

**Nahdlatul Ulama
and the
Struggle for Power
within Islam
and Politics in
Indonesia**

The **Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)** was established as an autonomous organization in 1968. It is a regional centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environment. The Institute's research programmes are the Regional Economic Studies (RES, including ASEAN and APEC), Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS), and Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS).

ISEAS Publishing, an established academic press, has issued almost 2,000 books and journals. It is the largest scholarly publisher of research about Southeast Asia from within the region. ISEAS Publishing works with many other academic and trade publishers and distributors to disseminate important research and analyses from and about Southeast Asia to the rest of the world.

**Nahdlatul Ulama
and the
Struggle for Power
within Islam
and Politics in
Indonesia**

R O B I N B U S H



INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

Singapore

First published in Singapore in 2009 by ISEAS Publishing
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Pasir Panjang
Singapore 119614

E-mail: publish@iseas.edu.sg
Website: <http://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

© 2009 Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

ISEAS Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Bush, Robin.

Nadhlatul Ulama & the struggle for power within Islam & politics in Indonesia.

1. N.U. (Organization).
2. Islam and politics—Indonesia.
3. Indonesia—Politics and government—1988-.

I. Title.

BP10 N83B97

2009

ISBN 978-981-230-875-7 (soft cover)

ISBN 978-981-230-876-4 (hard cover)

ISBN 978-981-230-879-5 (PDF)

Copy-edited by Beth Thomson, Canberra.
Typeset by Superskill Graphics Pte Ltd
Printed in Singapore by Seng Lee Press Pte Ltd

*Dedicated to the memory of
Daniel S. Lev, with much love and gratitude*

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Glossary</i>	xi
1. Introduction	1
2. The Origins of NU and the Conflict with Masyumi	24
3. Kembali ke Khittah 1926 and the Discourse on Civil Society	65
4. NU and <i>Reformasi</i> : Political Developments from 1998 to 2001	111
5. <i>Reformasi</i> and Khittah '26	152
6. Conclusion	187
<i>Appendices</i>	
1. Autonomous Bodies, Institutes and Committees of NU, 2004	201
2. Membership of the PBNU, 1984–89	203
3. Membership of the Executive Council of PKB, 1998–99	206
4. Membership of the PBNU, 1999–2004	208
<i>References</i>	211
<i>Index</i>	223
<i>About the Author</i>	235

Acknowledgements

My first word of thanks goes to the many NU leaders, *ulama*, activists and intellectuals who welcomed me into their world, shared their insights and struggles with me, and helped me obtain the information, documents and interviews I needed. There are too many to name here, so I won't mention individuals, but I will give special acknowledgment to the staff and leadership of Lakpesdam, LKiS, P3M, LKPSM, YKF, ISIS, Fatayat NU, Maarif NU, ICIP and WI. In addition, I'm very grateful to the leadership of the PBNU in 1999, and particularly the Muktamar Organizing Committee, for allowing me to participate in the 1999 Muktamar not just as an observer, but as a member of the *panitia*, which afforded me a unique perspective.

It is not possible to convey here the depth of the debt of gratitude that I owe to the late Professor Daniel S. Lev, who supervised my graduate study and the research from which this book stemmed. Dan Lev was one of the great giants of comparative law and Indonesian studies. He held a deep love for Indonesia at the same time as he held an uncompromising commitment to supporting reform in Indonesia. I learned more from him about Indonesian politics and society, approaches to studying religion, and how to survive graduate school than from any other single person. This book is dedicated to his memory.

There are several other scholars who have been influential in shaping my understanding of NU. I am indebted foremost to Dr Greg Fealy for generously sharing his considerable insight into NU over many hours of conversation, countless emails and numerous article drafts, and for taking the time to review and give critical commentary on the bulk of this volume. His input has immeasurably improved the quality of the book. From the early days of my academic and professional career, Dr Douglas Ramage has been an inspiration and a mentor. His unparalleled understanding of contemporary Indonesian politics also influences this work. Without his unswerving support, it would not have been possible for me to fulfil my responsibilities at The Asia Foundation while completing this book. For this I am deeply grateful.

I must include a special word of thanks for my extraordinary editor, Beth Thomson. There is no question that the publication of this book would not have been possible without her. Her professional rigour, attention to detail, thoroughness and discipline are largely responsible for the quality of this publication — while any remaining flaws are clearly my own responsibility. Beth managed the huge challenge of more or less keeping me on deadline with good humour and patience, for which I am most grateful.

Finally, I must thank my family for their patience, support and love throughout the seemingly endless process of writing and revising this book. My children, Ayu and Philip, bring energy and joy and meaning to my life, and my husband Phil has been a constant support and inspiration. I owe my deepest and most personal thanks to all three.

Robin Bush
10 May 2008

Glossary

<i>abangan</i> Muslims	nominal or less strict Muslims, usually in reference to Javanese Muslims
<i>ahlusunnah wal jamaah</i>	'those who follow the Sunnah'; long-hand term for the majority Sunni branch within Islam; in Indonesia, it refers to those who follow any of the four <i>mazhab</i> , and is used by traditionalist Muslims to differentiate themselves from modernist Muslims
<i>aliran</i>	'stream'; also used to denote the variation between types of Islam in Indonesia
Al-Irsyad	Jami'yyat al-Islah wal-Irsyad (Union for Reformation and Guidance)
<i>amar ma'ruf nahi munkar</i>	doing good and avoiding evil
Ansor	the young men's branch of NU
<i>assalamu'alaikum</i>	'peace be upon you' (an Islamic greeting)
Bakorstanas	Badan Koordinasi Stabilitas Nasional (Coordinating Agency for the Maintenance of National Stability)
Banser	the paramilitary wing of Ansor
<i>bid'ah</i>	innovation (usually holds a negative connotation)
BPPN	Badan Penyehatan Perbankan Nasional (National Banking Rehabilitation Agency)
Bulog	Badan Urusan Logistik (National Logistics Agency)
Darul Islam	a pro-Islamic-state, secessionist movement that rebelled against the Indonesian government in 1948–62
DDII	Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (Islamic Education Council of Indonesia); founded in 1967

DPR	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (People's Representative Council); the lower house of parliament
ELSAD	Lembaga Studi Agama dan Demokrasi (Institute for the Study of Religion and Democracy)
Fatayat NU	NU Younger Women's Organization
<i>fatwa</i>	religious edict or opinion
<i>fiqh</i>	jurisprudence, legal prescriptions
FKI	Forum Kerja Indonesia (Indonesian Working Forum); founded in 1998
FUKOHA	Forum Ulama Untuk Optimalisasi Hak Atas Anggaran (Forum of Ulama to Optimize Budget Rights)
GMNU	Generasi Muda Nahdlatul Ulama (Young Generation of NU)
Golkar	Golongan Karya (the state political party under the New Order, and one of the major post-New Order parties)
GPI	Gerakan Pemuda Islam (Islamic Youth Movement)
Guided Democracy	the Soekarno regime, 1959–66
Gus Dur	Abdurrahman Wahid
Haji	title used by a male who has performed the <i>hajj</i>
Hadith	report or account of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad transmitted through a chain of narrators; Hadith are a basic source for Islamic law (see also Sunnah)
<i>hajj</i>	the annual pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>halal</i>	'released' (from prohibition); term denoting what is permitted or lawful in Islam
<i>haram</i>	'forbidden'; term for actions or things that are prohibited by Islamic law
Hijaz	a coastal region of the western Arabian Peninsula bordering the Red Sea, and including both Mecca and Medina; it was

	an independent kingdom until it united with Nejd to form the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
HMI	Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Islamic Students Association); founded in 1947
IAIN	Institut Agama Islam Negeri (State Islamic Institute); provides tertiary-level degrees
<i>ibadah</i>	worship, prescribed ritual duty
IBRA	Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency (also known as BPPN)
ICIP	International Centre for Islam and Pluralism; founded in 2003
ICIS	International Conference of Islamic Scholars
ICMI	Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals); founded in 1990
<i>ijtihad</i>	independent judgement, based on recognized sources of Islam, on a legal or theological question (in contrast to <i>taqlid</i> , judgment based on tradition or convention)
<i>ijma'</i>	consensus of expert legal opinion
IPKI	Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia (Pro-Independence Alliance of Indonesia)
IPNU	Ikatan Pelajar Nahdlatul Ulama (Union of NU Students); a group for secondary school boys
IPPNU	Ikatan Pelajar Putri Nahdlatul Ulama (Union of NU Girl Students); a group for secondary school girls
ISIS	Institut untuk Studi Institusi Sosial (Institute for Social Institutions Studies)
<i>jahiliyah</i>	'ignorance of Islam'; historically it refers to the period before the revelation of Islam and its spread by the Prophet Muhammad
JIL	Jaringan Islam Liberal (Liberal Islam Network); founded in 2001

JPPR	Jaringan Pendidikan Pemilih untuk Rakyat (People's Voter Education Network); founded in 1998
Ka'bah	the 'House of God'; a cube-like building situated in the Grand Mosque of Mecca
Kembali ke Khittah 1926 Kepercayaan	Return to the Guidelines of 1926 'Belief'; the official title for a set of mystically oriented belief systems indigenous to Indonesia
<i>ketua</i>	director or deputy chair
<i>ketua umum</i>	chair (the head of the Tanfidziyah)
KH	Kiai Haji (see <i>kiai</i> , Haji)
<i>khilafiyah</i>	contentious legal matter on which the opinion of the <i>ulama</i> is divided
<i>khittah</i>	guidelines, basis
Khittah '26	see Kembali ke Khittah 1926
<i>kiai</i>	'noble', 'lofty'; title of a religious scholar or leader
KISDI	Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam (Indonesian Committee for World Islamic Solidarity); formed in 1986 to promote the cause of overseas Muslims in conflict zones
<i>kitab kuning</i>	'yellow books' (a reference to the colour of the pages); commentaries on the Qur'an and Islamic law used as teaching texts in <i>pesantren</i>
KMNU	Kaum Muda Nahdlatul Ulama (Young Generation of NU)
Konstituante	Constituent Assembly; elected body that met between December 1956 and June 1959 to draft a permanent constitution to replace the existing provisional constitution
KOPRI	Korps Putri (the women's branch of PMII)
KPU	Komite Pemilihan Umum (National Election Commission)
Lajnah Bahtsul Matsail	Committee for Religious Problem Solving
Lajnah Falakiyah	Committee of Astrology

Lakpesdam	Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (Institute for the Study and Development of Human Resources), founded in 1985
Liga Muslimin	League of Muslims, established by NU in August 1952 in an effort to provide an organizational alternative to Masyumi for Muslim groups in Indonesia
LIPi	Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (Indonesian Institute of Sciences)
LKB	Lembaga Kajian Bangsa (Institute of National Studies)
LKiS	Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Social (Institute for the Study of Islam and Society); founded in 1993
LKKNU	Lembaga Kemaslahatan Keluarga Nahdlatul Ulama (NU Family Welfare Institute)
LKPSM	Lajinah Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (the Yogyakarta-based branch of Lakpesdam)
LP2NU	Lembaga Pengembangan Pertanian Nahdlatul Ulama (NU Agricultural Development Institute)
LP3ES	Lembaga Penelitian Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial (Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information); founded in 1971
LPBH	Lembaga Penyuluhan dan Bantuan Hukum (Institute for Legal Training and Aid)
Ma'arif NU <i>madrasah</i>	Ma'arif NU Institute of Education Islamic day school, often located on the grounds of a <i>pesantren</i> ; since 1989 <i>madrasah</i> have been required to teach the national education curriculum
MAR	Majelis Amanat Rakyat (People's Mandate Council); founded in 1998

Masyumi	Madjlis Sjuro Muslimin Indonesia (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims); originally a Japanese-sponsored Islamic organization formed in 1943, it transformed itself into an Islamic party in 1945 and was banned by Soekarno in 1960
<i>mazhab</i>	the four schools of Sunni Islam (Syafi'i, Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali)
MDI	Majelis Dakwah Islamiyah (Muslim Education Council)
MIAI	Majelis Islam A'laa Indonesia (Supreme Council of Indonesian Muslims); formed in September 1937
MPR	Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (People's Consultative Assembly); the upper house of parliament
Muhammadiyah	modernist Islamic organization founded in 1912
MUI	Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Council of Ulama); founded in 1975
Muktamar	National Congress of NU, held every five years
Munas	Musyawahar Nasional Alim Ulama (National Meeting of Ulama); NU's mid-term conference
Murba	Partai Musyawarah Rakyat Banyak (Party of the Masses); founded by Adam Malik in 1948
Muslimat NU	NU Women's Organization; founded in 1946
Mustasyar	Advisory Council (of NU)
New Order	the Suharto era, 1965–98
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama (Revival of the Religious Scholars); Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, founded in 1926 by Hasyim Asy'ari and Wahab Chasbullah to promote traditionalist Islam
NUM	Nahdlatul Ummat (Awakening of Muslim Believers)

P3M	Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (Association for the Development of Pesantren and Society); founded 1983
P-4	Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila (an indoctrination course on Pancasila)
PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional (National Mandate Party); founded in 1998
Pancasila	the 'Five Principles' constituting the national ideology of the Indonesian state; they are: belief in Almighty God, humanitarianism, national unity, democracy through consultation and consensus, and social justice
Paramadina	a neo-modernist NGO founded in 1986
Parkindo	Partai Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Party)
Parmusi	Partai Muslimin Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Party)
Partai Bintang Sembilan	Nine Star Party
Partai Katolik	Catholic Party
PBB	Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent Moon and Star Party); founded in 1998
PBNU	Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama (Executive Board of NU)
PCNU	Pengurus Cabang Nahdlatul Ulama (District Board of NU)
PBS	Partai Bintang Sembilan (Nine Star Party)
PDI	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (Indonesian Democratic Party); founded in 1973 by President Soeharto by merging five existing parties
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle); founded in 1998
Persis	Persatuan Islam (Islamic Association); reformist Islamic organization founded in 1923

Perti	Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (Islamic Education Association); Sumatra-based traditionalist organization and political party founded in 1930
<i>pesantren</i>	'place of the <i>santri</i> '; traditional Islamic boarding school
PIR	Persatuan Indonesia Raya (Greater United Party)
PK	Partai Keadilan (Justice Party); formed in 1998 and renamed Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) in 2003
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party); founded in 1998, and based largely on an NU constituency
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PKU	Partai Kebangkitan Umat (Muslim Community Awakening Party)
PMII	Perikatan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Students Association)
PNI	Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Nationalist Party)
PNU	Partai Nahdlatul Umat (Rise of the Muslim Community Party)
Poros Tengah	Central Axis
PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party); established under regime pressure in 1973 by amalgamating four Islamic parties: NU, Parmusi (the successor to Masyumi), Perti and Sarekat Islam
<i>priyayi</i>	the traditional aristocratic class of Java
PRRI	Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia)
PSII	Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Union Party); an offshoot of Sarekat Islam

PUI	Partai Umat Islam (Muslim Believers Party)
PWNU	Pengurus Wilayah Nahdlatul Ulama (Provincial Board of NU)
Qur'an	God's word as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, and the supreme source of absolute authority for Islam
<i>rais am</i>	president general (the head of the Syuri'ah)
Ramadan	ninth month of the Islamic calendar during which fasting is required
<i>reformasi</i>	'reform'; the post-New order period
RMI	Rabitah Ma'ahid al-Islamiyah (Pesantren Institute)
<i>salafiyah</i>	term for those who seek to emulate the practice of the first few generations of the Muslim community, who are seen as providing an exemplary model of proper Islamic thinking and behaviour
<i>santri</i>	student (in a <i>pesantren</i>)
<i>santri</i> Muslims	pious Muslims who seek to adhere strictly to the ritual and legal requirements of Islam
Sarekat Islam	Islamic Association; founded in 1912
sharia	Islamic law
Shi'a, Shi'ism	'faction', 'party'; the second largest branch of Islam after Sunni
Sufism	Islamic mysticism
SUNI	Solidaritas Uni Nasional Indonesia (Solidarity of the National Union of Indonesia)
Sunnah	'custom', 'usage'; established custom and normative precedent in Islam based on the example of the Prophet Muhammad; collection of the records and memories of the behaviour, thoughts and actions of the Prophet
Sunni	the majority branch of Islam (see <i>ahlusunnah wal jamaah</i>)

Syafi'i	one of the four <i>mazhab</i> of Sunni Islam, and the dominant school of Indonesia's traditionalist Muslims
Syuriah <i>tahlil/tahlilan</i>	Supreme Council (of NU) <i>tahlil</i> refers to the repetition of the phrase <i>la ilaaha illa 'llah</i> (there is no god but God); <i>tahlilan</i> refers to the ritual of community members gathering to pray for the soul of someone who has died
Tanfidziyah <i>taqlid</i>	Administrative Council (of NU) judgment based on tradition or convention; reliance on the legal interpretations of the <i>ulama</i> , contained within the four main <i>mazhab</i> of the classical era
<i>ulama</i>	'learned'; Islamic scholar(s)
<i>umat</i>	the Islamic community
<i>umat</i> Islam	the unified body of Muslim believers
Wahhabism	Saudi-based religious purification and social reform movement founded in the late eighteenth century by scholar Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–87)
WALHI	Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (Friends of the Earth Indonesia)
YKSSI	YKSSI: Yayasan Keluarga Sehat Sejahtera Indonesia (Foundation for Indonesian Health and Family Welfare)
<i>ziarah</i>	the practice of visiting and praying at the grave of a parent or holy person