

The Decline of Ideology and Rise of Political Pragmatism Among Kiai in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia

Ahmad Nabilul Maram^{1*}, Ahmad Busyairi², Muhammad Raqib Assidiqi³

¹UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia ²University of The Holy Quran and Islamic Sciences,

Omdurman, Sudan, ³Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt

Nabilul.maram@gmail.com

busyairi1988@gmail.com

muhammadroqib19@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author

Article History:

Received: November 20, 2023

Accepted: December 13, 2023

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.62032/aijit.v1i1.15>

Abstract: This article aims to analyze the role of pesantren in post-reform Indonesian politics. Through a qualitative method by reviewing relevant documents and literature, this paper highlights the phenomenon of political pragmatism among kiai and its impact on political dynamics. The main findings show that the role of pesantren in general elections is increasingly significant through mass mobilization. However, the political pragmatism of kiai figures often encourages ideological inconsistency and internal fragmentation of Islamic parties. The implications include that electoral considerations drive more political recruitment, and the public is pragmatic. This study contributes to a contemporary understanding of the dynamics of pesantren and kiai as educational institutions and influential political forces in policy and political decision-making in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Pesantren, Kiai, Mobilization, Political Pragmatism, Electoral politics*

INTRODUCTION

As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has a long history of the relationship between religion and politics. One of this involvement's most prominent and essential aspects is the role of pesantren, traditional Islamic educational institutions. Pesantren has played a significant role in shaping political perspectives and mobilizing the masses amidst the complex political dynamics of Indonesia. With their profound spiritual and intellectual influence, pesantren have become a crucial foundation for shaping political opinions, recruiting leaders, and organizing communities in Indonesia's political processes.

Over the past few decades, pesantren in Indonesia have played diverse roles in the nation's politics. The long history of religious involvement in Indonesian politics has created a unique dynamic where pesantren has become essential. Under President Soeharto's leadership, some pesantren supported the government during the New Order era, contributing to political stability. In contrast, others served as the base of opposition to Soeharto's regime, particularly in Islamic political movements.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).



During the New Order era, pesantren supporting the Soeharto regime often received financial support and particular policies from the government. This created inequality in the pesantren world, where those supporting the government had more resources than those choosing to oppose the government. However, opposition pesantren also influenced the public's critical political perspectives towards the government (Yansah, 2016).

After the political reform in 1998 in response to dissatisfaction with the New Order regime led by President Soeharto, significant changes occurred in Indonesian politics. The New Order was known for its authoritarianism (Rajab, 2022), human rights violations, and rampant corruption (Martiningsih, 2017). Massive demonstrations, protests, and public pressure forced President Soeharto to resign in May 1998, ending his three-decade-long rule. Political reform opened the door to substantial changes in Indonesia's political system, resulting in dramatic shifts and greater political involvement from various segments of society. One of the fundamental changes was more open and fair elections, with increased political participation from multiple elements of the population, including pesantren. Freedom of expression and the press also increased, allowing pesantren and religious figures to become more involved in political issues (Hamzah, 2014).

Pesantren began actively participating in general elections, supporting specific candidates or political parties, and developing political agendas related to Islamic values. Pesantren also became hubs for developing leaders and activists in political Islamic movements, serving as spaces for education and political understanding for their santri. This reform also heightened the importance of religious issues in Indonesian politics, with pesantren playing a role in promoting matters related to morality, ethics, and Islamic law in political discussions. As a result of political reform, the role of pesantren in Indonesian politics became increasingly significant and continued to evolve (Abdillah, 2013).

Therefore, it is unsurprising that pesantren often serve as political campaign locations during general elections. In these strategic places, candidates or political parties discuss their political agendas and seek support from the Kiai and their santri. These institutions are frequently used as bases for mobilizing political support, especially during general elections and various political movements. Pesantren are not just religious education and community service institutions; they also play a significant political role because Kiai, who are the founders and leaders of pesantren, hold a strong appeal for their santri, alums, and the surrounding community (Ummah, 2019).

However, despite the significant impact of pesantren on Indonesian politics, there needs to be a gap in understanding how pesantren have been involved in Indonesian politics after the political reform 1998. Therefore, this research will focus on the role of pesantren in post-reform politics to fill the current gap in understanding.

In some cases, pesantren can actively support specific political candidates or parties. For example, the leaders of Sunan Drajad pesantren, including Abdul Ghofur, provided support to Prabowo Subianto in the 2014-2019 presidential elections, employing various strategies such as campaigning through religious studies broadcast on pesantren media like radio and television. Additionally, the Matholi'ul Anwar pesantren in Lamongan invited Ma'ruf Amin to the pesantren to support Joko Widodo in the 2014-2019 presidential elections (Ummah, 2019).

This research holds significant importance in Indonesian politics and society, particularly in understanding and exploring the pragmatism and mobilization of pesantren for practical political purposes. Today, pesantren serve as centers for religious education and political forces with profound implications in policy formation and political decision-making.

METHOD

This method was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the role of pesantren in Indonesian politics. To describe and analyze pesantren within the realm of politics, the concept of charismatic authority proposed by Max Weber focuses on the social relationship between the holders of charisma and their followers (Ahmadi & Rose, 2014). The charismatic perspective delves beyond merely scrutinizing the charismatic leader's personality. It also examines the structure of charismatic relationships that symbolize emotional collectivization, united by emotional bonds with the leader. Consequently, this research explores the dynamic relationship structure between pesantren as holders of charismatic authority and their followers within the political context.

Furthermore, a phenomenological approach will be employed to elucidate the role of pesantren in maintaining political stability within the community. This approach will assist in understanding the subjective experiences of individuals associated with pesantren and how these experiences influence their perceptions of political stability within the community. The research will emphasize the contribution of pesantren to political mobilization in Indonesia. Data for the study will be collected by analyzing relevant documents and literature about the research topic. The gathered data will then undergo analysis using a qualitative analytical approach to delve deeper into the role and contribution of pesantren within Indonesia's political dynamics.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

History of Pesantren and Politics in Indonesia

As a subculture, Pesantren has three fundamental elements that shape its identity. *First*, pesantren have an independent leadership pattern that needs to be co-opted by the state. *Second*, it involves using standard reference books that have been used for centuries. *Thirdly*, the value system adopted by pesantren is an integral part of the broader society (Wahid, 1995).

By focusing on these three elements, it can be concluded that pesantren is closely related to Indonesian society's way of life. It is not an exaggeration to say that pesantren is one of the main pillars of Indonesia's education system. History has recorded that thousands of pesantren have been established, grown, and developed. This phenomenon indicates that millions of Indonesians have experienced the unique learning patterns offered by pesantren.

For instance, in Java, Clifford Geertz classified santri (pesantren students) as one of the three Javanese society classifications in Mojokuto (Geertz, 2013). They were grouped alongside the Priyayi and Abangan types. The classification of santri is not arbitrary but reflects the social reality of Javanese society. The existence of pesantren as centers for the spread of Islam in Indonesia has endured for centuries. Although there is no exact record of the founding of the first pesantren, some research indicates that pesantren education patterns have existed since the Wali Songo in the 15th century. Abdurrahman Mas'ud, in his study, shows that the Islamic missionary teachings practiced by Maulana Malik Ibrahim, one of the Wali Songo, served as an inspiration for the establishment of Pesantren Nahdlatul Wathan in the Pancor area of East Lombok (Mas'ud, 2000).

The relationship between pesantren and politics in Indonesia encompasses the pre-independence and post-independence periods. Resistance occurred when the Dutch government implemented the Ordinance Goeroe policy in 1925-1927, which was seen as

detrimental to the pesantren community. This policy required every Islamic religious teacher to obtain prior permission from the Dutch East Indies government and prohibited teachers from providing education to their santri without official consent. This led to increased tension in the political and social sphere among the pesantren community. Religious leaders (kiai) in rural areas and pesantren strongly condemned this rule, seeing it as government interference in religious and Islamic education matters traditionally overseen by pesantren and local religious scholars. The consequence of this policy was heightened tension between pesantren and the Dutch colonial government, strengthening solidarity and unity among the pesantren community, who felt threatened by this intervention. This event marked one of the early instances of conflict between pesantren and the colonial government, which later influenced the political dynamics in the lead-up to Indonesia's independence (Royani, 2020).

At the 11th Mukhtamar in 1938 in Banjarmasin, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), an Islamic organization representing pesantren and santri, made a significant decision regarding their views on the state and homeland in the context of Islamic Sharia law. This decision was based on the belief that Indonesia's state and homeland should be upheld per the principles of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) (Amin, 1996). The Mukhtamar referred to the book "*Bughyah al-Mustarshidin*," which concluded that the Indonesian archipelago (Nusantara) was considered an Islamic state, or *dār al-islām* in the terminology of political *fiqh*. In the tradition of political *fiqh*, there are three types of states: *dār al-islām* (Islamic state), *dār al-ṣulh* (peaceful state), and *dār al-ḥarb* (war state). NU believed that Indonesia was an Islamic state that must be safeguarded and preserved by Islamic teachings.

These arguments are based on the historical understanding that the Nusantara region, especially the island of Java, was once entirely ruled by Islamic kingdoms in the past. Although non-Muslims later colonized this region, most of its population remained Islamic. Furthermore, they were granted the freedom to practice Islamic Sharia law. This decision reflects NU's view on the role and status of Islam in Indonesia and its determination to uphold Islamic values within a nation under colonial rule. Therefore, NU took a crucial step in the political struggle to advocate for the interests of Muslims and Islamic values in Indonesia (Mustaqim, 2015).

The involvement of santri and Pesantren in defending Indonesia's independence was realized through the Jihad Resolution initiated by Hasyim Asy'ari (Saputra, 2019). The Jihad Resolution was not just words; it was a concrete action by santri to protect and preserve their homeland from the threat of colonizers attempting to regain control of Indonesia. With the spirit of "*ḥubb al-waṭan min al-īmān*" (love of the land is part of faith), this santri contributed to the struggle for independence. They bravely sacrificed their lives and bodies and led the resistance with unwavering determination, demonstrating extraordinary courage in ensuring Indonesia's continued independence.

Thanks to their strong base within society, kiai, as pesantren leaders, enjoyed substantial influence. They were often invited to deliver speeches at various events such as post-Ramadan gatherings, end-of-year celebrations, the Prophet's birthday commemorations, the revelation of the Qur'an, and even wedding and circumcision ceremonies. In these situations, the influence of the ulama (Islamic scholars) further strengthened their position in the public consciousness (Abdurrahman Wachid, 2001). The popularity and dominance of kiai among the public represented a significant advantage in the political arena. However, they managed this power through various approaches.

The influence held by Kiai pesantren can be explained from two different perspectives: cultural power and structural power. With cultural influence that has permeated society, Kiai

or ulama essentially possess power because they can shape the thinking and worldview of the community, ultimately becoming an undisputed form of leadership. In other words, they determine the direction of thought and actions of the community in line with the values and teachings they convey (Nasih, 2022).

Meanwhile, Kiai pesantren actively engaged in politics and held political positions with dual cultural and structural power. In addition to influencing culture and public perception, they can affect the formal structures and policies within the political system. Therefore, their influence is not limited to cultural and social aspects but extends into the structural and political decisions that impact the direction of the nation and society as a whole (AR, 2017).

Pesantren's Role in General Elections

Pesantren plays a crucial role in shaping political perspectives and influencing voters in general elections in Indonesia. Pesantren often serve as places where political views and religious understanding converge, giving Kiai significant influence in guiding their followers. The proximity between pesantren leaders, santri, and the surrounding community makes pesantren centers for disseminating political and religious values, affecting how voters perceive candidates, political parties, and relevant political issues. This demonstrates that pesantren's role in shaping the political consciousness of the Islamic community must be considered and influence their participation in general elections (Ernas & Siregar, 2010).

From a Weberian sociological perspective, society only respects and obeys authority if there are valid reasons to support it. These reasons can manifest through three forms of domination: legal domination, traditional domination, and charismatic domination (Turner, 1984). Charismatic authority, as one of these forms, is characterized by obedience based on tradition or rules and the belief in someone considered sacred. In the Javanese context, the figure considered sacred is the kiai. Culturally, kiai holds a distinct authority compared to the general population. Dhofier once stated that kiai is often seen as a minor king whose commands must be respected by everyone (Muhtadi, 2004). According to the perspective of ordinary people, the aura of sanctity associated with a kiai can influence their thought patterns. People tend to follow the teachings and path laid out by the kiai because obedience to the kiai is legitimized by their religious values.

In the discourse of scholarship and culture, the relationship between pesantren and kiai is a pair of entities that cannot be separated. Pesantren operates under the complete control of a kiai, and the figure of the kiai is a charismatic symbol that attracts pesantren. A popular and well-known Kiai holds significant influence. Pesantren led by such kiai are often highly sought after by santri. The result of a kiai in the world of pesantren is so strong that they are often portrayed as a king, the highest leader, and the sole authority in the "small kingdom" called pesantren (Abdullah, 2007; Hannan & Abdillah, 2019). With such social status, the Kiai have complete control over various aspects of life in pesantren, including social, economic, educational, cultural, and even political matters in their respective regions.

In the context of general elections in Indonesia, political parties are not the sole force in political mobilization. Instead, political rallies often involve non-political elements such as leadership and social networks. For example, in the 1950s, the influence of prominent ulama in Islamic parties played a significant role in the political dynamics of Indonesia. Similarly, in the 1980s, Golkar utilized the power of social networks involving the military and bureaucracy to secure victory in general elections (Nugroho, 2011). During the Reform Era, with the democratization and openness of the political system, the political influence of the santri

community became more apparent. For instance, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), representing the santri, successfully became the fifth president of Indonesia. This demonstrates that the pesantren community and the kiai leading the pesantren are involved in practical politics.

This situation creates a robust political attraction for pesantren. The political assets held by pesantren are often targeted by political parties, regional candidates, and even presidential candidates, who vie for their support. Pesantren has two options with associated risks and consequences. Both internally and externally, pesantren can choose their stance (Qomar, 2002). *First*, pesantren can remain neutral and independent or not directly engage in practical politics. This stance reflects the firm commitment that the primary focus of pesantren is on education and the spiritual and social betterment of the community, without direct involvement in practical politics. The consequence of this neutral stance is that pesantren have limited opportunities to receive the financial aid or support often promised or provided by political parties or regional candidates running for office. Often, pesantren are built with limited resource subsidies from the community, especially if the Kiai have financial constraints. In such situations, pesantren may become vulnerable to political assistance offers in exchange for political support, especially if it has a substantial number of santri, making it a valuable political commodity. *Second*, pesantren or kiai can actively engage in the political sphere by supporting a particular political party or figure. In this case, pesantren have a high potential to receive support, either through financial aid or infrastructure improvements to enhance their educational facilities.

The different stances among pesantren regarding involvement in practical politics create two distinct perspectives. Some pesantren support a particular party or candidate for religious or vested interests. On the other hand, the participation of pesantren in practical politics can lead to potential conflicts with other pesantren that remain neutral, as they believe that pesantren should not enter the realm of practical politics but instead focus on education and community spiritual and social development, without engaging in politics. These two stances of pesantren, in turn, can confuse the santri regarding the role of pesantren in society.

Resource Mobilization and Pesantren Networks in Politics

As an institution with a long historical legacy, pesantren has its distinct advantages through the utilization of a solid and extensive social network among pesantren, kiai (leaders), santri, alums, and the surrounding community. By harnessing this network, pesantren can influence the political dynamics, the development of pesantren, and religious education amid society. This can be utilized as a political resource, either to support specific candidates or to voice the aspirations and interests of the santri.

Indonesian voters can be categorized into three types: emotional voters, rational-emotional voters, and rational voters (Malik, 2018). Emotional voters have a solid emotional connection to their identities, such as ideological beliefs, religion, and culture. In the political context, pesantren as religious institutions wield significant influence over emotional voters. Cengiz Erisen divides emotional voters into active and passive emotional voters. Active emotional voters are easily identifiable because they quickly respond to political issues related to religion and identity (Erisen, 2018). They are often active on social media and aggressively post about these issues. This is where pesantren and pesantren figures can influence emotional voters.

On the other hand, passive-emotional voters tend not to display their emotions and prefer silent communication overtly. They may not openly declare their political preferences but can be observed through their actions, like 'liking' articles or information they agree with. Pesantren can also influence these voters through the information and issues they convey.

Rational-emotional voters are those who, when processing political information, tend to prioritize emotional factors, especially when issues related to religion and identity come into play. Pesantren can influence these voters through messages that trigger their emotional responses.

Rational voters, on the other hand, prioritize rational analysis in their decision-making. Emotional factors do not heavily influence them; they tend to consider data and arguments supporting their political choices. Pesantren can deliver logical arguments and influence this type of voter. Consequently, pesantren and their networks can mobilize various voter types by understanding their thought patterns and emotional responses to political issues related to religion, identity, and ideology.

At a macro level, pesantren wields significant social capital that influences political dynamics. As a respected and trusted religious institution among the public, pesantren holds high social legitimacy. This is based on the prominence of Kiai leaders and the reputation of the quality educational systems in Pesantren. When pesantren engage in electoral politics, they can mobilize a significant mass base due to the support and faith of the community in the institution.

At a micro level, pesantren's involvement in electoral politics is often seen through the affiliation of pesantren figures with political parties with Islamic nuances. Influential presidential figures play roles as advisors or even political candidates. Support from pesantren and their santri becomes a valuable asset in political campaigns.

At a meso level, pesantren possess a solid social network that supports their mechanisms of political involvement. This network may encompass relationships with local communities, community leaders, and political figures. Pesantren utilizes this network to mobilize support, gather financial resources, and influence political decisions at both local and national levels (Hasanudin, 2017).

One example of pesantren's involvement in politics is the declaration of the Santri Network for Jokowi (JASA Jokowi) made by several young kiai in Tasikmalaya in 2019. JASA Jokowi was a tactical organization formed to capture the support of santri for Jokowi as a presidential candidate for a second term. This declaration was made at two pesantren, Al-Hikmah and Sulalatul Huda, inviting thousands of santri from various regions. In this event, the Kiai delivered political messages aimed at directly mobilizing the santri, highlighting Jokowi's achievements and care for the santri, and encouraging santri to participate in the elections (Dewi, 2019) actively.

As the 2024 elections approach, the role of pesantren in electoral politics becomes more prominent, especially because presidential candidates are becoming increasingly active in campaigning at pesantren. This phenomenon reflects the awareness of candidates about the potential support they can gain from the pesantren community in Indonesia. Presidential candidates implement various strategies to garner support from pesantren. They visit prominent pesantren, meet with kiai, and promise to support the development of pesantren and Islamic education in Indonesia. This underscores their awareness of the importance of religious education and pesantren-related issues in electoral politics. With thousands of santri and an extensive network, pesantren become a solid support base for presidential candidates.

In this context, pesantren are places to obtain support and tools for mobilizing the masses for political campaigns.

In the example in Malang Regency, thousands of NU students and kiai from all over East Java wholeheartedly supported Prabowo Subianto as a presidential candidate in the 2024 Presidential Election by raising the slogan "Prabowo President 2024". This support is driven by the belief that Prabowo has the ability and commitment to advance pesantren in Indonesia (detikJatim, n.d.).

Pesantren clerics and caretakers are actively involved in mass mobilization to support Prabowo as a presidential candidate in the 2024 presidential election. Islamic boarding school scholars and caretakers, including Gus Hans (Jombang), Gus Atok (Wonosobo), Gus Munif (Banyumas), Gus Candra Malik (Karanganyar), as well as several other figures such as Gus Jaroh (Yogyakarta), Gus Aam, Gus Lukman, Ning Uul (Kudus), Ning Uci (Pasuruan), Ning Nita (Yogyakarta), firmly expressed their support (*Ditugasi Cari Dukungan Ulama, Gus Miftah Bikin Lagu "Prabowo Capresku,"* 2023). Prabowo announced his presidential re-election to contribute to the nation's progress. Support from various pesantren figures is considered the moral capital motivating Prabowo. However, Prabowo has yet to announce who will be his running mate as vice presidential candidate.

In another community, "Santri Dukung Ganjar Banten" (Santri Support Ganjar Banten), santri are actively supporting Ganjar Pranowo as a presidential candidate by voicing the slogan "Ganjar President 2024" based on the belief that Ganjar will pay attention to the development of pesantren in Indonesia (Kharisma, n.d.). Meanwhile, in East Java, several major pesantren like Lirboyo, Ploso, Sukorejo Situbondo, and Bumi Sholawat have positively responded to the duo of Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar (Cak Imin) in the 2024 presidential election, reflecting the active involvement of pesantren in electoral politics (Rinanda, n.d.).

This shows the critical role of pesantren in Indonesian politics, where the support of Islamic scholars and caregivers is expected to influence opinion and mass mobility and become an essential factor in the contemporary political process in Indonesia.

Kiai's Influence on Mass Mobilization

According to Dhofier, "kiai" is an honorary title the community gives to an Islamic religious scholar who leads a pesantren and teaches classical Islamic texts to its santri. Initially, "kiai" were known as Islamic religious leaders before becoming involved in practical politics. However, in Islamic history, religious leaders could also hold political leadership positions, as seen in the history of the Prophet Muhammad, who served as both a religious and political leader. Over time, the term "political kiai" emerged to distinguish kiai involved in politics from those focused solely on education within pesantren (Dhofier, 1982; Turmudi et al., 2004).

It is not correct to equate the meaning of ulama with kiai. However, this meaning is used when there is no equivalent of the word kiai in Arabic that is closer than the word or in its plural form, "ulama." The term ulama parallels a verse that says that the servants who fear Me most are the scholars on Surah. al-Fāṭir [35]: 28. The religious knowledge possessed by the ulama (read: kiai) should make the kiai more afraid of threats and negligence of obligations as a servant of Allah and *khalīlah Allah fi al-ard* (Allah's representative on earth). In other words, kiai (ulama) are believed to be religious figures who have abilities in the field of religion, or kiai are a mirror and symbol of a person who is obedient and has a strong understanding of religion.

Pesantren kiai, especially those affiliated with NU, is closely related to the teachings of *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*, prioritizing political stability and security while opposing forms of rebellion against authorities. The principles of Sunni teachings, such as moderation, balance, tolerance, and uprightness, make Sunni kiai tend to be accommodating toward the government and adaptable to various cultural spectrums (Ridwan, 2004).

At least two vital sources of influence for a kiai in the political realm stemming from their two primary power sources. *First*, it comes from kinship and intellectual relationships. Relationships between kiai or among pesantren are often connected through social bonds based on family (kinship) and intellectual bonds based on the chain of knowledge transmission (*sanad*). Kinship connections among pesantren play a crucial role in shaping economic and political behavior to strengthen the influence of a kiai involved in these kinship relationships. The broader a kiai's kinship network, their economic and political power is more significant. Additionally, in the context of intellectual relationships, a kiai represents the teachings of the pesantren and their teachers from the institution where they acquired their knowledge. Therefore, in political matters, a kiai will follow the guidance of the pesantren where they studied (Dhofier, 1982). *Second*, a kiai's political influence comes from their formal positions in political parties, religious, and social organizations. These legal positions within the structural organization serve as the basis for a kiai's influence on other individuals within their roles in the structure. These sources of power can strengthen a kiai's impact since a kiai who is not a politician may not directly gain electoral benefits from the seeds of power they hold. In practice, these resources are used to advance their political agenda within the context of general elections.

In practical politics, leadership competition is often based on individuals with solid personal fame and charisma. This is a highly prominent feature in community politics. In this regard, the political orientation of religious groups or structures, such as kiai and pesantren, becomes a very relevant and accurate indicator to measure the direction of the community's political journey, especially in the East Java region (Abdussalam, 2015; Hannan, 2017).

Regarding the use of descent or "*trah*" of kiai in social politics, an exciting example emerged during the regional head elections in Bangkalan Regency. This involved the association of Fuad Amin with the symbolic heritage of "Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan" due to his family's relation to Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan. This fact was leveraged in the context of social politics to increase Fuad Amin's popularity. This strategy proved highly effective in garnering support, with some individuals willing to sacrifice everything to demonstrate their loyalty to this figure. This fanaticism can be understood, given that Syaikhona Khalil Bangkalan was a charismatic religious scholar acknowledged as a teacher by many Islamic scholars in the archipelago. Even a scholar as significant as Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of Indonesia's most prominent religious and social organization, is known to have been a santri under the guidance of Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan. Therefore, in various social and cultural aspects, including the political arena, kiai can easily wield their influence and charisma to attract the attention and support of the public (Hannan, 2017).

In the 2014 presidential election, Amin Imron, the head of the campaign team for the Prabowo-Hatta presidential ticket, successfully mobilized support from approximately 1,200 kiai in Bangkalan Regency, which also includes Sampang, Pamekasan, and Sumenep Regencies, to support the Prabowo-Hatta ticket. This support came from various pesantren across Madura East Java and was influenced by the shared national values between NU scholars and the presidential candidates. Fuad Amin effectively mobilized and coordinated support from various Kiai across Madura (Ridho, 2023).

When examined in depth, the power inherent in the figure of a kiai is not without a basis but rooted in the public's perception of the kiai as possessing profound religious knowledge. From this perspective, the primary variable that explains why a kiai can easily influence the subjectivity and collective consciousness of the community is that the kiai's power is deeply embedded within the community, reaching various layers, including grassroots communities. This network of control refers to a broad mass, ranging from networks of Santri Pesantren alums to charismatic lineages that extend through influential families and predecessors. These charismatic lineages become the social capital used by the Kiai to strengthen their position and build their profile as a figure with high prestige.

From the perspective of social theories proposed by Weber and Foucault, all elements of prestige held by the kiai are rooted in the kiai's status and social role, which can be referred to as "enunciative modality." In the public's view, the kiai is a symbol of religion, and power enables them to influence and shape the attitudes of the entire community directly. This effectively shapes perceptions of truth and even justification, serving as the foundation for the legitimacy of the actions, attitudes, and even the thoughts of the entire society.

The influence of the kiai in society is well illustrated due to the belief that showing respect and behaving well towards religious scholars like Kiai will bring blessings from Allah (Syarif, 2016). Therefore, the instructions and views given by the kiai are rarely met with resistance from the community because the kiai is regarded as a guide in life, providing guidance and direction in both worldly and spiritual matters (Zainuddin, 2014). The power of the kiai extends even to leadership institutions and government bureaucracies. For example, in efforts to control population growth through the Family Planning program in Betawi (Derani, 2013), where the government even faced challenges implementing the program, the Kiai could play a significant role in realizing the program. Even the statement by Sofi'i, a resident of Pamekasan Regency based on research by Asmawati, further reinforces the view of the strong influence of kiai in society.

"If a kiai tells us to do something, the people will not refuse it, even if it contradicts the government, we will do it because the kiai would never instruct something that is not good for the community. So we believe that the Kiai can guide us. Obeying the kiai is one of our acts of devotion (Asmawati et al., 2021)."

Sofi'i's testimony reflects the community's belief that the kiai possesses profound religious knowledge and can adequately guide worldly and spiritual affairs.

Kiai's Political Pragmatism and the Reduction of Islamic Political Parties

The involvement of kiai in practical politics is a common phenomenon in Indonesia, especially in the post-reform era. Kiai, an influential religious figure with a history of shaping moral values and providing spiritual guidance to the community, has, over time, decided to actively engage in practical politics, going beyond their traditional roles as spiritual leaders.

The involvement of kiai in politics is based on various motives, including ideological, pragmatic, or a combination of both. The ideological justification is the primary reason that drives Kiai to participate in politics. They view politics as a means to realize religious and moral values in concrete actions and believe that governing according to Islamic teachings is consistent with religious beliefs and that establishing a state according to the consensus of scholars (Ijma ulama) is a collective obligation. The pragmatic motive is also one of the reasons Kiai gets involved in politics. Kiai realizes that politics is one way to advocate for the interests

of the Muslim community. By engaging in politics, kiai can influence government policies to be more favorable to the Muslim community.

As Herbert Feith discussed, the development of political ideologies and party movements in Indonesia has an exciting history. Initially, Indonesia had four major ideological movements that influenced its political outlook: communism, represented by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI); nationalism with Javanese-Hindu cultural influences reflected in the Indonesian National Party (PNI) led by Soekarno, Islamism represented by Islamic parties like Masyumi and NU, and social democracy adopted by minor parties like the Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI) (Feith & Castles, 1970).

However, the era of solid political ideologies ended when Indonesia entered the New Order era under Soeharto's leadership. During the New Order period, the government merged political parties to reduce political pluralism. This policy indirectly reduced the role of ideology in Indonesian politics. Existing political parties were forced to join the United Development Party (PPP) and the Functional Groups (Golkar), which tended to adopt a pragmatic rather than an ideology-based approach.

The impact of this policy was that political parties during the New Order period focused more on supporting the government rather than pursuing their agendas. While ideology still played a role in Indonesian politics, its role became more limited compared to the previous era. This influenced the political dynamics in Indonesia for several decades until the political reform in 1998 brought significant changes to the Indonesian political system.

Many significant changes occurred in politics and the political party system in the reform era. To understand this dynamic, many political scientists used typologies created by Richard Gunther to classify political parties based on their characteristics. In this context, most political parties in post-reform Indonesia can be classified as "electoral parties" (Gunther & Diamond, 2003). One key characteristic of electoral parties is prioritizing winning votes in general elections over ideological consistency. This shift resulted from the global changes after the end of the Cold War, as stated by Francis Fukuyama, who argued that ideologies had lost their relevance (Fukuyama, 2006). Therefore, existing political parties focused more on gaining as many votes as possible in elections than maintaining rigid ideological consistency. This highly pragmatic electoral typology would significantly impact the political recruitment process in Indonesia, where electoral gains often take precedence over the quality of cadres and the alignment of cadre ideologies with the party's ideology.

Electoral parties prioritize winning votes in general elections as their primary goal and focus more on electoral objectives than commitments to a particular ideology or principles. This means that parties pay more attention to how to gain maximum electoral support rather than adhering to a consistent political ideology.

The phenomenon of political pragmatism among Kiai is evident, especially in the political careers of Fuad Amin and Tuan Guru Bajang (TGB) Zainul Majdi, who initially fought for Islamic parties and later shifted toward pragmatism. Fuad Amin began his political journey with the United Development Party (PPP) in 1990 when the PPP was the sole Islamic-oriented political party. In 1996, he assumed the position of the PPP's Regional Executive Board in Bangkalan, replacing his father, Amin Imron, who was an influential figure in the PPP in Madura during the New Order era. Kiai Amin Imron was crucial in introducing Fuad Amin to practical politics.

After the Reform in 1998, which marked the end of the Soeharto regime, numerous new political parties emerged, including the National Awakening Party (PKB), founded by NU figures, including Gus Dur. Fuad Amin found himself at a crossroads, needing to choose

between remaining with the PPP to continue his father's legacy or joining PKB, which Gus Dur, a central figure in NU at the time, led. Gus Dur even offered Fuad Amin the position of member of the Central Executive Board (DPP) of PKB as part of the Shura Council. Ultimately, Fuad Amin decided to leave PPP and join PKB.

During his time with PKB, Fuad Amin successfully won a seat in the Indonesian Parliament (DPR) as a member. When PKB experienced internal divisions in 2001 between the camps of Gus Dur and Matori Abdul Djilil, Fuad Amin supported the Gus Dur camp and became the Chairman of the Shura Council of PKB East Java, according to Gus Dur's version. Fuad Amin continued to strengthen his influence in Bangkalan by winning two terms as the head of the local government, one from 2003 to 2008 and another from 2008 to 2012. After his tenure as regent, he remained active in Bangkalan's politics, although he was no longer a PKB cadre. Fuad Amin joined the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) led by Prabowo Subianto. Under the Gerindra banner, he was elected Chairman of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) in Bangkalan for the 2014-2019 term. Fuad Amin's presence in Gerindra had a significant impact. Gerindra won the Bangkalan elections, securing 10 out of 45 seats in the Bangkalan Regional Council (*Keputusan Komisi Pemilihan Umum Republik Indonesia*, 2018). His son, Makmun Ibnu Fuad, had previously held this position and later became the Regent of Bangkalan after Fuad Amin, creating an exchange of parts between father and son. Thus, the Fuad Amin family controlled the two highest leadership positions in Bangkalan politics.

A similar situation occurred in the political journey of TGB Zainul Majdi. He was first elected as a member of the Indonesian Parliament (DPR RI) from the Crescent Star Party (PBB) for the 2004-2009 term. Then, in the 2008 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), with the support of a coalition between PBB and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), TGB was elected as the Governor of NTB. However, in 2011, TGB joined the Democratic Party and was even selected as the Chairman of the Democratic Party in NTB during the Regional Congress (Musda) of 2011. After that, in 2018, TGB decided to switch to the Functional Groups Party (Golkar). Although he briefly served as the Coordinator of the Religious Affairs Division in the Golkar Central Executive Board (DPP), TGB was not included in the party's leadership structure after the Golkar National Congress in October 2020.

Furthermore, TGB moved between parties and was appointed as the Chairman of the People's National Convention of the Perindo Party and later inaugurated as the Deputy Chairman of the National DPP of Perindo (Riswanda, 2022). TGB's decision to switch parties reflects a pragmatic political behavior, where he always sought the party that offered the most advantageous opportunities and support for his political career. This also reflects changes in the relationship between political elites and political parties and a response to Indonesia's open proportional multi-party electoral system.

The phenomenon of political pragmatism among Kiai, clearly reflected in the political careers of figures like Fuad Amin and TGB Zainul Majdi, undoubtedly significantly impacts Indonesia's political dynamics and society. The implications of this phenomenon include several aspects. *First*, there is a reduction in ideological consistency, where Islamic political parties tend to soften their ideological stance to maintain or increase electoral support. *Second*, this phenomenon reflects internal dynamics within Islamic political parties, with leaders focusing more on personal or group interests than the party's ideology, which can create instability within these parties. *Third*, the pragmatic political behavior of Kiai also affects the public's perception of Islamic political parties and Kiai as religious leaders, making the public more pragmatic in supporting political figures. *Fourth*, the political recruitment process is

more driven by electoral considerations than by the ideological alignment between cadres and the party, changing the dynamics of candidate selection. *Fifth*, this phenomenon highlights the importance of adaptation and flexibility in dealing with changing political dynamics, where kiai must move across parties and make tactical decisions to maintain their political existence. Overall, political pragmatism among Kiai reflects a profound transformation in Indonesian politics, with a shift from ideology towards pragmatism in gaining political support. These implications stimulate debates about the future of Islamic political parties and the role of religious leaders in contemporary Indonesian politics.

CONCLUSION

The role of pesantren and kiai in Indonesian politics continues to evolve with undeniable significance. As religious educational institutions, pesantren have a broad mass base and a solid social network for mobilizing political support. As a central figure in pesantren, Kiai can mobilize people's opinions and political participation through his influence and authority. However, this phenomenon reflects a shift from ideology to pragmatism in gaining political support. The political pragmatism of kiai and Pesantren has implications for ideological inconsistency in Islamic parties, internal party fragmentation, electoral-based political recruitment, and the public's pragmatic view of religious figures and Islamic-based parties.

To overcome this challenge, kiai must be adaptive and flexible in facing political dynamics without abandoning moral commitments. In the future, dialog and partnerships will be necessary between Islamic parties, pesantren, and the government to balance kiai's constructive political and spiritual roles for the nation.

REFERENCES

- Abdillah, M. (2013). Hubungan Agama dan Negara dalam Konteks Modernisasi Politik di Era Reformasi. *AHKAM : Jurnal Ilmu Syariah*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v13i2.937>
- Abdullah, S. (2007). *Pesantren Jati Diri dan Pencerahan Masyarakat*. Sumenep: Said Abdullah Institute Publishing.
- Ahmadi, R., & Rose, K. R. (2014). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif*. http://senayan.iainpalangkaraya.ac.id/index.php?p=show_detail&id=11966&keywords=
- Amin, M. M. (1996). *NU & ijtihad politik kenegaraannya*. Al-Amin Press.
- AR, Z. T. (2017). Genealogi Peran Kaum Santri dalam Sketsa Politik Nasional. *Al-Ibrah*, 2(1), 32–59.
- detikJatim, T. (n.d.). *Kiai Khos NU dan Santri di Malang Siap Menangkan Prabowo di Pilpres 2024*. detikjatim. Retrieved October 4, 2023, from <https://www.detik.com/jatim/berita/d-6927549/kiai-khos-nu-dan-santri-di-malang-siap-menangkan-prabowo-di-pilpres-2024>
- Ditugasi Cari Dukungan Ulama, Gus Miftah Bikin Lagu "Prabowo Capresku."* (2023). CNN. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20230909135135-617-996845/ditugasi-cari-dukungan-ulama-gus-miftah-bikin-lagu-prabowo-capresku>
- Erisen, C. (2018). *Political behavior and the emotional citizen*. Springer. <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/978-1-137-58705-3.pdf>

- Ernas, S., & Siregar, F. M. (2010). Dampak Keterlibatan Pesantren dalam Politik: Studi Kasus Pesantren di YOGYAKARTA. *Kontekstualita: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, 25(2), 37094.
- Geertz, C. (2013). Agama Jawa: Abangan, Santri, Priyayi dalam Kebudayaan Jawa. (No Title). <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130282270519983104>
- Hamzah, S. H. (2014). Perkembangan Pesantren Di Indonesia (Era Orde Lama, Orde Baru, Reformasi). *SYAMIL: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education)*, 2(1), 14–14.
- Hannan, A., & Abdillah, K. (2019). HEGEMONI RELIGIO-KEKUASAAN DAN TRANSFORMASI SOSIAL Mobilisasi Jaringan Kekuasaan dan Keagamaan Kyai dalam Dinamika Sosio-Kultural Masyarakat. *Sosial Budaya*, 16(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.24014/sb.v16i1.7037>
- Hasanudin, S. (2017). Mekanisme Religio-Politik Pesantren: Mobilisasi Jaringan Hamida Dalam Politik Elektoral Tasikmalaya. *MASYARAKAT: Jurnal Sosiologi*, 53–80.
- Keputusan Komisi Pemilihan Umum Republik Indonesia*. (2018). https://jdih.kpu.go.id/data/data_kepkpu/278_Jatim.pdf
- Malik, A. (2018). Ruang publik sebagai representasi kebijakan dan medium komunikasi publik. *Sawala: Jurnal Administrasi Negara*, 6(2), 82–88.
- Martiningsih, D. (2017). Peran Masyarakat Madani Mewujudkan Clean Government (Pemerintahan Yang Bebas Korupsi Kolusi Dan Nepotisme). *PUSAKA*, 5(2), 201–218.
- Mustaqim, M. (2015). Politik Kebangsaan Kaum Santri: Studi Atas Kiprah Politik Nahdlatul Ulama. *Addin*, 9(2). <http://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/Addin/article/view/618>
- Nasih, M. (2022). Ulama'Pesantren dan Kekuasaan. *KAIS Kajian Ilmu Sosial*, 1(1), 27–33.
- Nugroho, K. (2011). Ikhtiar teoritik mengkaji peran partai dalam mobilisasi politik elektoral. *Departemen Politik. Universitas Airlangga*, 24(3), 202–214.
- Qomar, M. (2002). *Pesantren: Dari transformasi metodologi menuju demokratisasi institusi*. Erlangga. https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=_u6ouXge9JcC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=santren:+Dari+Tranformasi+Metodologi+Menuju+Demokratisasi+&ots=2rl3BsISku&sig=L05m2TKTsJN-L8QISn0U0QAwk5k
- Rinanda, H. M. (n.d.). *Daftar Ponpes Besar yang Diklaim Eks Petinggi PWNu Jatim Pro Anies-Cak Imin*. detikjatim. Retrieved October 4, 2023, from <https://www.detik.com/jatim/berita/d-6917870/daftar-ponpes-besar-yang-diklaim-eks-petinggi-pwnu-jatim-pro-anies-cak-imin>
- Royani, A. (2020). Pesantren Dalam Bingkai Sejarah Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Indonesia. *Jurnal Islam Nusantara*, 2(1), 121–128.
- Saputra, I. (2019). Resolusi Jihad: Nasionalisme Kaum Santri Menuju Indonesia Merdeka. *JURNAL ISLAM NUSANTARA*, 3(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.33852/jurnal.in.v3i1.128>

- Ummah, S. (2019). Afiliasi Politik Pondok Pesantren Dalam Pilpres 2019 di Kabupaten Lamongan. *Jurnal Politik Indonesia Vol, 5(02)*. <http://journal.unair.ac.id/download-fullpapers-jpic38daa356dfull.pdf>
- Wahid, A. (1995). Pesantren sebagai subkultur. *Dalam M. Dawam Rahardjo (Ed.). Pesantren Dan Pembaharuan. Ttp: LP3ES.*
- Yansah, A. (2016). Politik Kebijakan Pemerintah terhadap Pendidikan Agama Islam di Masa Orde Baru. *Nur El-Islam, 3(1)*, 50–62.