels, inside and outside Java, and in the NU-base and non-NU Base regions, this study finds that NU's political engagement often reflects a mix of ideological commitments to maintain Aswaja doctrine and the non-ideological motives which are the proximity to the party or candidate motive, patronage motive, and economic incentives and access to power motive. The research also highlights the challenges NU faces in maintaining neutrality while navigating the complexities of electoral politics. These diverse interests have ultimately led to polarization within NU and prove that NU is not a monolithic political force. Thus, this paper argues that NU's political participation is an unavoidable aspect of its identity, shaped by ongoing tensions between religious principles and the demands of a changing political landscape.

Keywords: *Aswaja*, NU's political involvement, non-ideological motives, presidential election.

Introduction

Even though Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is part of civil society and institutionally has a neutral attitude towards politics, through its activist circles, NU plays a significant role in practical politics. The roles played

by NU are varied, ranging from being an opposition to the government and part of the pro-democracy movement¹ to being a political actor associated with the authorities. NU's political role can also be seen in the context of the presidential election (pilpres). Throughout the presidential elections in Indonesia, NU has been proven to not only play a role as a vote getter, but also often holds a prestigious position.

At the beginning of the Reformation Era, Abdurrahman Wahid, a great figure of NU, succeeded in becoming president from 1999 to 2001. After that, in the 2004 Presidential Election, there were two NU elites who became vice presidential candidates. They were Hasyim Muzadi and Solahuddin Wahid. Muzadi was the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (PBNU) who was nominated as vice president by Megawati Sukarno Putri. Meanwhile, Solahuddin Wahid, who was the grandson of the Founder of NU, K.H Hasyim Ashari, became Wiranto's vice presidential candidate.

In the next two presidential elections, in 2009 and 2014, the role of NU circles decreased slightly compared to the previous presidential elections. This was partly because there were no NU figures in the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, even though at that time Muhammad Jusuf Kalla was often associated as a figure or representative of NU. However, the label as the General Chairman of the Golkar Party was much stronger attached to Jusuf Kalla than his NU identity. NU's position was symbolically strengthened in the 2019 Presidential Election, after Ma'ruf Amin, Chairman of the Syuro Council (*Rais 'Aam*) PBNU, became Joko Widodo's vice-presidential candidate. Ma'ruf Amin's presence was the result of recommendations from NU figures, especially from PKB.

In the 2024 Presidential Election, the role of NU circles is even more prominent and gives the impression of how significant the existence of this circle is in the dynamics of Indonesian politics. Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar, the General Chairperson of PKB who is also the great-grandson of the founder of NU, K.H Bisri Sansuri, became the Vice-Presidential Candidate for Anies Rasyid Baswedan. who employs

¹ Anders Uhlin, *Oposisi Berserak: Arus Deras Demokratisasi Gelombang Ketiga Di Indonesia* (Mizan, 1998).

politization of Islam since his Jakarta election a few years back.² Several NU figures were also seen in the Anies-Muhaimin Pair's successful team, such as Maksum Fakhri from the Langitan Tuban Islamic Boarding School. Meanwhile, Mohammad Mahfud Mahmodin (Mahfud MD), a Muslim scholar with a NU background, was the vice-presidential candidate for Ganjar Pranowo. In addition, the Ganjar-Mahfud National Winning Team was also filled with NU figures including Zannuba Arrifah Chafsoh (Yenny Wahid), Gus Dur's daughter.

Meanwhile, the Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka camps placed several NU figures in their National Campaign Team, such as Habib Muhammad Luthfi bin Yahya, an NU figure who was also a member of the presidential advisory council. There was also the General Chairperson of the Central Board of the NU Scholars Association, Ali M. Musa; the Advisory Board of Muslimat NU Mahfudzoh, Ali Ubaid; the Chancellor of the Nahdlatul Ulama University of Indonesia, Juri Ardiantoro; and several influential Islamic boarding school administrators in Java.

The support given to the three candidate pairs by NU circles appeared in the context of NU being not formally involved in supporting presidential election contestants. This was firmly conveyed by the Chairman of PBNU KH Yahya Cholil Staquf. However, PBNU does not prohibit administrators in the NU structure from determining their stance including becoming a candidate's campaign team. Apart from the large mass numbers, the widespread distribution of choices among Nahdliyin citizens has the potential to win support from NU voters.³

The various roles and political activities of NU as a civil society organization have attracted the attention of several scholars. Research about NU's strategic role in Indonesian politics can be found in studies about state-civil society relations. Studies capturing NU's involvement in politics ranging from being a supporter of democracy, a supporting

² Mochammad Irfan Achfandhy et al., "The Pre-Presidential Election 2024: Uncovering the Consistency of Religious Politicization," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 24, no. 1 (2024).

³ Yohan Wahyu, "Membaca Arah Pilihan Politik Warga NU Di Pemilu 2024," https://www.kompas.id/baca/riset/2023/05/31/membaca-arab-pilihan-politik-warga-nu-di-pemilu-2024?status=sukses_login&login=1722320918774&open_from=header_button&loc=header_button (February 2023).

element of political pluralism, an actor in political education, to playing a role as a collaborator of political parties and rulers have been carried out by several scholars.⁴ The study conducted by Yani concludes the central role of kiai as religious figures in shaping discourse among NU followers.⁵ The political orientation of NU kiai in Indonesia is characterized by pragmatism and orientation towards the idealism of piety in politics, which is rooted in Islamic ethics.

Specifically, in Indonesian electoral politics⁶, NU was noted as an important component in the 2019 presidential election, when Jokowi was paired with Ma'ruf Amin. Meanwhile, the study by Shofia & Pepinsky also analyzed Ma'ruf Amin's candidacy and its effect on votes in the 2019 presidential election. Using a combination of survey and polling data, both showed that the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin and NU alliance did not increase electoral advantages in NU-dominated areas but eliminated comparative disadvantages in those areas in 2014.⁷

Related to NU's political motivation, Greg Fealy's study indicates that the interest in maintaining the existence of Nahdliyin is the fundamental reason for NU's involvement in political spaces.⁸ This is in line with NU's determination to maintain traditional forms of religious beliefs and practices against attacks by reformists. Furthermore, according to Kacung Marijan, political action for NU

⁴ Alexander R Arifianto, "From Ideological to Political Sectarianism: Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the State in Indonesia," *Religion, State & Society*, 2021; Muhammad Najib et.al. Azca, *Dua Menyemai Damai: Peran Dan Kontribusi Muhammadiyah Dan NU Dalam Perdamaian Dan Demokrasi*, 2020; Gustav Brown, "Civic Islam: Muhammadiyah, NU and the Organisational Logic of Consensus-Making in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* (2019); Robin Bush, *Nahdlatul Ulama & the Struggle for Power within Islam & Politics in Indonesia*. (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009); Robert W Hefner, *Civil Islam: Islam Dan Demokratisasi Di Indonesia* (The Asia Foundation dan ISAI, 2021); Pramono Ubaid Tanthowi, *Islam, Masyarakat Sipil, Dan Demokratisasi: Studi Kasus Muhammadiyah Dan NU Di Indonesia Pasca-Subarto* (JIBPost, 2021).

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 (February 2022).

⁶ Syafiq Hasyim, "Aliran Politics, Political Jihad, and Disappointment: Notes for Muslim Javanese in The Pre- and Post-2019 General Election in Central Java," in *The 2018 And 2019 Indonesian Elections Identity Politics and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Leonard Sebastian and Alex Arifianto (Routledge, 2021).

⁷ Naila Shofia and Tom Pepinsky, "Measuring The 'NU Effect' In Indonesia's Election," <https://www.newmandala.org/measuring-the-nu-effect-in-indonesias-election/>, 2019.

⁸ Greg Fealy, *Ijtihad Politik Ulama: Sejarah NU 1952-1967* (LKIS, 2011).

means, among other things, developing the values of true and democratic independence based on the principles of Pancasila which are primarily aimed at strengthening national consensus.⁹ The history of NU has shown an attitude of flexibility and duality in political activities - including coalitions in the presidential election - in the past. It is necessary to refresh the data on this issue along with the reasons.

In particular and in contrast to several previous studies, this article will analyze the background and motives or driving factors for NU circles to be involved in the 2024 presidential election and analyze how these motives then influence the formation of polarization among NU members in determining their choice in the 2024 Presidential Election. In this regard, this study will examine NU's political role on two issues that have not been studied much before, namely NU's ideological interests and political pragmatism. This article will test whether NU in its long journey in Indonesian politics has consistently maintained the values (ideology) of the *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah* (Aswaja) teachings and other NU traditions or has been reoriented to non-ideological interests that prioritize group or individual pragmatism, or a mixture of the two.

Another novelty of this study is related to the fact that it was only at the 2024 Presidential Election that for the first time a NU figure who is also the General Chairperson of the PKB acted as a vice-presidential candidate. In this presidential election, the involvement of NU circles was seen to be so dominant compared to other mass organizations and political parties. These conditions certainly have an impact on NU politics which increasingly shows various interesting tendencies in NU politics in the contemporary era.

In doing so, this study uses a qualitative method through in-depth interviews with several informants in several regions that are NU bases such as East Java and South Kalimantan, as well as non-NU base regions, namely DKI Jakarta and Yogyakarta as a comparison. The informants in this study are NU circles, both those who fall into the category of structural or cultural circles or those who are directly involved in the Presidential Election, especially as a successful team both at the center and in the regions. Several politicians from various parties with NU backgrounds also became informants for this study, in addition to observers and academics who understand the existence of NU, both in their capacity as part of civil society or political mechanics. Judging from the composition of organizational

⁹ K Marijan, *Quo Vadis NU: Setelah Kembali Ke Khittah 1926* (Erlangga, 1992).

backgrounds, political affiliations and regions, it can be said that the informants in this study represent almost all elements and aspects within the Nahdliyin.

Ideology and Political Identity of NU

NU, established in 1926, is a large mass organization in Indonesia. The birth of NU was a direct result of the traditionalist community's need to protect certain religious beliefs and expressions from the threats posed by Wahhabism in the Middle East.¹⁰ Deliar Noer argues that NU was born as a reaction to the reform movement that advocated a return to the Qur'an, Hadith, and the reopening of the doors of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning).¹¹ NU's religious doctrine is based on the *Ahlusunnah wal Jama'ah*, which literally means 'those who follow the Sunnah.' This doctrine is used to distinguish itself from non-Sunni Islamic groups, such as Shia, as well as other Islamic groups in Indonesia, including modernist groups like Muhammadiyah and traditionalist groups like Ittihadul Ulama Minangkabau and Nahdlatul Wathon in Lombok

To differentiate itself from other groups, NU refers to the teachings of one of the four classical schools of jurisprudence (*mazhab*) in decision-making, though in practice, it often refers to the opinions of Imam Shafi'i, whose views are based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, consensus (*ijma*), and analogical reasoning (*qiyas*). In terms of theology, NU follows the teachings of Imam Abu Hassan Al-Ash'ari and Imam Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi. In the field of Sufism, NU adheres to the teachings of Imam Abul Qasim Al-Junaidi.¹²

The main stronghold of NU is the group of *kiai* (Islamic scholars) who establish pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), which also serve as a base for spreading the *Ahlusunnah wal Jama'ah* doctrine. NU followers are divided into two groups: structural NU and cultural NU. The former, known as NU Jam'iyah, consists of those who have affiliations with NU due to their involvement in and connection to NU's structure. The latter, known as *jama'ah*, are those who are part of the religious tradition and additional practices, such as *qunut* prayer, 23-

¹⁰ Bush, *Nahdlatul Ulama & the Struggle for Power within Islam & Politics in Indonesia*.

¹¹ Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Modern Islam Di Indonesia 1900-1942* (LP3ES, 1982).

¹² Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (LP3ES, 1982).

rakaat tarawih, *talqin mayat* (prayers for the deceased), *tablilan* (communal prayer recitations), and *ziarah qubur* (grave visits).¹³

In pursuing its interests, NU is often accused of being opportunistic in its political behavior. According to Wahid, a former chairman of PBNU and president of Indonesia, this accusation is not accurate. For NU, its guidance is not based on political strategy or Islamic ideology in the abstract sense but rather on its legitimacy in the eyes of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Because of this *fiqh*-based approach, NU often issues decisions that may seem arbitrary at first glance, accommodating the interests of the ruling government. Furthermore, Wahid states that NU's opportunism is often scapegoated as the reason for the inconsistency in the "Islamic struggle" in Indonesia, leading to a *casus bello* of a sharp differences in strategies among Islamic movements.¹⁴

With its *fiqh*-based approach, which refers to the Shafi'i school of thought, NU responds to situations flexibly, accommodatingly, and without being bound by past decisions in formulating its stance. This is in line with the moderate stance of Imam Shafi'i, who developed his teachings according to the surrounding social conditions. By adhering to the Shafi'i school, NU allows for choices that can be adjusted to context and time.¹⁵ Therefore, it can be understood if NU leaders or elites differ in their political stance, actions, and behavior in supporting different presidential candidates in the 2024 elections.

Maintaining *Aswaja* Values as a Basis for Politics

In politics, the NU community is committed to consistently protecting and upholding the interests of NU and the values of Ahlusunnah wal Jama'ah (*Aswaja*). *Aswaja* doctrine governs the lives and activities of Nahdliyin (NU members), not only individually but also in terms of organization and society.¹⁶ For the Nahdliyin, Islam in the *Aswaja* perspective is their primary identity, distinguishing them

¹³ Ali Maksum, *Hujjah Ahli Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* (Yayasan Ali Maksum Pondok Pesantren Krpyak, 2022).

¹⁴ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan: Nilai-Nilai Indonesia Dan Transformasi Kebudayaan* (The Wahid Institute, 2007).

¹⁵ Abdul Gaffar Karim, *Metamorfosis: NU Dan Politisasi Islam Indonesia* (Pustaka Pelajar, 1995).

¹⁶ H A Thoyfoer, *Politik Kebangsaan NU: Tafsir Khitab Nahdlatul Ulama 1926* (Mutiarra, 2010).

from other Islamic sects. This aligns with the belief that upholding Aswaja is one of the main reasons for NU's existence (*raison d'être*).¹⁷ The establishment of NU in the early 20th century was partly aimed at being a religious institution that defends Aswaja values. Such a perspective has become final and universally accepted by any Muslim who considers themselves a part of NU. This point of view has led to the view that NU's politics, in principle, is the politics of Aswaja. Several NU political observers believe that the values that bind the Nahdliyin in political and socio-cultural entities essentially stem from traditional Islamic traditions, particularly the Aswaja doctrine.¹⁸

One of the implementations of Aswaja's characteristics is defending the existence of nationality or Indonesianness. NU's religious values, which are rich with teachings such as moderation (*tawassuth*), balance (*tawazun*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and flexibility, serve as the foundation for NU to adapt and become the forefront in defending and strengthening Indonesian values.¹⁹ As a realization of this, NU has become a religious movement that expands the doctrine of the interrelation between religion and the state within the spirit of nationalism, diversity, and tolerance. Aswaja also serves as the foundation for a moderate and contextually-oriented religious doctrine. With this characteristic of thought, NU is involved in politics to work with other parties or nationalist groups to defend Pancasila values, which causes NU to be identified with organizations willing to cooperate with various groups, including non-Muslim and nationalist groups.

As a consequence, NU becomes the vanguard ready to ward off all forms of Islamization that clash with Indonesian unique values. With its moderate ideology, NU consistently rejects all forms of Islamist movements, including Wahhabism and those with a fundamentalist

¹⁷ Choirul Anam, *Pertumbuhan Dan Perkembangan NU* (Duta Aksara Mulia, 2010); Fealy, *Ijtihad Politik Ulama: Sejarah NU 1952-1967*; Marijan, *Quo Vadis NU: Setelah Kembali Ke Khittah 1926*.

¹⁸ A Effendy Choirie, *Islam-Nasionalisme: UMNO-PKB Studi Komparasi Dan Diplomasi* (Pensil-234, 2008); Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai*; Munawir Abdul Fattah, *Tradisi Orang-Orang NU* (Pustaka Pesantren, 2008).

¹⁹ Ali Masykur Musa, "Politik NU Dan Pragmatisme Parpol," in *Nahdlatul Ulama, Dinamika Ideologi Dan Politik Kenegaraan*, ed. Khamami Zada and A Fawaid Sjadzili (Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2010).

orientation.²⁰ NU's ideological stance makes it impossible for NU to align politically with the "Islamic right-wing." On the contrary, NU empirically finds it easier to align and channel its political aspirations toward nationalist groups. These elements are what ultimately form the political identity of the NU community, including in the 2024 Presidential Election.

The Clash of Ideological Motives within NU in the 2024 Presidential Election

The 2024 Presidential Election shows the importance of maintaining ideological values as the essence of NU's existence. Each candidate pair aimed to demonstrate that they were supported by the NU community, which of course, has a commitment to uphold the ideology and strengthen NU. For supporters of the Anies-Muhaimin (AMIN) pair, their presence aligns with the wishes of influential senior NU scholars. Several NU figures have indeed expressed their support for this pair, including former PBNU Chairman Said Agil Siradj, descendants of As'ad Syamsul Arifin (from Situbondo), and descendants of Habaib from several Nahdliyin strongholds. Above all, the presence of Muhaimin Iskandar (Cak Imin) gives this pair Aswaja legitimacy, as he is a direct descendant of NU's founder. Cak Imin's presence is seen as a guarantee that the AMIN pair will fight for Aswaja values. Moreover, the support from PKB (National Awakening Party) is also seen as ideological support, as PKB is the only party claimed to have been founded by PBNU and consistently declares itself a defender of Aswaja and a channel for NU's aspirations.

Meanwhile, the Prabowo-Gibran pair also received ideological legitimacy as a pair that will defend Aswaja interests. Like the other pairs, this is symbolically demonstrated by the presence of NU figures in the success team of this pair. The most significant ideological justification is the tendency of the PNBU administrators, who hold the highest legitimacy within the Aswaja community, to support this pair. The attitude of the PBNU community, which is close to and consistently expresses sympathy for the Prabowo-Gibran pair, shows a form of support. Additionally, Prabowo has a good relationship with

²⁰ Rizky Alif Alvian and Irfan Ardhani, "The Politics of Moderate Islam in Indonesia: Between International Pressure and Domestic Contestations," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, no. 1 (February 2023): 19–57.

NU scholars and figures, which began when he was still active in the military.

That close relationship has continued to build until today, especially in several NU strongholds outside Java, leading to the perception that Prabowo is still regarded as a figure who fights for the aspirations of Muslims. This ideological view is particularly strong in South Kalimantan, one of NU's strongholds, where Prabowo's positive image remains strong. This relationship is also reflected at the party level, where many Gerindra members and cadres are also NU members and administrators. This situation creates a solid and accommodating relationship between NU and Gerindra in several regions in Indonesia. The presence of party figures, if they are elected, affiliated with NU seems to guarantee or ensure that Aswaja values will continue to be protected.

For the Ganjar-Mahfud pair, the long-established relationship between PDIP (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) and NU seems to guarantee that this pair will understand the aspirations and Aswaja values upheld by NU. The relationship between PDIP and the Nahdliyin community began during the Reform Era when Megawati Soekarnoputri chose Hasyim Muzadi as her vice-presidential candidate. This relationship has been relatively maintained in subsequent periods, so there are no significant obstacles between the two groups. The Aswaja values, rich in respect for national political contexts and national values, serve as an ideological bond that makes political connections easy to establish.

The ideological closeness between the Sukarnoist nationalists (PDIP) and Aswaja (NU) becomes more evident with the involvement of Yenny Wahid and the Gus Durian family. The Gus Durian community feels a strong compatibility with this pair, which carries the theme of reform. Additionally, the presence of Mahfud as the vice-presidential candidate adds a unique NU flavor. Although he is better known as a professional figure in law, Mahfud is culturally a loyal NU figure. His presence is noteworthy, especially as a representative of the NU community in the Madura region, a stronghold of NU with influence and followers in other parts of Indonesia.

The other interesting things about maintaining Aswaja is that candidate pairs also received political attacks from the NU community. The attack on the Anies-Muhaimin pair is mainly due to the presence of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) as one of the main supporting

parties. PKS is often perceived by many Nahdliyin as a representative of Wahhabism or the "Islamic Right" in Indonesia.²¹ Although this accusation is denied by the Anies-Muhaimin pair and PKS itself, the fear of the "Islamic Right" easily spreads in NU strongholds, leading to covert resistance among the NU community towards the AMIN pair.

The Prabowo-Gibran pair also faced attacks related to protecting Aswaja values. Some NU members, who adhere to the political stance of NU's senior scholars and are committed to upholding "*amar ma'ruf nabi munkar*" (enjoining good and forbidding wrong), viewed the Prabowo-Gibran pair critically, perceiving them as too pragmatic and permissive towards abuses of power. For this group, Prabowo has a problematic past, especially regarding serious human rights violations. This is why the Gus Durian community tended to prefer the Ganjar-Mahfud pair over Prabowo.

As for the Ganjar-Mahfud pair, the fundamental issue in terms of protecting Aswaja values is that neither of them is truly seen as representing the interests of Aswaja defenders. This can be understood for Ganjar, who is politically aligned with secular nationalist groups, particularly PDIP. Another interesting point is that although Mahfud comes from a NU cultural background, some NU members do not view him as someone who fully represents NU. Mahfud is seen as lacking structural and cultural legitimacy in the eyes of most NU members. As a result, the connection between NU and Mahfud is not very deep, making the commitment to protecting Aswaja values seem weak to some NU members. This perception of Mahfud's "non-purity" as a NU figure became problematic in garnering support in NU strongholds.

Non-Ideological Motives Behind NU's Involvement in the 2024 Presidential Election

The involvement of the Nahdliyin community in supporting the 2024 Presidential Election coalitions is not only driven by ideological reasons to protect and defend Aswaja values but also by several non-ideological motives that tend to be more pragmatic. NU's involvement in the 2024 Presidential Election coalitions can be categorized into

²¹ Ibnu Burdah, "GROWING EXCLUSION OF THE MAJORITY: The 'Triumph of Wahhabism' and Its Threat to Indonesian Islam in the Democratic Society," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 17, no. 1 (2023).

three main motives: (1) proximity to the party or candidate, (2) patronage, and (3) economic incentives and access to power.

The *first motive*, proximity, refers to the personal connection between Nahdliyin members and a specific candidate or political party. One form of this proximity is seen in the dual identity of NU members who simultaneously serve as functionaries in a political party. This dual identity naturally leads them to support the candidate supported by the political party they are part of.²² Specifically, for NU members supporting AMIN, their personal connection with Muhaimin Iskandar (Gus Imin) is a dominant factor in their support.²³ They openly state that their support is purely for Gus Imin, even though he is only the vice-presidential candidate. However, since the Presidential Election involves choosing a pair, they automatically support Anies Baswedan as the presidential candidate.²⁴ Additionally, the strong belief among some NU members that PKB politically represents NU also influences their decision to support AMIN. For those who hold this view, alignment with PKB's values, which originated from NU, is the main reason for their support of AMIN.²⁵

For NU members supporting the Prabowo-Gibran pair, the cultural closeness between some NU scholars (*kiai*) and Prabowo Subianto is a significant factor. Although institutionally, the relationship between PBNU and Prabowo is not clearly defined²⁶, at the local level, particularly in East Java, which is a cultural center for NU, Prabowo has maintained a close relationship with NU scholars since he served as military officer. Since Prabowo began running for president in 2014, this relationship has been nurtured through interactions with NU figures, often in a context that is not always political.²⁷ As a result, since his candidacy in the 2014 Presidential

²² AF, "Interview with AF, Nasdem Political Party Elite, East Java, May 2024," February 2024; AS, "Interview with AS, Gerindra Political Party Elite, East Java, May 2024," February 2024; BN, "Interview with BN, NU Circle, South Kalimantan, May 2024," February 2024; SY, "Interview with SY, NU Circle, South Kalimantan, May 2024," February 2024.

²³ GS, "Interview with GS, NU Circle, Jakarta, April 2024," February 2024; SY, "Interview with SY, NU Circle, South Kalimantan, May 2024."

²⁴ SH, "Interview with SH, NU Circle, Jakarta, April 2024," February 2024; SY, "Interview with SY, NU Circle, South Kalimantan, May 2024."

²⁵ GS, "Interview with GS, NU Circle, Jakarta, April 2024."

²⁶ SH, "Interview with SH, NU Circle, Jakarta, April 2024."

²⁷ Ibid.

Election, Prabowo has garnered significant support from NU scholars in East Java. Likewise, in the 2024 Presidential Election, almost all major pesantren in East Java, such as Langitan, Lirboyo, Genggong, Ploso, Sidogiri, Sukorejo, Banyuanyar, Tebuireng, Shaikhuna, and others, are part of the Prabowo-Gibran campaign team.²⁸

For NU members supporting the Ganjar-Mahfud pair, the context of proximity here is the close relationship between NU and PDIP, which has been established not only in electoral coalitions but also in government coalitions. In the context of the Presidential Election, NU and PDIP have collaborated in political alliances four times, each resulting in victory. This collaboration began when Megawati Soekarnoputri served as vice president under President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and continued in the 2019 election with the pairing of Joko Widodo and Kiai Ma'ruf Amin. Furthermore, at the grassroots level, NU and PDIP often overlap.²⁹

The second motive behind NU's support in the 2024 Presidential Election coalitions is patronage. This motive relates to how a figure who serves as a community patron can influence the majority of NU members to support a particular candidate in the election. At least three main figures can be categorized as patrons in this context. The first are those who come from *NU's structural leadership*, both at the national and local levels. Figures like Yahya Cholil Staquf (Gus Yahya) and Kiai Said Aqil Siraj, who are NU structural elites, have significant influence in mobilizing support, with Gus Yahya supporting the Prabowo-Gibran pair and Kiai Said supporting AMIN.³⁰ Their support indirectly influences their followers to align their political preferences with those of their patron.³¹

The second type of patron is found at the *local level and does not always come from NU's structural leadership*. These local patrons operate in different contexts across various regions. For example, in Madura, where NU bases are no longer aligned with PKB, the patrons are often independent figures. There are two main types of influential figures in Madura's political landscape: Kyai and Blater (strongmen in Madura, both physically and spiritually, often known for their invulnerability

²⁸ AF, "Interview with AF, Nasdem Political Party Elite, East Java, May 2024"; SH, "Interview with SH, NU Circle, Jakarta, April 2024."

²⁹ GS, "Interview with GS, NU Circle, Jakarta, April 2024."

³⁰ BN, "Interview with BN, NU Circle, South Kalimantan, May 2024."

³¹ Ibid.

and martial skills). Both Kyai and Blater inherit different religious and political traditions. Their political behavior tends to be characterized by patron-client relationships and oligarchic tendencies.

Given this tendency, both Kyai and Blater have significant influence in directing their followers' support to a particular candidate in the election. Similarly, in South Kalimantan, the concept of patronage does not refer to NU's structural leadership. Although South Kalimantan has a strong cultural NU presence, in practice, NU's identity is often set aside in political matters, even by local Kiai who often do not affiliate themselves with NU symbolically.³² Therefore, in South Kalimantan, the patronage motive is more influenced by local bossism³³ figures who play a crucial role in shaping public preferences.

The third patron figure is *Joko Widodo*. There is no denying that Joko Widodo's role in the 2024 Presidential Election was central. This phenomenon can be referred to as the "Jokowi Effect". He has even managed to shift NU support that initially leaned towards the Ganjar-Mahfud pair to the Prabowo-Gibran pair. This shift is due to the dynamics of Joko Widodo's relationship with PDIP. Initially, their relationship was smooth, especially since the public recognized that Joko Widodo's support often correlated with a candidate's potential victory. With the ideal of supporting a potential winner, it was natural for NU members to lean towards Ganjar-Mahfud pair, supported by PDIP (SH, 2024). However, during the campaign, Joko Widodo shifted his support to Prabowo-Gibran pair by positioning his son as Prabowo's running mate. Consequently, this caused a change in NU support, which initially favored Ganjar-Mahfud pair but later shifted to Prabowo-Gibran pair.

The third motive is economic incentives and access to power. This motive tends to be more pragmatic, aimed at improving the social conditions of NU members and ensuring the supremacy of NU culture. According to GS, the NU community can be categorized into three groups: (1) Structural and elite members, (2) Mid-level and local elites, and (3) Grassroots NU members.³⁴ Each group has its own considerations when supporting a political force. The first group tends to emphasize ideological motives, while the lower the level, the more

³² Ibid.

³³ John T Sidel, *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines* (Stanford University Press, East-West Center Series on Contemporary Issues in Asia and the Pacific, 1999).

³⁴ GS, "Interview with GS, NU Circle, Jakarta, April 2024."

economic motives dominate their support for a political force. Approximately 80% of grassroots NU members are motivated by economic reasons when supporting a candidate. This is partly due to the economic conditions of grassroots NU members, which are still unstable.³⁵

Regarding the motive of gaining access to power, the goal is to maintain the sustainability of the NU organization. NU's support for a particular political force is driven by the desire to fight for the welfare of the Muslim community. NU members will always try to align themselves with whoever has the greatest chance of winning. This is why many NU members leaned towards the Prabowo-Gibran pair, based on the political calculation that this pair had a higher potential to win compared to the others. Therefore, by aligning with the elected government, NU hopes that its organization's continuity and various interests can be accommodated by the government.³⁶

Partial Stance of PBNU and the Polarization in the 2024 Presidential Election

Although NU declared its position, in practice, NU members or figures became involved in the contestation of the three presidential candidate pairs as part of their campaign teams.³⁷ PBNU's leadership, such as its Secretary-General Saifullah Yusuf, also faced questions regarding their stance, with indications that they were leaning towards supporting a particular candidate. He was accused of directing NU members not to vote for a particular pair and stating that PBNU has its own criteria for selecting a presidential candidate.³⁸

Internal conflicts over political support for presidential candidates arised among political elites with Nahdliyin backgrounds, as they competed for the votes of NU members. For example, there was tension between Minister Yaqut Cholil Qoumas and PKB Chairman Muhaimin Iskandar. Yaqut once expressed his opinion that voters

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ BN, "Interview with BN, NU Circle, South Kalimantan, May 2024."

³⁷ Fajar Yusuf Rasdianto, "Gerilya Sesepuh NU Menangkan Prabowo-Gibran," <https://news.detik.com/berita/detail/spotlight/20240110/Gerilya-Sesepuh-NU-Menangkan-Prabowo-Gibran/> (February 2024).

³⁸ Syafiq Hasyim, "Questioning the Neutrality of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia's 2024 Election," <https://Fulcrum.Sg/Questioning-the-Neutrality-of-Nahdlatul-Ulama-in-Indonesias-2024-Election/>, February 2024.

should not choose leaders who are merely good speakers and use religion for political purposes. This statement triggered a response from Muhaimin's camp, who threatened to “discipline him”.³⁹ This conflict was due to Yaqut and Muhaimin being in different political camps. Yaqut, a PKB cadre, was perceived to favor the Prabowo-Gibran pair over supporting Muhaimin.⁴⁰

Despite reaffirming its neutral stance, several indications of PBNU's bias towards a particular candidate surfaced, leading to internal consolidation. PBNU was perceived to be directing its support towards the Prabowo-Gibran pair in the 2024 Presidential Election. For instance, a report by Koran Tempo mentioned indications of this bias in a closed meeting with regional executives at Hotel Bumi Surabaya on January 7, 2024.⁴¹ Additionally, a meeting with NU West Java regional executives at Pondok Pesantren Al Muhajirin 3 in Purwakarta on January 11, 2024, reportedly involved discussions on consolidating support for Prabowo-Gibran. These meetings were said to not only direct support but also discuss the reasons for choosing the Prabowo-Gibran pair over Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD.⁴²

PBNU Chairman Yahya Cholil Staquf has also ever stated that NU would never distance itself from Jokowi. Yahya explained how Jokowi's direct involvement with PBNU, including the provision of educational infrastructure projects for NU, reinforced this stance.⁴³ Saifullah Yusuf also expressed a preference for a one-round

³⁹ BBC, “Konflik Terbuka Yaqut Cholil Dan Cak Imin, Apa Motif Politik Di Balikinya Dan Mengapa PBNU Tak Dukung PKB?,” <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/artides/cxx6p247g66o> (February 2023); Hendrik Khoiril Muhid, “Menjelang Pemilu 2024: Fakta-Fakta Gesekan Cak Imin Dengan Gus Yaqut,” <https://pemilu.tempo.co/read/1780157/menjelang-pemilu-2024-fakta-fakta-gesekan-cak-imin-dengan-gus-yaqut> (February 2023).

⁴⁰ Hasyim, “Questioning the Neutrality of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia’s 2024 Election.”

⁴¹ Koran Tempo, “NU Dalam Ancaman Kubangan Politik Praktis,” <https://koran.tempo.co/read/editorial/486837/nu-dan-ancaman-politik-praktis> (February 2024).

⁴² Andi Adam; Faturahman and Imam Hamdi, “Ketika PBNU Arahkan Muslimat Ke Prabowo,” <https://Koran.Tempo.Co/Read/Nasional/486838/Cerita-Pbnu-Arahkan-Muslimat-Ke-Prabowo>, February 2024.

⁴³ Kurniawan Fadilah, “Gus Yahya: NU Tak Akan Pernah Jauh-Jauh Dari Jokowi,” <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-6936826/gus-yahya-nu-tak-akan-pernah-jauh-jauh-dari-jokowi> (February 2023).

presidential election, which could be interpreted as support for the Prabowo-Gibran pair, as a one-round election was considered more cost-effective.⁴⁴ The consolidation of support was also evident within NU's autonomous organizations, such as Muslimat NU. The celebration of Muslimat NU's anniversary at Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta on January 20, 2024, was suspected of being a form of mobilization for the Prabowo-Gibran support. Muslimat NU is led by Khofifah Indar Parawansa, who joined the Prabowo-Gibran campaign team.⁴⁵

In response to concerns about neutrality, NU temporarily suspended several executive board members involved in the 2024 election campaign. Those suspended were prohibited from using NU's name, symbols, and assets in any political activities.⁴⁶ The suspension remained in effect until the election process was completed. Among the issues related to NU's leadership changes, the dismissal of KH. Marzuki Mustamar as Chairman of NU East Java drew attention. According to Yahya, Marzuki's dismissal was not politically motivated but was due to internal organizational reasons within NU.⁴⁷ However, some consider the dismissal to be politically charged, as it occurred during the election campaign and Marzuki was seen as leaning towards the Anies-Muhaimin pair.⁴⁸

Internal conflicts or polarization over political choices within NU occurred because Nahdliyin is not a politically homogeneous group. NU members' political support and aspirations are often divided among various parties and presidential candidates.⁴⁹ As a social and

⁴⁴ Hasyim, "Questioning the Neutrality of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia's 2024 Election"; Febrianto Adi Saputro, "Sekjen PBNU Dukung Pilpres 2024 Satu Putaran: Bisa Hemat Anggaran," https://pemilukita.republika.co.id/berita/s84441484/sekjen-pbnu-dukung-pilpres-2024-satu-putaran-bisa-hemat-anggaran#google_vignette (February 2024).

⁴⁵ Faturahman and Hamdi, "Ketika PBNU Arahkan Muslimat Ke Prabowo."

⁴⁶ Hidayat; Salam and Nikolaus Harbowo, "PBNU Nonaktifkan 63 Jajaran Pengurus Yang Terlibat Pemilu 2024," <https://www.kompas.id/baca/polbuk/2024/01/23/pbnu-nonaktifkan-63-jajaran-pengurus-terlibat-pemilu-2024> (February 2024).

⁴⁷ Runik Sri Astuti, "Lantik Penjabat Ketua PWNU Jatim, Gus Yahya: Tak Terkait Pilpres 2024," <https://www.kompas.id/baca/polbuk/2024/01/15/resmi-lantik-penjabat-ketua-pwnu-jatim-gus-yahya-tegaskan-tak-bernuansa-politik-pilpres-2024> (February 2024).

⁴⁸ Ananda Bintang Purwaramdhona, "PBNU Copot Ketua PWNU Jatim KH Marzuki Mustamar, Alasan Politis?," <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1816479/pbnu-copot-ketua-pwnu-jatim-kh-marzuki-mustamar-alasan-politis> (February 2024).

⁴⁹ Tempo, "Seberapa Signifikan Suara Nahdlatul Ulama," <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/opini/169866/suara-nahdlatul-ulama> (February 2023).

religious organization, NU does not have the authority to issue political instructions endorsing a particular political force. NU's political decisions are decentralized, leaving the choice to its members. In this sense, NU resembles a "confederation".⁵⁰ This decentralization results in internal fragmentation within NU when it comes to political stances. NU's complex organizational structure, which is highly decentralized and involves local kyai leadership with charismatic authority, leads to diverse political views and orientations.⁵¹

The political stance and position of NU's leadership and elites present challenges for NU as a social and religious organization moving forward. Among these challenges is understanding the involvement of civil society organizations with political parties, the competition for state resources, and concerns about government cooptation of NU to further its agenda.⁵² NU's involvement in practical politics raises questions about its role as a non-partisan social and religious institution, as it risks eroding public trust in a religious institution that is supposed to maintain moral authority without favoritism.⁵³

Conclusion

The existence of NU in political life appears to be a fixed law. This means that NU will always be involved in Indonesian politics. The various elements of NU (whether structural or cultural, in Java or outside Java, with nationalist or religious tendencies) have a mutual agreement not to distance themselves from political life. This, in turn, makes NU's presence in Indonesian politics a constant, with its various interests shaping political life. NU members feel it is essential to be involved in politics, driven by a combination of ideological and pragmatic interests. The analysis above demonstrates why this happens and how these interests manifested.

⁵⁰ M, "Interview with M, NU Circle, Yogyakarta, July 2024," February 2024.

⁵¹ Luthfi Makhasin, "Islamic Organisation and Electoral Politics: Nahdlatul Ulama and Islamic Mobilisation in an Indonesian Local Election," *PCD Journal* 5, no. 2 (2017).

⁵² Greg Fealy, "Nahdlatul Ulama and the Politics Trap," <https://www.Neumandala.Org/Nahdlatul-Ulama-Politics-Trap/>, February 2018.

⁵³ Virдика Rizky Utama, "Is Indonesia's Largest Islamic Organization Compromising Its Political Neutrality?," <https://thediplomat.com/2024/01/is-indonesias-largest-islamic-organization-compromising-its-political-neutrality/> (February 2024).

These diverse interests have ultimately led to polarization within NU. This has been happening for a long time, preventing NU from becoming a monolithic political force. In reality, NU politics is continuously fragmented and polarized. This shows that sharing the same ideology does not automatically lead to the same political stance and allegiance. NU members, who all believe in and practice Aswaja principles, have never formed a unified political force. On the other hand, this also proves that non-ideological motives play a significant role in NU members' political involvement. These non-ideological motives seem to take priority and ultimately become a source of polarization. This is further reinforced by PBNU's non-neutral stance, which provokes responses from NU members with different political views and motives. This article ultimately demonstrates the consistency of NU's involvement in politics up to the contemporary era, suggesting that NU will continue to be involved in politics in the future, driven by various motives. []

References

- Achfandhy, Mochammad Irfan, Wawan Trans Pujianto, Wiwi Dwi Daniyarti, and Ririn Jamiah. "The Pre-Presidential Election 2024: Uncovering the Consistency of Religious Politicization." *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 24, no. 1 (2024).
- AF. "Interview with AF, Nasdem Political Party Elite, East Java, May 2024," February 2024.
- Alvian, Rizky Alif, and Irfan Ardhani. "The Politics of Moderate Islam in Indonesia: Between International Pressure and Domestic Contestations." *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, no. 1 (February 2023): 19–57.
- Anam, Choirul. *Pertumbuhan Dan Perkembangan NU*. Duta Aksara Mulia, 2010.
- Arifianto, Alexander R. "From Ideological to Political Sectarianism: Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the State in Indonesia." *Religion, State & Society*, 2021.
- AS. "Interview with AS, Gerindra Political Party Elite, East Java, May 2024," February 2024.

- Astuti, Runik Sri. "Lantik Penjabat Ketua PWNU Jatim, Gus Yahya: Tak Terkait Pilpres 2024." <https://www.kompas.id/baca/polbuka/2024/01/15/resmi-lantik-penjabat-ketua-pwnu-jatim-gus-yahya-tegaskan-tak-bernuansa-politik-pilpres-2024> (February 2024).
- BBC. "Konflik Terbuka Yaqut Cholil Dan Cak Imin, Apa Motif Politik Di Balikny Dan Mengapa PBNU Tak Dukung PKB?" <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/cxx6p247g660> (February 2023).
- BN. "Interview with BN, NU Circle, South Kalimantan, May 2024," February 2024.
- Brown, Gustav. "Civic Islam: Muhammadiyah, NU and the Organisational Logic of Consensus-Making in Indonesia." *Asian Studies Review* (2019).
- Burdah, Ibnu. "GROWING EXCLUSION OF THE MAJORITY: The 'Triumph of Wahhabism' and Its Threat to Indonesian Islam in the Democratic Society." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 17, no. 1 (2023).
- Bush, Robin. *Nadblatul Ulama & the Struggle for Power within Islam & Politics in Indonesia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009.
- Choirie, A Effendy. *Islam-Nasionalisme: UMNO-PKB Studi Komparasi Dan Diplomasi*. Pensil-234, 2008.
- Dhofier, Zamakhsyari. *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai*. LP3ES, 1982.
- et.all. Azca, Muhammad Najib. *Dua Menyemai Damai: Peran Dan Kontribusi Muhammadiyah Dan NU Dalam Perdamaian Dan Demokrasi*, 2020.
- Fadilah, Kurniawan. "Gus Yahya: NU Tak Akan Pernah Jauh-Jauh Dari Jokowi." <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-6936826/gus-yahya-nu-tak-akan-pernah-jauh-jauh-dari-jokowi> (February 2023).
- Fattah, Munawir Abdul. *Tradisi Orang-Orang NU*. Pustaka Pesantren, 2008.
- Faturahman, Andi Adam, and Imam Hamdi. "Ketika PBNU Arahkan Muslimat Ke Prabowo." <https://Koran.Tempo.Co/Read/>

Nasional/486838/Cerita-Pbnu-Arabkan-Muslimat-Ke-Prabowo,
February 2024.

- Fealy, Greg. *Ijtihad Politik Ulama: Sejarah NU 1952-1967*. LKIS, 2011.
- . “Nahdlatul Ulama and the Politics Trap.” <https://www.newmandala.org/nabdlatul-ulama-politics-trap/>, February 2018.
- GS. “Interview with GS, NU Circle, Jakarta, April 2024,” February 2024.
- Hasyim, Syafiq. “Aliran Politics, Political Jihad, and Disappointment: Notes for Muslim Javanese in The Pre- and Post-2019 General Election in Central Java.” In *The 2018 And 2019 Indonesian Elections Identity Politics and Regional Perspectives*, edited by Leonard Sebastian and Alex Arifianto. Routledge, 2021.
- . “Questioning the Neutrality of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia’s 2024 Election.” <https://fulcrum.sg/questioning-the-neutrality-of-nahdlatul-ulama-in-indonesias-2024-election/>, February 2024.
- Hefner, Robert W. *Civil Islam: Islam Dan Demokratisasi Di Indonesia*. The Asia Foundation dan ISAI, 2021.
- Karim, Abdul Gaffar. *Metamorfosis: NU Dan Politisasi Islam Indonesia*. Pustaka Pelajar, 1995.
- M. “Interview with M, NU Circle, Yogyakarta, July 2024,” February 2024.
- Makhasin, Luthfi. “Islamic Organisation and Electoral Politics: Nahdlatul Ulama and Islamic Mobilisation in an Indonesian Local Election.” *PCD Journal* 5, no. 2 (2017).
- Maksum, Ali. *Hujjah Abli Sunnah Wal Jama’ab*. Yayasan Ali Maksum Pondok Pesantren Krapyak, 2022.
- Marijan, K. *Quo Vadis NU: Setelah Kembali Ke Khittab 1926*. Erlangga, 1992.
- Muhid, Hendrik Khoirul. “Menjelang Pemilu 2024: Fakta-Fakta Gesekan Cak Imin Dengan Gus Yaqut.” <https://pemilu.tempo.co/read/1780157/menjelang-pemilu-2024-fakta-fakta-gesekan-cak-imin-dengan-gus-yaqut> (February 2023).

- Musa, Ali Masykur. "Politik NU Dan Pragmatisme Parpol." In *Nabdlatul Ulama, Dinamika Ideologi Dan Politik Kenegaraan*, edited by Khamami Zada and A Fawaid Sjadzili. Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2010.
- Noer, Deliar. *Gerakan Modern Islam Di Indonesia 1900-1942*. LP3ES, 1982.
- Purwaramdhona, Ananda Bintang. "PBNU Copot Ketua PWNU Jatim KH Marzuki Mustamar, Alasan Politis?" <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1816479/pbnu-copot-ketua-pwnu-jatim-kh-marzuki-mustamar-alasan-politis> (February 2024).
- Rasdianto, Fajar Yusuf. "Gerilya Sesebuah NU Menangkan Prabowo-Gibran." <https://news.detik.com/x/detail/spotlight/20240110/Gerilya-Sesebuah-NU-Menangkan-Prabowo-Gibran/> (February 2024).
- Salam, Hidayat, and Nikolaus Harbowo. "PBNU Nonaktifkan 63 Jajaran Pengurus Yang Terlibat Pemilu 2024." <https://www.kompas.id/baca/polbuk/2024/01/23/pbnu-nonaktifkan-63-jajaran-pengurus-terlibat-pemilu-2024> (February 2024).
- Saputro, Febrianto Adi. "Sekjen PBNU Dukung Pilpres 2024 Satu Putaran: Bisa Hemat Anggaran." https://pemilukita.republika.co.id/berita/s8444t484/sekjen-pbnu-dukung-pilpres-2024-satu-putaran-bisa-hemat-anggaran#google_vignette (February 2024).
- SH. "Interview with SH, NU Circle, Jakarta, April 2024," February 2024.
- Shofia, Naila, and Tom Pepinsky. "Measuring The 'NU Effect' In Indonesia's Election." <https://www.Newmandala.Org/Measuring-The-Nu-Effect-In-Indonesias-Election>, 2019.
- Sidel, John T. *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*. Stanford University Press, East-West Center Series on Contemporary Issues in Asia and the Pacific, 1999.
- SY. "Interview with SY, NU Circle, South Kalimantan, May 2024," February 2024.

- Tanthowi, Pramono Ubaid. *Islam, Masyarakat Sipil, Dan Demokratisasi: Studi Kasus Muhammadiyah Dan NU Di Indonesia Pasca-Subarto*. JIBPost, 2021.
- Tempo. “Seberapa Signifikan Suara Nahdlatul Ulama.” <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/opini/169866/suara-nahdlatul-ulama> (February 2023).
- Tempo, Koran. “NU Dalam Ancaman Kubangan Politik Praktis.” <https://koran.tempo.co/read/editorial/486837/nu-dan-ancaman-politik-praktis> (February 2024).
- Thoyfoer, H A. *Politik Kebangsaan NU: Tafsir Khitab Nahdlatul Ulama 1926*. Mutiara, 2010.
- Uhlin, Anders. *Oposisi Berserak: Arus Deras Demokratisasi Gelombang Ketiga Di Indonesia*. Mizan, 1998.
- Utama, Virdika Rizky. “Is Indonesia’s Largest Islamic Organization Compromising Its Political Neutrality?” <https://thediplomat.com/2024/01/is-indonesias-largest-islamic-organization-compromising-its-political-neutrality/> (February 2024).
- Wahid, Abdurrahman. *Islam Kosmopolitan: Nilai-Nilai Indonesia Dan Transformasi Kebudayaan*. The Wahid Institute, 2007.
- Wahyu, Yohan. “Membaca Arah Pilihan Politik Warga NU Di Pemilu 2024.” https://www.kompas.id/baca/riset/2023/05/31/membaca-arab-pilihan-politik-warga-nu-di-pemilu-2024?status=sukses_login&login=1722320918774&open_from=header_button&loc=header_button (February 2023).
- Yani, Muhammad Turhan, Choirul Mahfud, S A P Rangga Sa’adillah, Mohammad Reevany Bustami, Maskuri, and Ahmad Taufiq. “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 (February 2022).