

The Cipete Vs Situbondo Feud (1983-1984): Study of *Khittah* NU Return and Its Impact on PBNU Political Policy

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Abstract

This article aims to look at the history of the feud between the Cipete camp, namely the KH Idham Chalid camp and supported by NU politician cadres with the Situbondo camp supported by non-political scholars in the context of searching for NU identity (*Khittah* NU) and its implications for PBNU's political policies during the leadership of Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf, both national politics and practical politics in the 2024 elections. This article is a library research study with historical methodology, namely heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The research found that the conflict between the Situbondo camp and the Cipete camp was a tug-of-war over the search for NU's identity, which was allegedly pushed very far into the realm of practical politics and neglected other fields. To settle the dispute, a reconciliation was made between the two camps in 1984, and both continued the NU congress in Situbondo, which gave birth to a new PBNU leadership, a return to the basic values of NU as a social organisation, withdrawing from various aspects of practical politics, and accepting the single principle of Pancasila. When viewed in the context of 2024, the PBNU led by Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf (period 2022 to 2027) is guided by the *Khittah* NU and stops all practical political activities, especially in the face of the 2024 elections. PBNU, under Gus Yahya's leadership, asserted its neutrality and independence as a form of NU's *Khittah* in all kinds of practical politics. The issue of PBNU's alignment with one of the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidate pairs in the 2024 elections was dismissed and denied by PBNU. PBNU carries out national politics by ensuring the safety of Indonesia's religion, nation, and state, especially after the 2024 elections.

Keywords: *Cipete; Situbondo; NU identity; PBNU Politics; Yahya Cholil Staquf*

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk melihat sejarah perseteruan antara kubu Cipete yaitu kubu KH Idham Chalid dan didukung oleh kader politisi NU dengan kubu Situbondo yang didukung para ulama non-politis dalam rangka pencarian identitas NU (*Khittah* NU) serta implikasinya terhadap kebijakan politik PBNU masa kepemimpinan Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf baik politik kebangsaan maupun politik praktis dalam pemilu tahun 2024. Artikel ini merupakan penelitian

pustaka dengan metodologi *historis* yaitu *heuristik, kritik, interpretasi* dan *historiografi*. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa konflik antara kubu Situbondo dan kubu Cipete merupakan tarik ulur tentang pencarian identitas NU, yang disinyalir didorong sangat jauh ke ranah politik praktis dan mengabaikan bidang lain. Untuk menyudahi perselisihan tersebut, maka dilakukan rekonsiliasi antara kedua kubu tersebut pada tahun 1984, dan keduanya meneruskan muktamar NU di Situbondo, yang mana melahirkan kepemimpinan PBNU yang baru, kembalinya nilai-nilai dasar NU sebagai organisasi sosial, menarik diri dari berbagai aspek politik praktis, dan menerima asas tunggal Pancasila. Apabila dilihat pada konteks tahun 2024, PBNU dipimpin oleh Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf (periode 2022 hingga 2027) berpedoman pada *Khittah* NU dan menghentikan segala aktivitas politik praktis, terutama dalam menghadapi Pemilu 2024. PBNU dibawah pimpinna Gus Yahya menegaskan netralitas dan independensinya sebagai bentuk *Khittah* NU kepada segala macam politik praktis. Adapun isu mengenai keberpihakan PBNU kepada salah satu pasangan calon Presiden dan Wakil Presiden pada Pemilu tahun 2024 ditepis dan dibantah oleh PBNU. PBNU menjalankan politik kebangsaan dengan memastikan keselamatan agama, bangsa dan negara Indonesia khususnya pasca Pemilu tahun 2024.

Kata Kunci: *Cipete; Situbondo; Identitas NU; Politik PBNU; Yahya Cholil Staquf*

INTRODUCTION

Nahdlatul Ulama's journey to *Khittah* went through phenomenal events. K.H. Idham Chalid led the *tanfidziyyāh* PBNU for 28 years, from 1956 to 1984. K.H. Idham Chalid's leadership drew Nahdlatul Ulama into the world of practical politics, and NU experienced becoming an Islamic party. This gave rise to pros and cons in subsequent developments, some positively welcomed NU's entry into the world of politics, but some thought that NU was taking too much care of political affairs, while the socio-religious field was being left behind. The National Conference in Kaliurang accepted this from 30 August to 2 September 1981, in which K.H. Ali Maksum was elected to replace Kiai Bisri Sjansuri as Rais 'Amm. K.H. Idham Chalid wanted K.H. Musaddad to be his supporter as Rais Amm, but he was not selected. This sign is considered to be the beginning of the defeat of KH Idham Chalid's camp (Rahmadi et al., 2013).

The conflict between NU and Indonesian Muslims in the PPP group regarding the distribution of seats and the preparation of a list of legislative candidates, both of which were previously carried out in an authoritarian manner by the PPP Chairman at that time, Naro, also contributed to the trigger. The conflict arose because, apart from limiting the number of NU seats, this reduction also impacted the serial numbers of central and regional NU figures. For example, KH

Saifuddin Zuhri, who at that time was Rais Amm III PB Syuriah NU, received serial number 20, which was originally serial number 1, then H.M Zamroni, who at that time held the position of Deputy Secretary General of PBNU became number 28 which was previously number 5, then from number 1 becomes number 31, namely K.H. Yusuf Hasyim who serves as Chairman I of PBNU, while Drs. HA. Chalik Ali served as treasurer from number 7 to number 43 (Rahmadi et al., 2013).

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K.H. Idham Chalid, General Chair of PPP and General Chair of PBNU, remained silent regarding the conflict that occurred within PPP. So many NU political actors have criticized K.H. Idham Chalid apart from Naro. Within NU, two factions are divided and clashing. The first group consisted of NU figures such as Amin Iskandar, Chalid Mawardi, K.H. Ali Maksum, and Mahbub Djunaidi, who all supported NU remaining in PPP. The second group, consisting of Chalik Ali, Abdurrahman Wahid, Yusuf Hasyim, K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri, and Imron Rosyadi, wants NU to leave PPP. This second group is dissatisfied with the unilateral reduction in seats and the lowering of serial numbers (Machfoedz, 1982).

Through the LPU or the Minister of Home Affairs, the government chose to support the PPP led by Naro, so even though K.H. Idham Chalid had signed the statement letter, the situation could not be changed. As a result, many NU political

cadres felt disappointed. K.H. Idham Chalid's role as PPP President gave NU political cadres hope that he would build common ground and stand out among underrepresented NU cadres. However, K.H. Idham Chalid did not state his stance. It seems that K.H. Idham is trapped between two NU camps: NU, which is the opposing camp, and NU, which is accommodating K.H. Idham Chalid. On the other hand, PPP containing MI components requires balance.

The previous research on the theme of the Cipete-Situbondo feud, which later resulted in the *Khittah* NU and its implications for PBNU policy in the leadership of Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf, among others: First, research by Abdul Hakim Syafi'i et al. entitled "Political Party Intervention in the Leadership Succession of the 33rd Nahdlatul Ulama Congress in Jombang in 2015". This research explains that the conflicts that occurred in the Jombang Congress did not arise immediately but rather the accumulation of various antagonistic relations around the management of the Nahdliyyin organisation. Of course, the main determinant cannot be separated from the process of political rivalry between NU elites in order to control and influence NU organisational policies for their respective interests. In that context, conflict and elite theories were used as analytical tools to find the factors that caused the conflict in the leadership succession in the Jombang Congress.

Second, Sukamto's research entitled "Flashback of NU *Khittah* in the Context of Local Politics in Jombang". This research explains the holding of the NU Congress in Situbondo, which intends to evaluate the extent of political gains and losses obtained by NU while joining the PPP. However, the results of this evaluation were predictable, namely that the losses suffered by NU were greater than the benefits gained, especially since, in the mid-80s, NU conflicted with the PPP leadership. On the other hand, the congressional decision culminated in the disharmony between NU's internal groups in understanding its position within the PPP.

Third, Moh Rosyid's research entitled "2015 Muktamar and NU Politics in State History". This research explains that the main roots of PU politics began when it was established to build a pluralistic nation that cannot be separated from politics. During NU's participation in practical politics, it was realised to return to the 1926 NU *Khittah*. However, if the *Khittah* is not balanced with the spirit to realise it by fortifying the interests of party politicians, the *Khittah* will turn into NU semi-party politics. When in politics, efforts to build NU citizens are

increasingly unrealised amid poverty and underdevelopment of its congregation.

Fourth, Ikmal Fawaid's research entitled "The Dynamics of NU After Independence towards the Establishment of NU *Khittah* as a Decision of the Situbondo Mukhtamar 1945-1984". This research explains that NU's withdrawal from practical politics is a well-founded decision. NU has experienced various events that harm itself by engaging in practical politics. The position of confronting various parties, both with fellow party members and with parties outside the party, made NU too involved in repeated and endless disputes. In addition, the main issues on which NU was founded have also been neglected due to its deep involvement in practical politics. By withdrawing from practical politics, opportunities for cooperation with various parties become more open.

Based on several studies above, no research specifically discusses conflict dynamics between the Cipete and Situbondo camps. This conflict eventually led to the holding of the Congress in Situbondo in 1984, NU returned to its social organisation mission and removed NU from all aspects of active political participation. The chairman of PBNU then upheld *Khittah* NU for the 2022-2027 period, Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf, in his policy to withdraw from the political constellation, especially in the 2024 elections. This is a novelty in the history of the development of NU political thought. Therefore, from the above background, this scientific article aims to analyse the historical study of the conflict between the Cipete camp and the Situbondo camp and its influence on Gus Yahya's political strategy during his tenure as PBNU leader.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is library research using the historical research method, which includes four stages. First, heuristics collects sources from various written sources, which is the first stage of this article's library research. Second, criticism is the process of criticizing sources that have been obtained regarding the credibility and authenticity of those sources. Third, interpretation is the process of interpreting sources that have passed the critical stage. Fourth, historiography is the writing process (Asa'ari et al., 2022; Hidayat et al., 2022; Kuntowijoyo, 2013; Nurjaman et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the study focuses on discussing NU in searching for its identity, especially on the history and dynamics of NU going back to the 1926 sermon and its implications for PBNU political policies during the leadership of Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf, especially ahead of the political party event in 2024.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

“Kawatan” Meeting

The condition of the feud between elements of NU and MI within the PPP (United Development Party) and internal conflict within NU increasingly heated up, especially when disappointed NU groups resigned, as was the case with K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri and other NU figures before the 1982 elections. This conflict spread to NU internally after the 1982 election. Senior scholars met on May 1 from 10:00 to 11:00. K.H. As’ad Syamsul Arifin, KH Ali Ma’shum, K.H. Machrus Ali, KH Achmad Shiddiq, and KH Mudjib Ridwan served as hosts. The meeting was known as the “pertemuan kawatan” or “kawatan meeting” because it took place in Kawatan Village, Surabaya. The discussion included the problematic situation of NU and the leadership of K.H. Idham Chalid. Ulama-ulama, who was present, decided to ask K.H. Idham Chalid to resign seriously and honorably if his health prevents him from taking an active part in the management of PBNU. This agreement follows the meeting (Rahmadi et al., 2013).

The ulama who were present the day before left for Jakarta the next day, May 2, 1982, to inform K.H. Idham Chalid about the results of their agreement. If K.H. Idham Chalid is willing to resign as General Chair of PBNU, the ulama will write him a resignation letter. Senior academics re-evaluated the draft letter after it was further edited and typed at K.H. Masjkur’s house in Jakarta. The group of senior ulama went to K.H. Idham Chalid’s house on Mangunsarkoro Street after assessing the letter as good. Senior scholars include Dr. Muhammad, K.H. As’ad Syamsul Arifin, K.H. Machrus Ali, K.H. Ali Ma’shum, K.H. Masjkur, and K.H. Mudjib Ridwan. The meeting between K.H. Idham Chalid and senior ulama went well. The senior cleric suggested that K.H. Idham be willing to resign if his health does not allow it and hand over his position to Rais Amm, who would then look for a replacement (Rahmadi et al., 2013).

K.H. Idham Chalid, who had the intention to resign, welcomed the proposal from the senior ulama. Then, the ulama showed the concept of a resignation letter for KH Idham Chalid. Kiai Idham asked that the concept of the letter be clarified further after reading it, adding the sentence “*By the advice of senior NU cleric Y.M. Mr. K.H. As’ad Syamsul Arifin, K.H. Machrus Ali, and K.H. Maskur*” in the first sentence. In order not to give the impression of relinquishing his position as NU leader. K.H. Idham Chalid asked that this provision be

implemented. Moreover, K.H. Idham also asked that *titimangsa* (a point of certain time) dated 2 May 1982 be changed to 6 May 1982 so as not to give the impression that the letter was deliberately written to hamper the implementation of the election. K.H. Idham Chalid then requested that his resignation be announced on May 6, 1982. K.H. Idham Chalid's three demands were granted and retyped (Yusuf et al., 1983).

Following the resignation of K.H. Idham Chalid as General Chair of PBNU, his followers began appearing outside K.H. Idham's house on 3 May 1982. After receiving this information, several NU leaders in Surabaya and Yogyakarta held a special meeting on 5 May. Newspaper publications in Yogyakarta, namely *Kedaulatan Rakyat* and *Masa Kini*, reported the news of K.H. Idham Chalid's resignation before the official letter of resignation was read by PBNU on May 6, 1982 (Rahmadi et al., 2013). Imron Rosyadi, acting as Rais IV PB Syuriah NU, read K.H. Idham Chalid's resignation letter at the PBNU meeting on May 7, 1982. However, K.H. Idham himself was not present at the meeting. K.H. Idham Chalid's resignation was first known to the public on May 12, 1982.

The fall of K.H. Idham sparked controversy in many NU circles and sparked debate on both sides. K.H. Idham's followers, led by Amin Iskandar and Chalid Mawardi, responded firmly and vocally. One of K.H. Idham's supporters stated that K.H. Idham's resignation process was irrational and did not follow AD/ART guidelines. K.H. Idham's supporters argued that because the NU Congress chose him to serve as General Chair, Congress must also agree to his resignation. They claimed that four seniors, K.H. carried out a coup against K.H. Idham's leadership (Machfoedz, 1982). Amin Iskandar stated that K.H. Idham's replacement as General Chair of PBNU did not receive support from him because he was deemed to have violated NU's AD/ART (Fathoni & Zen, 1992). Amin Iskandar then contacted NU regional leaders throughout Indonesia, and not long after, representatives from 17 different regions gathered to hold a meeting at Warung Sate Bangil Senayan in Jakarta. The meeting results prompted K.H. Idham Chalid to return to take over the position of NU leader and continue to serve as general chairman of PBNU (Machfoedz, 1982).

The group opposing K.H. Idham's self-compassion also spoke out. *Rais 'Amm* (general leader) K.H. Ali Maksum, according to Mahbub Junaidi as Chairman II of PBNU, did not violate NU's AD/ART because sharia has the authority to reprimand, advise, and guide organizational administrators,

including PBNU. Several other NU figures, including Chalik Ali, Zamroni, and Anwar Nurris, supported K.H. Idham. They emphasized that the senior cleric's actions were legal, and K.H. Idham's resignation was also legal (Fathoni & Zen, 1992).

KH Masykur Ali, another senior cleric who was closely involved, responded and firmly denied accusations that the clerics had carried out a coup against K.H. Idham. He claimed that K.H. Idham refused to join NU after the election for health reasons, even though Ulama asked him to do so. K.H. Idham stated that he had twice asked his secretary to gather individuals to take over persuading, but the secretary refused because it could appear that K.H. Idham was avoiding his responsibilities. K.H. Idham then gave his position to KH Ali Makshum at the same time as the senior cleric arrived (Machfoedz, 1982).

K.H. Idham Chalid's Reaction

Furthermore, K.H. Idham Chalid became suspicious because news of his resignation leaked before the agreed date, namely 6 May 1982. K.H. Idham Chalid suspected that the senior ulama who came to him was driven by another group, which was certainly anti-K.H. Idham Chalid's leadership. Therefore, this suspicion made K.H. Idham Chalid lose his sincerity in resigning. Besides that, K.H. Idham was also surprised by the birth of groups for and against his resignation and worried that it would cause wider divisions within NU itself. As a result, K.H. Idham Chalid announced the cancellation of his resignation via letter on May 14, 1982 (Machfoedz, 1982).

This further exacerbated polarization within NU. *Rois 'Amm* has been appointed General Chair of PBNU and cannot be dismissed. Therefore, K.H. Ali Ma'shum claims that K.H. Idham Chalid's resignation cannot be canceled (Machfoedz, 1982). K.H. Idham's revocation was considered to have lowered the cleric's self-esteem (Fathoni & Zen, 1992). So, a cold war broke out between K.H. Idham's camp and K.H. Ali Maksum's camp. As a result, the NU Syuriah PB held a plenary meeting on May 16, 1982, and invited *the Syuriah* and *Tanfidziyah* administrators. KH Idham Chalid, KH Ali Maksum, KH Anwar Musaddad, KH Masykur, KH Saifuddin Zuhri, Imran Rosyadi, Abdurrahman Wahid, and KH Rodhi Soleh were among the clerics who came (Fathoni & Zen, 1992).

During the meeting, K.H. Idham stated his reasons for withdrawing his resignation: First, because it had already been leaked before the agreed date

regarding the resignation letter. Second, suspicions arose that the senior clerics who came to him were “driven” by other groups. This idea originated from the previous meeting in the Surabaya area (the Kawatan meeting), which was attended by Yusuf Hasyim, who was a Chairman I of PBNU and became the main challenger to the leadership and management of K.H. Idham Chalid in the ranks of PBNU. Therefore, K.H. Idham asked *Syuriah* to state that he would not resign and would continue to lead PBNU as General Chair until the next Congress (Rahmadi et al., 2013). On the other hand, it was emphasized that K.H. Idham Chalid’s resignation violated organizational protocol and was invalid according to Islamic Jurisprudence Law (Yusuf et al., 1983). Therefore, they rejected K.H. Idham Chalid’s solution, which included holding an extraordinary conference. In the end, the plenary meeting did not produce anything, and this issue will be discussed at the next PB *Syuriah* plenary meeting with witnesses to K.H. Idham Chalid’s resignation.

However, the second plenary meeting was not held, giving birth to dualism in leadership. The ulama camp believes that K.H. Idham’s withdrawal is invalid, while K.H. Idham maintains that he is the legitimate General Chair of PBNU. The expressions of the Situbondo camp, which refers to the K.H. Ali Maksum and K.H. As’ad groups, which are also supported by non-political organizations, and the Cipete camp, which refers to the K.H. Idham Chalid group, which politicians support are created as a result of this leadership dualism (Fathoni & Zen, 1992). The name Cipete is taken from the name of an area in South Jakarta, which is the address of K.H. Idham Chalid’s residence (Hakim Syafi’i et al., 2019).

Steps to Resolve the Feud between the Cipete Camp and the Situbondo Camp

Later, when the issue of NU reform emerged, K.H. Idham Chalid appealed to the public not to get involved in public debate because it would have a bad impact on NU. Polemics between NU members continued despite K.H. Idham Chalid’s appeal, so the situation never improved. Furthermore, on May 20, K.H. Idham Chalid received a determination regarding polarization within the NU environment from 22 NU DPWs (Yusuf et al., 1983).

The Situbondo camp took action by asking the New Order (Orde Baru) government for help. K.H. As’ad visited President Soeharto several times, and several ministers met with Situbondo clerics. Efforts to obtain support from the government carried out by the Situbondo camp occurred between 1983 and 1984.

The National Conference of Muslim Scholars held in Situbondo on 18-21 December 1983 marked the government's decision, ultimately supporting the Situbondo camp. This conference returned NU to its *Khittah* (paths) when NU was founded, namely in 1926, as a socio-religious organization and supported Pancasila as a single principle (Rahmadi et al., 2013).

On February 26, 1984, this Situbondo group of Ulama requested that the case involving K.H. Idham Chalid be handled procedurally at his second meeting with President Soeharto and some officials, including the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs. By holding a PBNU plenary meeting on December 7 and 8, 1983, the Cipete camp also took similar actions, which resulted in the acceptance of the single principle of Pancasila. After meeting with President Soeharto, K.H. Idham met with the Minister of Religion, Manawir Sjadzali, at Idham's house. Imam Sofyan and Nuddin Lubbis, two liaisons between K.H. Idham's camp and the government, met Suparjo Rustam as the Minister of Home Affairs.

Responding to pressure from the two warring factions, the New Order government sided more with the Situbondo camp. This was so that the New Order government was considered more financially successful and politically secure than the K.H. Idham camp, which was supported by NU political cadres. NU's *Khittah*, namely the return of NU to focus on the socio-religious field and no longer as a political organisation benefits the new order government because this will eliminate NU extremist factions, which the government also wants to remove from parliament.

Then, on September 10, 1984, a resolution occurred, and both camps agreed to end the conflict. When both parties finally understood, fifty Javanese and Madurese clerics gathered at Hasyim Latif's house in Surabaya for the *tahlilan* ceremony (a ritual of reciting religious praises to God). The two camps were attended by K.H. Idham Chalid, K.H. As'ad Syamsul Arifin, K.H. Ali Maksum, K.H. Masykur, K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri, K.H. Machrus Ali, and K.H. Achmad Siddiq. Signs of the agreement were a "proclamation of familiarity" and an agreement to immediately hold the NU conference (Fathoni & Zen, 1992).

The proclamation of familiarity aimed to end the debate, apologize to each other, and decide to work, especially in facing the 27th NU Congress in December 1984 in Situbondo. So, this proclamation of familiarity ended the feud between the Cipete camp and the Situbondo camp, which lasted for more than three years A

Khoirul Anam, "Para Kiai Sepuh "Turun Gunung" Jelang Mukhtamar 1984," NU Online, 2015.

27th NU Mukhtamar in Situbondo (1984) and NU'S Return to *Khittah* (A True Path) 1926

K.H. Idham is required to remain as General Chair of PBNU until the NU congress in Situbondo, and the decisions of the Semarang congress will still be upheld. A triangular discussion regarding the new management structure was held between the Cipete side, the Situbondo camp, and the government before the NU Congress in Situbondo. Even though K.H. Idham agreed not to run for general chairman at the next NU Congress, he still received great support from NU branches outside Java, but he demanded that his allies, especially Anwar Musadad, Ali Yafie, and Chalid Mawardi, be given adequate support significant in the management of the new PBNU.

However, the government, which tends to support the Situbondo camp, is trying to get rid of Chalid Mawardi in the nomination for general chairman before the holding of the Congress, Chalid Mawardi was appointed ambassador to Syria. In addition, to cover the chances of victory for the Cipete camp, a new method was implemented in preparing the management before the Mukhtamar started, in the sense that a group of top ulama or senior ulama chose new management rather than choosing directly the team of senior ulama was named *Ahlu al-Halli wa al-Aqdhi*, chaired by K.H. As'ad Syamsul Arifin because he is the most senior ulama and this is detrimental to the Cipete camp, namely K.H. Idham Chalid's camp (Rahmadi et al., 2013). The word *Ahlu al-Halli wa al-Aqdhi* comes from the word *Ahwa*, which means people who have the power to release and bind, and members refer to certain organizations that function as decision-making bodies (Rosyid, 2015). It turned out that this was true, K.H. As'ad appointed *Rais 'Amm*, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, and K.H. Achmad Siddiq as the new general chairman of PBNU. The share given to K.H. Idham's camp exceeded the agreed limit. It turned out that K.H. As'ad had changed the names on K.H. Idham's list to those he liked better. The only *Rais* remaining in the *Syuriah* ranks are Ali Yafie and Kiai Idham who have now been appointed as *Mustasyār*.

K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid called as Gus Dur requested that K.H. Idham Chalid be notified of the results of the new management and then informed by telephone. Then K.H. Idham Chalid assured Gus Dur that there would be no more

fighting and that K.H. Idham and his troops would not openly oppose him (Ridwan, 2010). If direct elections were held at the Situbondo Congress, K.H. Idham Chalid could win the election as general chairman because he managed to win 23 of the 26 participating provinces. However, K.H. Idham decided to resign to maintain the integrity of the Nahdlatul Ulama organization (Muthalib & Zamzam, 2010). K.H. Idham Chalid's camp was deemed "lost" after the NU Congress in Situbondo, which produced new leadership. Then, Nahdlatul Ulama returned to its *Khittah* in 1926 as a group that concentrated on social and religious issues while avoiding involvement in practical politics, including the departure of NU from the PPP group or the political practice (Nafi'a, 2022).

NU elites admit that the financial problems of NU members have not been handled by NU administrators even though NU left PPP as a result of NU's *Khittah* (Sukanto, 2012). So, NU's identity is no longer a political organization or even a political party, as was the case with the leadership of K.H. Idham Chalid. NU's identity after Mukdamar in Situbondo is that of an organisation operating in the social, educational, religious, and da'wah fields. Thus, due to strengthening the ties between NU and the government and government supervision of NU members' behavior, NU's development in the fields of education and da'wah is growing rapidly. However, the negative impact was that during the New Order government, NU members did not receive the position of minister of religion (Feillard, 1999). The urgency of NU's *Khittah* was explained by one of the senior clerics, namely K.H. Achmad Siddiq; First, the growing gap between the founding generation and the succeeding generation. Second, the increasing number of fields of struggle. Third, more individuals from various educational and subcultural backgrounds are registering at NU. Fourth, fewer founding generations ulama in NU leadership (Siddiq, 2005).

K.H. Abdul Muchith Muzadi emphasized that the founders and supporters of the group had long shared the core principles of NU's *shittah*. (Muzadi, 2007) So, after the birth of the NU sermon, the political activities of NU members were not in the name of NU. Therefore, the NU Congress in Situbondo is considered the most important conference in NU's history because apart from NU returning to its *Khittah* and the election of Gus Dur as general chairman, it also accepted Pancasila as the principle of its organization (Shodiq, 2004).

Apart from that, by reaffirming the superiority of *Syuriah* over *Tanfidziyah* in terms of status and law through NU's *Khittah*, ulama's leadership was re-

appointed. Furthermore, the new PBNU management came up with the idea for an initiative centered on the non-political sector, which had previously been neglected or abandoned because it was busy with political affairs (Fawaid, 2022). The existence of the NU *Khittah* means that NU is not bound by one party, instead, NU lives across parties, such as still being in PPP, others in PKB, PKNU, PKS, and several parties with nationalist ideologies. This is not anti-politics but rather following NU's motto, "NU is not going anywhere but is everywhere" (Rosyid, 2015).

Kiai Achyat Chalimi from the Mojokerto branch of NU proposed an NU sermon at the 22nd NU Congress in Jakarta in 1959, but his proposal was rejected. At the next NU Congress in 1962, held in Solo, Central Java, *Khittah's* idea was raised again but received no response. *Khittah* was a topic that also came up at the 25th NU Congress in Surabaya in 1971 but was abandoned due to a dispute between K.H. Idham and Subhan ZE. This idea was reaffirmed during the 26th NU Congress in 1979 when NU politics entered the PPP. K.H. Machrus Ali was one of the firm speakers at this congress, but political people controlled the condition of *the muktamirin*, which refers to the members who attended Mukhtamar, and they still wanted NU to get involved in politics (Sukamto, 2012).

Implications of NU's *Khittah* for PBNU Political Policy, Leadership of Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf

Indonesia was a country that implemented a democratic system by aligning with the teachings and values of dogmatic Islam until the end of the New Order government. After entering the reformation era, Indonesia entered a new phase of democracy that was more open and liberal. The peaceful transition of power cannot be separated from the role of NU, which adheres to a more moderate religious understanding that has acculturated with the social reality of Indonesian society. Nevertheless, it turns out that according to Gus Yahya's view as chairman of PBNU 2022-2027, the quality of democracy in Indonesia is declining because religion is used as a supporting element of identity politics (Mediaindonesia.com, 2022).

Gus Yahya is not only an Indonesian Muslim figure but also a peak structural leader in the NU's milieu. Gus Yahya is well renowned as an inclusive and tolerant thinker who fights for peace among religious communities both in Indonesia and abroad. So, his open and tolerant thoughts toward the diversity of

religions and beliefs carry a huge mission in fighting for moderate Islam, bringing peace, and forming a harmonious society with differences (Munanda, 2023).

Gus Yahya's popularity is proven by selecting Gus Yahya as the 500 most influential Muslim figure in the world in 2023 by *The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center (RISSC)* in 19th place. Apart from that, he was also selected and included among the 50 influential Muslim figures, according to the Center for Strategic Learning of the Islamic Kingdom of Jordan (Ugm.ac.id, 2023). Regarding identity politics, according to Gus Yahya, identity politics must stop making religion its main fuel. It has long been a tradition to use religion to gain political advantage and present it directly to the public. So, when religion is used as political legitimacy, it will become a justification for various actions which tend to be negative (Mediaindonesia.com, 2022).

Gus Yahya firmly rejects identity politics, which has been proven to cause divisions in Indonesian society, especially in the face of the 2024 elections. Gus Yahya even stated that he not only rejects and opposes, but he will also fight individuals or groups who use identity politics for their group's political victory (Antaraneews.com, 2022). Therefore, in the life of democracy in Indonesia, candidates or candidates for people's representatives and national leaders at all levels, during the campaign period, often visit religious leaders to seek political support, including Islamic boarding schools or leaders of Islamic mass organisations to gain political votes (Barokah, 2023).

This is evidenced by the results of Ilham's 2020 research, which found that santri (students), in terms of their political choices, depend on the choice of the caregiver of the institution or personally the *Kiai* (teacher). The same opinion is also seen from the results of Fermadi's 2020 research, which states that Islamic boarding schools are an easy land to win as many votes as possible in political constellations. Therefore, Syarif in 2016 confirmed that a *Kiai* leadership has a certain political formula. This is also the case with Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia. NU is often used as a political campaign technique for certain candidates.

Many political figures held positions in the PBNU management structure from 2015 to 2020, including the Secretary General of the organization, who is a PKB cadre. In reality, NU cannot abandon its foundation in real politics. Since the NU Congress in Situbondo in 1984, NU, which has been active in the world of politics for 39 years during the leadership of KH Idham Chalid, has come to an

end. However, if this *Khittah* is not balanced by protecting NU from party political interests, NU will become a semi-political party. Because of this, efforts to raise the NU congregation will be increasingly difficult if they return to politics (Rosyid, 2015). On January 11, PBNU issued Regulation Number 72/II/04-d/XI/85, which regulates concurrent management positions within NU and contains provisions regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of re-implementing the *Khittah*. This is an effort to maintain the authority and dignity of Nahdlatul Ulama itself (Mahbub, 2023).

The article clarifies that NU administrators are not permitted to do daily administrative work in political parties or socio-political organizations. Consequently, the implementation date for the first semester is one year for regions and two years for branches. Administrators of NU regional and branch offices in Indonesia must make this choice. Then, this choice was confirmed by PBNU Decree Number 72/A-H/04-d/XI/1985.

As a result, the new management of the PBNU, under the leadership of Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf, makes it clear that NU is institutionally not allowed to participate actively in practical politics. During his tenure, Gus Yahya frequently and emphatically stated that NU would separate itself from practical political causes. Gus Yahya's current leadership of NU is based on the principles of the *Khittah* NU from the NU Congress in Situbondo in 1984 (Kompas.com, 2022).

Nahdlatul Ulama must not be used as a tool and medium to gain votes and power by any party, including the PKB and PPP, which are the forums for the political aspirations of NU members. According to Gus Yahya, this makes political life in Indonesia unhealthy. In addition, he states that he should not use identity politics to win over his political group, including religious identity and NU specifically (CNNIndonesia.com, 2022). Thus, it is very clear that NU must become a political arena for national interests and cannot be monopolized by one political party. The PBNU has a very close relationship with the PKB, but this relationship does not mean it is used as a tool for the PKB's political victory. This confirms the 1926 NU sermon (Rm.id, 2022).

However, this does not mean that Gus Yahya forbids NU members from engaging in politics, but that NU should not be linked to or used as a tool for practical political purposes. Political guidelines for NU members are also contained in the NU sermon. Consequently, PBNU is prohibited from getting involved in practical politics, but NU members may prove responsible and not act

in the name of NU (Kompas.tv, 2021). Regarding the 2024 political year event, NU is firmly not involved in nominating presidential candidates and supporting certain political parties because NU is not a political party, this is always emphasized by Gus Yahya in every statement regarding the world of politics for 2024. Under Gus Yahya's leadership, NU will adhere to the original teachings of its founding as a religious organization. The political policies of PBNU during Gus Yahya's leadership contrast with the previous leadership period under K.H. Aqil Siradj (CNNIndonesia.com, 2023).

A similar thing was stated by Ujang Komarudin, a political observer from Al-Azhar University Indonesia, who said that NU must maintain its distance and separate itself from practical politics. NU must continue to focus on religion, society, education, and *da'wah*. NU must maintain its *murru'ah*, norm, or authority without being tempted by temporary practical politics (CNNIndonesia.com, 2023). Under the leadership of Gus Yahya, PBNU will transform the construction of the NU organization, because the construction of practical politics within NU is still considered dominant, namely by returning to the principles of the results of the 1984 NU congress. In this case, Gus Yahya even claims that the tendency to carry out practical politics still impacts the institutions, structures, methods, and mindsets of NU members (Nu.or.id, 2022).

Wasisto Raharjo Jati, an Islamic politics researcher at the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), claimed that PBNU would re-emerge under Gus Yahya's leadership as a civil society organization removed from actual political activities. Yet, this does not mean that NU, under the leadership of Gus Yahya, will become a legitimate government opposition, NU will continue to support the government, whoever the president is, as an Islamic mass organization that has returned to its *Khittah* (Tirto.id, 2021). Accordingly, it is clear that PBNU's policy steps, which Gus Yahya is now leading for the 2024 elections, are that NU is firmly neutral and independent. NU, as a public organization does not take sides with political parties and does not support anyone as a candidate for the presidential, regional, or legislative elections in the 2024 elections. Two NU cadres are competing in the nomination arena for President and Vice President of Indonesia in 2024, namely Muhaimin Iskandar and Prof. Mahfudz MD, who are vice presidential candidates. However, PBNU firmly does not side with any of these candidates.

Then, there were rumors that PBNU supported one of the pairs of candidates for President and Vice President in the 2024 elections. This started with a statement by Saifullah Yusuf, often called Gus Ipul, the Secretary General of PBNU, who asked NU members not to vote for a pair of candidates for President and Vice President supported by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Amien Rais. Amin Rais, the founder of the Ummat Party, stated that he supported the Anies-Muhaimin (AMIN) pair and then distributed a voice recording of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, who also supported the AMIN pair. Gus Yahya then issued a statement stating that what his secretary argued was his personal opinion and not an official PBNU statement (CNNIndonesia.com, 2024).

The issue of PBNU's partiality towards one of the presidential pairs in the 2024 election was also raised by Gus Nadirsyah Hosen, NU intellectual figure, who said that PBNU had gathered all administrators from branch and regional levels throughout Indonesia in Surabaya. During the meeting, Gus Nadir said unwritten instructions to win pair 02 were directed to candidate Prabowo-Gibran. Gus Nadir said he had confirmed with several Kiai who were present at the meeting (CNNIndonesia.com, 2024). However, Gus Yahya denied this. Meanwhile, KH Miftachul Akhyar as Rais Amm PBNU reminded us to practice the culture of *tabayyūn* (confirmation), especially fellow Nahdliyin residents (Republika.co.id, 2024).

Apart from that, there are allegations that KH Hanif Ismail, one of the administrators of the Nahdlatul Ulama Branch Board (PCNU), gave direction on political choices to win number 02 of the Prabowo-Gibran pair. However, Gus Ipul, PBNU Secretary General, rejected the idea that there was no NU logo at the meeting. So, there is no violation. Gus Ipul also continued that there was PCNU Riau, which officially supported 02 in the 2024 election, and this was immediately stopped. Then, to maintain NU's dignity and *Khittah*, PBNU also did not receive visits from the three presidential and vice presidential candidates. Gus Ipul also emphasized that PBNU had never announced whether to win candidate pair number 02. Then Gus Ipul quoted PBNU's Rais Amm as saying, "Please choose and support one of the candidate pairs for President and Vice President but do not involve the institution (NU)" (Metrotvnews.com, 2024).

Then Gus Nadir stated that Gus Ipul's statement was formal and legalistic, but what happened, in reality, was a statement of NU's structural support for candidate pair 02, for example, KH Mustamsikin, PCNU Kendal clearly said that

this was a *dawuh* (ulama' saying or order) from Rais Amm PBNU to mobilize for candidate pair 02 victory in one round. Then KH Hanif, from PCNU Semarang, said that even though there was no NU logo on the meeting banner, this was a *dawuh*. Moreover, the words "Sami'na wa Atho'na" were on the banner. This was based on Rais 'Amm's statement at the previous meeting in Surabaya. This became the basis for political statements by PCNU Batang, PCNU Kendal, and PCNU Semarang. Gus Nadir suggested that PBNU clarify that it would not make any structural moves to win candidate pair 02 in one round. Gus Nadir also hopes that NU will become the nation's glue and stand above all groups. So that NU will continue to help build the nation, whoever the President (Metrotvnews.com, 2024).

Then, Gus Ipul denied Gus Nadir's statement that PBNU had never released a statement of support for pair 02. Gus Ipul said that Rais 'Amm was very careful and maintained the dignity of PBNU. Gus Ipul also cited Gus Yahya's statement that NU's interest in the presidential election ensures that whoever is elected, Indonesia must be safe, united, harmonious, and work for Indonesia. Then Gus Ipul denied the attitude of the branch managers that the meeting in Surabaya was between Rais 'Amm and regional administrators throughout Indonesia, not with branch administrators. Gus Ipul also emphasized that Rais 'Amm was never ordered to follow the ulama's command (Metrotvnews.com, 2024).

Gus Nadir said that he had paid tribute to many Rais Syuriah who were present at the event, but it turned out that a similar event was not only done once but was followed up in several places. So, Gus Nadir considered the meeting serious, so he did not want the meeting to be held at the PBNU or the PWNU office. Next, Gus Nadir gave advice "If PBNU really wants Indonesia to be safe, then what must be done is to invite all NU elements in all parties and candidates from NU and then be given advice regarding NU's message from Rais Amm NU for the safety of Indonesia and healthy competence." This is the basis for PBNU's neutrality in facing the 2024 presidential election. Instead of supporting certain candidates behind the scenes (Metrotvnews.com, 2024).

Furthermore, Gus Fahrur, the chairman of PBNU, also emphasized in his statement on January 23, 2024, that there was no special order or official direction to support a particular presidential candidate, even though it was true that an internal meeting in Surabaya did take place. Gus Fahrur also emphasized that PBNU has no official and structured consolidation, it is only suggestions and insights, PBNU remains focused on the social, *da'wah*, and religious fields

(Detik.com, 2024b). Therefore, Gus Fahrur stated that PBNU will remain neutral in the 2024 elections. This is proven by the deactivation of NU cadres who are members of the Success Team for candidate pairs in the Presidential Election or who are legislative candidates in the 2024 Election. There are around 63 PBNU administrators who are running for office as a legislative candidate and as *timses* (successful team) which have been deactivated, this was conveyed by H. Amin Said Husni, the Deputy General Chair of PBNU for Membership Organization and Cadre Generation, on January 21, 2024. To legitimize this decision, PBNU issued Decree Number 285/PB.01 /A.II.01.08/99/01/2024 (Detik.com, 2024b).

Among the administrators who were deactivated were Herman Deru, KH Ma'shum Faqih, Saifullah Ma'shum as the General Chair of Jam'iyatul Qurra wal Huffaz (JQH) and KH Asep Saifuddin Chalim as the chairman of the NU Teachers Association (PERGUNU) who became the Anies-Muhaimin National Team (AMIN). Then there are Habib Lutfi bin Yahya, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, Ai Masykur Musa as chairman of the NU Scholars Association (ISNU), and Nursron Wahid as the chairman of the NU Agricultural Development Institute (LPPNU) who is part of the Prabowo-Gibran National Campaign Team (TKN). In fact, Erick Thohir's name was also deactivated from the position of Chair of the PBNU Human Resources Study and Development Institute (Lakpesdam) on Wednesday, January 24, 2024. Then there were the names of Muhammad AS Hikam, KH Mustofa Aqil Siradj, Chair of the NU Ta'mir Mosque Institute (LTMNU), Nasyirul Falah Amru, and Yenny Wahid as the chairman of the Strategic Innovation Development Agency who became the Ganjar-Mahfudz National Winning Team (TPN) (Detik.com, 2024a). The dismissal of a number of PBNU administrators was aimed at maintaining the dignity of *Khittah* of Nahdlatul Ulama.

Therefore, Gus Yahya emphasized that PBNU is neutral and does not support any of the Presidential candidates in practical politics in 2024. He conveyed this when, after meeting with the Governor of DIY Sri Sultan HB at the meeting, Gus Yahya said: "So, PBNU remains in a position of not being involved in support. We will try to carry out the role of emulating Ngarsa Dalem Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X to maintain community unity." Gus Yahya also dismissed accusations from Gus Nadir Hosen that he had directed PBNU's structural management to win the Prabowo-Gibran pair in the 2024 elections (Antaraneews.com, 2024). PBNU's neutrality was also conveyed by KH Ahmad Fahrur Rozi, PBNU Chairman, who emphasized that up to now, there had been no

direct orders or direction structure to win one of the candidate pairs in the 2024 presidential election.

In fact, this was supported by the Director of the Prabowo-Gibran TKN Spokesperson, Viva Yoga Mauladi, that Gus Yahya would remain neutral and maintain NU's struggle and sermons. Even Viva Yoga Mauladi appreciated Gus Yahya by issuing a statement: "I think Gus Yahya has been wise in carrying out his duties as general chairman of PBNU, and we really respect Gus Yahya's attitude" (Detik.com, 2024c). Gus Yahya and Gus Ipul also support and hope that the 2024 President and Vice President election will run in one round for cost reasons. Despite this, PBNU remains consistently neutral (Tangselpos.id, 2024).

Although NU approves of everything that is for the benefit of the nation and state, including elections, this is the national political attitude and policy carried out by PBN, but NU is not a political party that can support a candidate in the contests of practical politics. As a result, NU has no interest whatsoever in political life in Indonesia except for the safety of the nation and state, and this is the national political attitude carried out by PBNU. However, NU will not remain silent regarding the various political dynamics in Indonesia to safeguard the safety of the nation and state. Thereupon, Gus Yahya is diligent in consolidating so that the current of practical politics does not sweep away NU members for any political interests (Nu.or.id, 2023).

Gus Yahya also welcomed NU cadres to be nominated in the 2024 elections, just as there was an issue of positioning a senior NU figure that is K.H. Nazaruddin Umar, as vice president by a certain political party (Liputan6.com, 2023). Nonetheless, Gus Yahya himself was not in a position to support certain parties, including his own NU cadres. The role of NU, especially PBNU, in facing elections is to be able to calm and protect the community during the election phase and not cause a commotion (Republika.co.id, 2023). In the end, all kinds of national political attitudes belonged to PBNU under Gus Yahya's authority whoever became the leader, he still invited all NU members to obey and support his leadership as long as he did not violate Islamic law (Tempo.co, 2023). Gus Yahya advised prospective leaders in the 2024 elections to compete healthily and to prioritize moral leadership, and not use identity politics (Tvonenews.com, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The contrasting position that leads to conflict between the Situbondo vis a vis Cipete faction is a tug of war over NU identity. The Cipete faction, which is dominated by NU political cadres such as KH Idham Chalid, wants NU to continue to participate institutionally in actual political life by keeping KH Idham Chalid as Chairman of PBNU. While the founding ideals of NU were to be a group that oversees the fields of religion, education, and da'wah, the Situbondo camp criticised KH Idham Chalid's leadership for taking NU very far into practical politics and neglecting other fields such as social, community, education and da'wah. The feud between the two camps lasted for more than three years and gave birth to dualism of leadership within the PBNU. Then there was an *islah* from the two camps in 1984 to end the conflict and both would succeed the NU Congress in Situbondo. The NU Congress in Situbondo resulted in a new PBNU management and returned NU institutionally to the 1926 *Khittah* as a social-community organisation and withdrew from various practical political life and accepted Pancasila as the sole principle. This 1926 NU *Khittah* is the main spirit of Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf in leading PBNU for the 2022-2027 period. Positioning NU as the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia with full authority by withdrawing from all activities affiliated with practical political realities, including in the face of the implementation of the 2024 election momentum. Gus Yaqut's firm statement that NU is institutionally neutral and independent and does not support and take sides with anyone in the 2024 democratic party. All issues regarding the alignment of PBNU, both to one pair of Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates and to political parties participating in the election contestation in 2024 were nullified by PBNU. This is done with the argument that PBNU is the adhesive organisation of the Indonesian nation and must ensure the safety of religion, nation and state of Indonesia, especially after the 2024 elections. This is the national political attitude of PBNU itself which is carried out by Gus Yahya Cholil Staquf.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this research so that it can be completed in the form of a scientific article. This research was not funded by any institution but purely on the author's initiative. Thank You.

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