

# Reimagining Nationalism Through Islamic Education: The Political Pedagogy of Kiai Wahab Hasbullah

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## Abstract

This study examines the political pedagogy of Kiai Wahab Hasbullah, which asserts the compatibility between nationalism and Islamic teachings. Through his ideas, the values of patriotism, unity, and social responsibility are positioned as an integral part of Islam. This concept was realized in an educational system acceptable to both Islamist and nationalist circles, pioneered through Nahdlatul Wathan, the precursor to Nahdlatul Ulama. Using a qualitative library research approach and John Obert Voll's theory of continuity and change, this research analyzes how traditional Islamic values were simultaneously preserved and adapted to the demands of modern nationalism. The findings show that Kiai Wahab Hasbullah's educational concept successfully became a foundation for national consciousness among Muslims and the youth by instilling patriotism, moderate religiosity, and a spirit of struggle within an Indonesian framework. His thought demonstrates that education is a primary pillar of nation-building, serving not only as a tool of resistance against colonialism but also as a long-term strategy for giving substance to independence. This concept represents a significant contribution to the study of contemporary Islamic education.

**Keywords:** Education, Nationalism, Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji pedagogi politik Kiai Wahab Hasbullah yang menegaskan keselarasan antara nasionalisme dan ajaran Islam. Melalui gagasannya, nilai-nilai cinta tanah air, persatuan, dan tanggung jawab sosial diposisikan sebagai bagian integral dari keislaman. Konsep ini diwujudkan dalam sebuah sistem pendidikan yang dapat diterima oleh kalangan Islamis maupun nasionalis, yang dirintis melalui Nahdlatul Wathan, cikal bakal Nahdlatul Ulama. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif studi kepustakaan dan analisis continuity and change dari John Obert Voll, penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana nilai-nilai Islam tradisional dipertahankan sekaligus diadaptasikan dengan tuntutan nasionalisme modern. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa konsep pendidikan Kiai Wahab Hasbullah berhasil menjadi fondasi kesadaran nasional bagi umat Islam dan pemuda dengan menanamkan patriotisme, religiusitas moderat, dan semangat perjuangan dalam bingkai keindonesiaan. Pemikirannya membuktikan bahwa pendidikan adalah pilar utama pembangunan bangsa, yang tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat perlawanan kolonialisme tetapi juga strategi jangka panjang untuk mengisi kemerdekaan. Gagasan ini merupakan sumbangan penting bagi kajian pendidikan Islam kontemporer.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan, Nasionalisme, Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah

### Introduction

Indonesian nationalism was primarily shaped by education. It is hoped that Islamic education in a national context can provide an inclusive, comprehensive, and contextual understanding of Islam. The history of Islamic education in Indonesia dates back a long time due to the unique characteristics of Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs that implement both classical and modern systems.<sup>1</sup> This was utilized by scholars of the time due to the perfection of Islam, which does not separate certain aspects of life from others. As we know, Islamic education throughout Indonesia teaches Islamic values that demonstrate Islam as a religion of peace. Every day, students are given a “kitab kuning” (traditional Islamic text) and taught how to lead a happy life. Additionally, students are taught about tolerance, ethics, and love for one’s country. Islamic education plays a crucial role in disseminating an inclusive and contextual understanding of Islam. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Abdur Rosid, “Relasi Nasionalisme dan Islam dalam Lirik Syair Ya Lal Wathan (Perspektif Ashabiyah Ibnu Khaldun),” *Jurnal Pendidikan Inklusif* 8, no. 6 (Juni 2024): 1-9.

because, to this day, education is considered the most effective method for transforming values, including those of Islamic nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

Although nationalism and Islamic teachings have strong points of convergence, there are still few studies that specifically and deeply discuss the concept of Islamic-based nationalism education from the perspective of local figures such as Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, particularly in the context of the embryonic organization Nahdlatul Ulama, namely Nahdlatul Wathan. Additionally, the approach linking Kiai Wahab's ideas to John Obert Voll's theory of continuity and change is rarely employed, despite its relevance for understanding the dynamics of traditional Islamic thought adapting to the realities of modern nationalism.

Currently, news reports that disparage the dignity and honor of Islam are attacking the Islamic community, claiming that they lack nationalism and even have no sense of nationalism. This is due to the existence of radical Islamic movements known as terrorism; this terrorism is carried out using Islamic attributes. Therefore, some people around the world view Islam as terrorism, and some people in Indonesia sarcastically say that they have no nationalistic spirit. In reality, the Muslim community played a significant role in achieving Indonesia's independence in history. Islamic leaders established Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren and madrasah to drive the nation's progress. In pesantren, students receive Islamic education that is highly beneficial for their lives, both in this world and the hereafter. One of these benefits is fostering a strong sense of nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

History shows that Muslims have strong nationalism. This is demonstrated by the wars and resistance carried out by Muslims, which began with educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools. This led to the emergence of Islamic reformers at that time, such as Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari, Kiai Ahmad Dahlan, and Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah. Given the intense colonial policies of the Dutch, which consistently hindered Islamic educational activities, these two figures became even more determined to focus their efforts and work tirelessly to oppose such policies.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ela Rosyida, Maulida Septiana Arbyanti, and Ahsanu Amala, "Pendidikan Islam Sebagai Konsep Dasar Nasionalisme: Studi Komparasi Perspektif Ir. Soekarno dan KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah," *ASWALALITA (Journal of Dakwah Manajemant)* 1, no. 1 (Maret 2022): 74.

<sup>3</sup> Hamdan Rasyid et al., *KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah: Perintis Pendiri dan Penggerak NU* (Jakarta: Panitia Penulisan Buku Sejarah Perjuangan KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, 1999), 82.

<sup>4</sup> Saifuddin Zuhri, *Berangkat dari Pesantren* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2013), 64.

Nahdlatul Ulama is not an exclusive group; it is limited to a select few. Since its establishment by Kiai Wahab, NU has been dedicated to the interests of religion, society, and the state. NU members must view all levels of society as their field of dedication. Politics, economics, public welfare, education, da'wah, and other fields are their areas of struggle. Education rooted in nationalism, as envisioned by Kiai Wahab Hasbullah, is a form of political pedagogy that integrates Islamic values with nationalist spirit through the educational pathways of pesantren and organizations like Nahdlatul Wathan. He viewed education not merely as the transfer of knowledge but as a means to foster collective awareness among Muslims to love their homeland, resist colonization, and fill independence with religious values. With this approach, Kiai Wahab instilled moderate and inclusive religious nationalism, positioning the pesantren as a strategic space for cultivating national leaders rooted in tradition yet responsive to the demands of the modern era.<sup>5</sup>

This paper aims to examine how the concept of Islamic-based nationalism education, according to the perspective of Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, an essential figure in the establishment and development of NU (1916-1971), was understood. Kiai Wahab was the longest-serving religious leader on the national stage. This was due to his relentless involvement across three eras: the independence movement, the leadership of Sukarno, and the leadership of Suharto. Kiai Wahab founded the Sarekat Islam (SI) branch in Mecca. From this point onward, Kiai Wahab established numerous organizations, including Nahdlatul Wathan in 1916 (in the field of education), Tashwirul Afkar in 1918 (a scientific discussion forum), and Nahdlatut Tujjar in 1918 (in the field of economics). All these organizations can be considered the precursors to the establishment of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).<sup>6</sup> Kiai Wahab, along with Dr. Soetomo, H. Agus Salim, Ki Hajar Dewantara, W. Wondoamiseno, Hendrik Sneevliet, Alimin, Muso, Abikusno Tjokrosujono, and Soekarno, founded the Islam Study Club in 1920.

The Islam Study Club initiated a movement that would later become the precursor to a way of thinking that guided cooperation between Islamic and nationalist forces. This way of thinking led to creating an advanced and modern social order without neglecting religious values. This was the most

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<sup>5</sup> Iwan Setiawan, "Islam dan Nasionalisme: Pandangan Pembaharu Pendidikan Islam Ahmad Dahlan dan Abdul Wahab Hasbullah," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (Januari 2018): 1, <https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.002.1.01>.

<sup>6</sup> Masyhuri, 99 *Kiai Kharismatik Indonesia, Biografi, Perjuangan, Ajaran, dan Doa-Doa Utama yang Diajarkan* (Jombang: Pustaka Anda, 2010), 85.

significant contribution made by the ulama to the nation.<sup>7</sup> Let's revisit the purpose of this writing. It is also to uncover and analyze the concept of Islamic-based nationalist education according to the thoughts of Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah with the political pedagogy he advocated, as well as to trace the role of Nahdlatul Wathan as the initial platform in fostering nationalist awareness among Muslim communities and examining the relevance and continuity of Kiai Wahab's thoughts using John Obert Voll's theory of continuity and change in contemporary Islamic education studies and providing conceptual contributions for the development of Islamic education that can harmoniously integrate religious and national values.

## Method

This study uses library research, and a qualitative approach was used to analyze the data because the data analyzed consisted of quotations, sentences, and opinions expressed in the form of qualitative data (non-numeric data). The qualitative approach takes natural data and describes it in writing using clear explanations and descriptions. This study chose and used qualitative research. Furthermore, library research is conducted to define and observe for more optimal research. The literature review research design is a type of library research. This study scientifically studies and analyzes reading sources from books, journals, and descriptions related to the topic to be discussed.<sup>8</sup> To assess the relevance of these concepts, the theory of continuity and change by John Obert is employed as a foundation for analysis.<sup>9</sup>

## Results and Discussion

### Biography of Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah

Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah came from a pesantren, or Islamic boarding school, also commonly referred to as ulama, sarungan, or santri, namely Pondok Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Tambak Beras Jombang. Pesantren

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<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Izzul Islam An Najmi, "Gagasan Hubb Al-Waṭan Min Al-Islām Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah sebagai Pondasi Pluralitas dan Persatuan Nasional," *Ushuluna: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 7, no. 2 (Desember 2021): 171.

<sup>8</sup> Penelitian kepastakaan atau (*Library Research*) adalah penelitian yang menggunakan teori-teori yang diambil dari literatur tertulis baik itu buku, jurnal atau tulisan ilmiah lainnya yang mendukung dan relevan dengan judul penelitian. Sedangkan penelitian lapangan (*field research*) adalah dimana peneliti menggunakan penelitian yang terjun ke lapangan atau tempat penelitian yang dipilih lihat Noeng Muhadjir, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Yogyakarta: Rake Sarasin, 2000), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-Agama* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015), 88.

play a very effective role in empowering and transforming society. The Islamic boarding school was established to respond to the social conditions of a community, aiming to improve and strengthen moral values through spiritual transformation. The boarding school has a mission as an agent of social change. Within the boarding school, there is a religious-based curriculum and a curriculum that addresses fundamental societal issues.

He is the longest-serving religious leader to appear on national television. This is since he has been actively involved in various movements for three consecutive periods: the struggle for independence, the era of Soekarno's leadership, and the era of Soeharto's leadership. In contrast, the version Greg Fealy and Barton provided differs, KH. Saifuddin Zuhri states that Kiai Abdul Wahab was born in Kampung Tambak Beras 1888. The version by Greg Fealy and Greg Barton is different. Kiai Wahab was born around 1886 and passed away in 1971.<sup>10</sup> Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah was a prominent Islamic scholar. His scholarly status was recognized throughout Indonesia and the Islamic world.

Although he did not hold any formal degrees or diplomas from schools or universities, his fame as a scholar transcended formalities, encompassing all levels of society, from the lowest to the most intellectual. Many Indonesians, especially Muslims in the archipelago, now believe that he was a great scholar.<sup>11</sup> KH. Abdul Wahab was instrumental in encouraging Islamic boarding schools always to accept and implement reforms. He was known as a wandering warrior because he often moved from one Islamic boarding school to another. He was also active in the Indonesische Studie Club (ISC) national intellectual discussion group led by Dr. Sutomo. The members of this discussion group were activists, so they were able to foster a love for the country directly.

The explanation above illustrates the power of an educational institution, whether formal or informal. The values taught are always related to instilling independence and breaking free from the oppression of colonialists. Their commitment to the nation is manifested through the educational institutions they founded. They were aware that colonial oppression was not limited to the exploitation of natural resources but

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<sup>10</sup> Zamakhsari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kiai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1997), 57.

<sup>11</sup> Greg Fealy, *Ulama and Politics in Indonesia: A History of Nahdlatul Ulama*, trans. Farid Wajidi dan Mulni Adelina Bachtar (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2009), 75.

extended to religious oppression, aiming to eradicate Islamic values and promote Christianization in practice.<sup>12</sup>

The theoretical implication lies in reinforcing John Obert Voll's theory of continuity and change, which states that traditional Islam can respond to socio-political changes without abandoning its religious roots. Wahab Hasbullah's thinking is a concrete example of how the pesantren tradition and nationalism can reinforce each other. The Islam-based nationalism education initiated by Kiai Wahab contributed to theoretical thinking about religious nationalism, namely a model of nationalism that grows from Islamic religious and spiritual values, not from Western secularism. This broadens the spectrum of nationalism theory in Islamic education studies. Kiai Wahab's concept demonstrates that education based on local values (local wisdom) can effectively shape national consciousness. Its contemporary relevance lies in the fact that this idea emphasizes the importance of incorporating the thoughts of local figures like Kiai Wahab into the curriculum of educational institutions, including madrasahs, pesantren, and public schools, to foster a national-religious identity among students.<sup>13</sup>

Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, a prominent figure in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization, founder and leader of the Tembak Beras Islamic boarding school in Jombang, East Java, emerged as a pioneer among religious nationalists who established close ties with leaders of the Syarikat Islam. This group was uncooperative with the colonial authorities. Ultimately, these meetings gave rise to a shared vision that Indonesia must break free from colonial oppression and achieve independence. They began collaborating to achieve this vision through educational institutions in terms of their development and the nature of the education provided, whether religious or general. However, establishing schools during the Dutch colonial period in the East Indies did not proceed as smoothly as hoped; the path was fraught with challenges and difficulties. This was due to the consistent criticism of Islamic schools, which opposed the policies implemented by the Dutch authorities.

The Dutch colonial government always restricted the establishment of Islamic boarding schools and required them to report to the government when new schools were established. However, this did not discourage the community or the clerics then; instead, it led to the establishment of more

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<sup>12</sup> Chairul Anam, *Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan Nahdlatul Ulama* (Salatiga: Jatayu, 1985), 43.

<sup>13</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 142.

Islamic boarding schools. The community knew they could not be controlled by the Dutch forever, especially in matters of religion. This was a matter of belief; they did not want to be dictated to by the Dutch. This was a form of nationalism, as explained earlier, which originated from Islamic educational institutions—the nationalism of KH. Wahab Hasbullah can be said to be integrative, resistant, and educational simultaneously, but with a strong emphasis on integrative and academic functions in the context of national struggle and the development of Islamic education.<sup>14</sup> He began cooperation to achieve these goals through educational institutions, both in their development and between religious and general education. During its development, establishing schools during the Dutch colonial period was not as smooth as expected; it was fraught with challenges and difficulties. This was due to the constant criticism of Islamic schools that opposed the policies issued by the Dutch.

### **The Concept of Nationalism Education Based on Islam**

Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah is known as a movement leader. He was actively involved in establishing various movement organizations. His journey began in Mecca, where he, along with Abbas from Jember, Asnawi from Kudus, and Dahlan from Kertosono, pioneered the establishment of the Islamic Society (SI) branch in Mecca. Upon returning from the holy city of Mecca in 1914, Kiai Wahab Hasbullah aspired to establish an educational institution to foster a nationalistic spirit among the youth towards their homeland. At the same time, Mas Mansur had recently returned from Egypt. The two met, shared the same vision, and eventually agreed to establish an educational institution. This idea was well-received by community leaders such as H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, Raden Pandji Soeroso, Soendjoto, and K.H. Abdul Kahar. K.H. Abdul Kahar was a wealthy merchant who also served as a donor for the construction of the educational institution's building.

In 1916, a fairly grand multi-story building was finally erected in Kampung Kawatan, Surabaya, serving as the venue for educational activities under Nahdlatul Wathan (NW) School. Nahdlatul Wathan itself means "Movement for the Homeland." In the same year, the educational institution obtained legal recognition (Rechtspersoon) with the following leadership structure: KH Abdul Kahar as Director, KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah as

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<sup>14</sup> Saifudin Zuhri, *Kiai Wahab Khasbullah Bapak dan Pendiri NU* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Falakiyah, 1983), 98.



Head of the Teachers' Council (keulamaan), and KH Mas Mansur as School Principal, assisted by KH Ridwan Abdullah.<sup>15</sup> Kiai Wahab developed a concept of nationalist education based on Islam through the establishment of Nahdlatul Wathan, whose curriculum included nationalist and religious education. Although he did not fully adopt the ideas of Islamic reform, Kiai Wahab essentially applied reformist thinking while instilling nationalist values through educational institutions such as Nahdlatul Wathan and Taswirul Afkar, and became a pioneer and guardian of the establishment of NU.

This is reinforced by Syair Syubbanul wathan by Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah. Based on its meaning and values, it falls under the theme of nationalism. This theme of nationalism is a theme of Arabic poetry that emerged in modern times. According to Wahab Hasbullah, the fundamental value of democracy is to humanize humans and regulate relationships between humans. He argues that a true nationalist does not merely imitate or copy Western nationalism but draws from a deep love for humanity and human values.<sup>16</sup> A nationalist who genuinely embraces nationalism as a doctrine and dedicates themselves to it as a form of worship must be free from all forms of ignorance. He demonstrates how to learn democracy within an organization when conflicts arise between the young and the old at the National University.

Education is essentially a process of social change, a process of adoption and innovation, and social change must begin with education. Education is essentially a process of social change, a process of adoption and innovation in development, and education must precede social change. The position of Islamic education at present and in the future about social and cultural change is to provide meaning to the development of more just and civilized human values. The closer a kiai is to his students, the greater his influence. A kiai can help change undesirable behavior into desirable behavior. One of the essential pillars in shaping, developing, educating, and producing the next generation of the nation is education.

Therefore, there is a connection between education in Indonesia in the early 20th century, especially in the Indonesian state. During the 1920s to the 1940s, when Indonesia was on the brink of independence, Muslims in Indonesia were one of the most dissatisfied groups with the policies of the Dutch colonial government. Many Dutch government policies required teachers to follow what was taught in Dutch-owned schools, which had been

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<sup>15</sup> Tim Aswaja NU, *Risalah Ahlussunnah Wal-Jama'ah* (Surabaya: Khalista, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Rasyid el all., *KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah*, 96.

infiltrated by covert missions, one of which was Zending. As a result, KH. Wahab Hasbullah emerged as a figure in various Islamic movements fighting against the Dutch colonial government. Kiai Wahab opposed and dismantled the injustices long felt by Muslims by presenting an alternative vision of Islamic education, emphasizing that it was not merely about teaching religious lessons but also instilling a spirit of nationalism, which was taught in Islamic boarding schools.<sup>17</sup> KH Wahab Hasbullah's nationalism was integrative, resistant, and educational. In the perspective of John Obert Voll's theory of continuity and change, he successfully maintained the pesantren tradition (continuity) while adapting to the demands of the times through relevant organizations and educational systems (change). His influence is still felt today through moderate, nationalistic Islamic education rooted in local traditions.

Islam is built on the foundation of brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*), including Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwwah islamiyah*), national brotherhood (*ukhuwwah wathoniyyah*), and human brotherhood (*ukhuwwah insaniyyah*), as the completeness of the practice of Islamic teachings depends greatly on personal virtue and participation in social work in various fields such as education, economy, politics, law, and others. History records the golden age of Islam from the 7th to the 13th centuries CE, which was determined by the success of Muslims in fostering brotherhood among humanity at the horizontal level, encompassing economic, political, and intellectual aspects.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the content of revelatory messages never changes and will never change. However, contextualizing revelatory messages, especially those concerning social institutions, including education, economics, politics, law, and socio-culture, is always elastic and flexible, accepting change. The framework for thinking is based on the principle that every social change always produces cultural change. Cultural change can be accepted as long as it does not contradict the fundamental values, namely, faith and worship. This is based on a perspective that places the components of religion, namely doctrine, ritual, and ethics, as personal matters deeply rooted in the hearts of each individual, which cannot be interfered with by others.

However, the fourth religious component, namely social institutions, particularly political institutions, provides an opportunity for dialogue to engage in a bargaining process, the results of which then become the shared property of all citizens. At one time, someone can be a friend, even though at

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<sup>17</sup> Zuharini dkk., *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2008), 57.

<sup>18</sup> Ridwan Lubis, *Agama dalam Diskursus Intelektual dan Pergumulan Kehidupan Beragama di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pusat Kerukunan Umat Beragama Kementerian Agama RI, 2015), 257.

another time they may become an opponent (overlapping consensus). This can happen because, after all, all components of the nation are fellow travelers, despite their differences.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, KH. Abdul Wahab has significantly contributed in encouraging Islamic boarding schools always to accept and implement reforms. He is known as a wandering warrior because he often moved from one Islamic boarding school to another. He was also active in the Indonesian Study Club (ISC), a national intellectual discussion group led by Dr. Sutomo. Members of this discussion group were activists in the movement, which directly fostered a love for the homeland. The above explanation illustrates the tremendous power of an educational institution, whether formal or informal. The values taught were always related to instilling independence and breaking free from the oppression of the colonizers. Their concern for the nation was channeled through establishing educational institutions they founded. They were aware that colonial oppression was not limited to the exploitation of natural resources but extended to religious oppression, aiming to eradicate Islamic values and promote Christianization in practice.<sup>20</sup>

With his deep religious knowledge and extraordinary leadership role and abilities in the community and organizations he founded, Kiai Wahab was also skilled at negotiation. This can be seen in the liberation of West Irian, which occurred thanks to Kiai Wahab's successful diplomacy in stopping the wondo rope. In addition, his leadership style was firm. He was not easily swayed and did not follow the crowd. This is further reinforced by events that occurred during the Old Order era. He decided that NU should sever ties with the Masyumi Party and become an independent political party. In terms of how he exercised his authority, Kiai Wahab demonstrated a democratic style.<sup>21</sup>

### **Nahdlatul Wathan: A Nationalist Education Media based on Islam**

Kiai Wahab founded the Nahdlatul Wathan (NW) organization in 1916. Nahdlatul wathan means "the awakening of the homeland" or can also be interpreted as "the nationalist movement." This movement aimed to train

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<sup>19</sup> Rosyida, Arbyanti, and Amala, "Pendidikan Islam Sebagai Konsep Dasar Nasionalisme," 80.

<sup>20</sup> Zuhri, *Berangkat dari Pesantren*, 69.

<sup>21</sup> As'ad Said Ali, *Islam, Pancasila, dan Kerukunan Berbangsa* (Depok: Pustaka LP3ES, 2019), 91-92.

the younger generation to become defenders of Islam and the homeland through education. Kiai Wahab also founded the Nahdlatut Tujjar (NT) organization, meaning “the revival of merchants.” While NW targeted young people in education, NT focused on businesspeople and merchants involved in the economic sector. Their goal was the same: to unite various elements of the nation with all their available resources to fight for the country and religion against foreign colonization. These two organizations later became the embryo for the establishment of Nahdlatul Ulama.<sup>22</sup>

Kiai Wahab’s perspective that Islamic-based nationalism education is a religious teaching of great urgency, the establishment of several embryonic organizations within NU, such as Nahdlatul Wathan, as a means to strengthen ideological and nationalist ideals, so that young people become aware of colonialism and must resist it, fostering cooperation between Muslims and nationalists through Tashwirul Afkar, and finally strengthening the economy through Nahdlatul Tujjar.<sup>23</sup> KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah can be classified as a movement leader, activist, eloquent orator, firm, unyielding, and prioritizing others. His leadership was democratic, flexible, yet firmly rooted in Islamic jurisprudence principles and guidelines.<sup>24</sup>

The political pedagogy of KH. Wahab Hasbullah demonstrates integrative nationalism. It is able to unite Islamic values with nationalistic spirit, resist colonialism and ideas that threaten the pesantren tradition, and is educational because it builds an Islamic education system that instills nationalistic and religious values. An analysis using the continuity and change theory (John Obert Voll) shows that continuity refers to Wahab Hasbullah’s preservation of pesantren traditions, scholarly lineage, and the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah. The change pertains to his response to societal transformations by establishing the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), initiating the Jihad Resolution, and designing an educational system aligning with nationalist ideals.

Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah was one of the figures who promoted Islam and nationalism. In this context, Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah was very attentive to the needs of the people at that time, when the idea of an Indonesian state was still considered subversive. The conflict between Islam and love for the homeland emerged since the early days of independence. This was caused by political differences between various schools of thought within

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<sup>22</sup> Rosid, “Relasi Nasionalisme dan Islam,” 5.

<sup>23</sup> Zuhri, *Berangkat dari Pesantren*, 333.

<sup>24</sup> Rasyid et al., *KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah*, 102.

Islam. However, the political meaning of nationalism is the manifestation of national consciousness that contains aspirations and drives a nation, namely the ambition to achieve independence, eliminate colonialism, and serve as a catalyst for building oneself, society, the country, and the state.

The culmination of nationalism is awareness, pride, and love for one's nation and country. This pride does not mean feeling superior to other nations and governments.<sup>25</sup> From this, it can be concluded that Kiai Wahab Hasbullah's awareness and attitude towards nationalism were obtained differently from other national figures, such as Soekarno, Hatta, and Soepomo. Kiai Wahab Hasbullah was exposed to nationalist ideas through the intellectual movements developing in the Middle East. At the same time, figures like Soekarno, Hatta, and Soepomo encountered nationalist ideas through direct contact with Western ideas in Dutch schools. The results were indeed different. Kiai Wahab Hasbullah's nationalism had a religious character, while the nationalism of Soekarno, Hatta, and others had a secular character.<sup>26</sup>

This can be seen from his struggle in NU by organizing thousands of madrasahs and schools throughout the country, which the citizens themselves financed. Therefore, he openly rejected the subsidies offered by the Dutch East Indies government. According to Saifuddin Zuhri, this attitude was undoubtedly influenced by anti-colonial politics. However, alongside this, he sought to prove his ability to stand on his own feet. The "Guru Ordonantie" imposed by the Dutch East Indies government to restrict the activities of religious teachers, ulama, and preachers was consistently opposed by Nahdlatul Ulama.

The moral and material burdens imposed on pilgrims, the requirements for sacrifice, religious beliefs, and other matters. The freedom to worship was fought for and ultimately achieved. Here we see the form of Kiai Wahab's struggle, carried out through the cultural framework of the NU movement organization, through education and the cultivation of awareness for the sake of society's interests, to free them from poverty, ignorance, and division. This policy not only supports urban communities but also rural areas.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rosyida, Arbyanti, and Amala, "Pendidikan Islam Sebagai Konsep Dasar Nasionalisme," 78.

<sup>26</sup> Said Aqil Siroj, *Islam Kebangsaan: Fiqih Demokratik Kaum Santri* (Jakarta: Penerbit Risalah NU, 2019), 59.

<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Rifai, *KH. Wahab Hasbullah: Biografi Singkat 1888–1971* (Yogyakarta: Gara House of Book, 2014), 135–140.

Returning to the initial issue, the image of Islam in the eyes of the world today has been tarnished by the enemies of Islam. This is not a new phenomenon; history records that this was done during colonial times, but the methods used today are more subtle and systematic. If we observe closely, the more intensely the enemies of Islam wage war against Islam, the more educational institutions are established. In Indonesia today, there are thousands of Islamic boarding schools, Islamic campuses, Islamic elementary schools, Islamic junior high schools, Islamic high schools, and so on.

It cannot be denied that education plays a crucial role for the wider community. Through education, we can distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, what is harmful to Islam and what is good for Islam, and so on. Ultimately, this broadens our understanding of the issues and phenomena occurring today. We can learn about culture, society, religion, politics, and even religion within educational institutions. With all of this, it becomes easier for us to cultivate a sense of love for our homeland, and even from various perspectives, a sense of nationalism will flourish, born from Islamic educational institutions that undoubtedly play a strategic role.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Relevance of the Concept of Nationalism-based Islamic Education in the Modern Era**

Education is one of the main pillars in shaping, developing, educating, and producing the nation's next generation. Therefore, regarding the state of education in Indonesia in the early 20th century, especially in Indonesia during the 1920s to 1945, when Indonesia was approaching independence, Muslims were one of the groups that felt most disadvantaged by the policies issued by the Dutch colonial government. Numerous policies imposed by the Dutch government required educators to participate in activities taught at Dutch-owned schools, which had been infiltrated by the Dutch colonial mission, one of which was the Zending mission.<sup>29</sup>

With this mission, KH. Wahab Hasbullah emerged as a figure in the Islamic movement that opposed the Dutch colonial government. To combat and dismantle the injustice long endured by the Muslim community, he highlighted the role of Islamic education, emphasizing that it is not merely about teaching religious lessons but also instilling a spirit of nationalism through the political pedagogy practiced in Islamic boarding schools

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<sup>28</sup> Choirul Anam, KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah *Hidup dan Perjuangannya* (Surabaya: PT. Duta Aksara Mulia, 2017), 220-224.

<sup>29</sup> Lubis, *Agama dalam Diskursus Intelektual*, 214.

(pesantren) and madrasahs across Indonesia.<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that Kiai Wahab's efforts to establish Nahdlatul Wathan did not happen without the assistance of Tjokroaminoto, who had previously founded Sarekat Islam. Nahdlatul Wathan was oriented toward fostering a spirit of love for the homeland through education. His efforts included establishing madrasahs (formal schools) and leadership courses (at that time referred to as "struggle"). To realize this vision, merchant H. Abdul Qahar pioneered the construction of a madrasah in Kawatan, Surabaya, where Kiai Mas Mansur served as the head teacher and Kiai Wahab Hasbullah became one of the teachers and key administrators of the madrasah.

Nahdlatul Wathan also began offering youth courses, organizing, and preaching (the term used at the time was *nadwah*, or *majlis taklim* in modern Indonesian). Kiai Wahab Hasbullah mainly led these courses and preaching activities. Shortly thereafter, Kiai Wahab Hasbullah, along with Kiai Mas Mansur and Kiai Ahmad Dahlan (the leader of the pesantren in Kebon Dalem, Surabaya), established Taswirul Afkar in 1918. This organization was intended to discuss religious and social issues within the SI, using the name proposed by Kiai Wahab Hasbullah. Nahdlatul Wathan, it was already evident that this organization aimed to awaken a sense of love for the homeland through education.

At that time, Soekarno, who would later become known as the leading figure in the nationalist movement and the proclaimer of independence, was only 15 years old and was still living in the home of Tjokroaminoto (1882-1934) in Surabaya while attending HBS (Hogere Burger School). Muhammad Hatta was only 10 years old, while Soepomo was 13 years old.<sup>31</sup> His role in the political and national life of the nation did not deviate from the principles of Islamic law within the tradition of pesantren education. Kiai Wahab was able to balance the aspirations of other Islamic groups and control the movements of socialists and communists within the government, including when President Sukarno proposed the integration of nationalism, religion, and communism (Nasakom).

Kiai Wahab had many friends with whom he could engage in discussion. Two charismatic figures would later become leaders of Indonesia's two largest religious organizations, KH. Wahab Hasbullah (Nahdlatul Ulama) and KH. Mas Mansur (Muhammadiyah) shared a strong emotional bond. This friendship can be traced back to the founding of Nahdlatul Wathan, as

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<sup>30</sup> Siroj, *Islam Kebangsaan*, 142.

<sup>31</sup> Ali, *Islam, Pancasila, dan Kerukunan Berbangsa*, 65-67.

they shared the same spirit of nationalism and education, which became even more apparent when they jointly established *Taswir al-Afkar* (Horizon of Thought). This discussion forum was a critical initiative by both of them to address the objective conditions of the people, who were still trapped in conservatism and traditionalism. This vital step, of course, had a legitimate purpose to bring them together and awaken them to their fate. In 1922, KH. Mas Mansur left Nahdlatul Wathan not only due to differences in opinion between him and KH. Wahab Hasbullah, but also because of the frequent religious speeches delivered by KH. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah, successfully persuaded KH. Mas Mansur was to leave Nahdlatul Wathan and later become a member of Muhammadiyah.

The difference in opinion between NU leader Wahab Hasbullah and Muhammadiyah leader Mas Mansur was that KH. Wahab Hasbullah invited KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, while Mas Mansur met with KH. Ahmad Dahlan. This happened around 1929. The differing perspectives stemmed from Kiai Wahab's emphasis on nationalist spirit. At the same time, Kiai Mas Mansur sought to develop education, leading him to join Muhammadiyah, which was already actively advancing Islamic education at the time. However, their relationship remained amicable, and today, these two perspectives have become synergistic in fostering harmony and well-being.<sup>32</sup>

Such was the figure of Kiai Wahab Hasbullah. He was an example for us all as individuals and one of the national leaders and prominent figures of NU at that time. The values of his thoughts and struggles embody the totality of a human being who seeks to change circumstances not merely through rhetoric, but through practical action on the ground, emphasizing open dialogue without compromising principles, thereby fostering national harmony at least, from the struggles and thoughts of KH. Wahab Hasbullah, we know that the concept of *Tashwirul Afkar* as a discussion group is still used and developed by NU today, by publishing a monthly magazine with the same name, *Tashwirul Afkar*. Furthermore, his ideas on education, youth, nationalism, economic empowerment, and appreciation for Islamic arts and culture, such as *Lesbumi*, *Nahdlatut Tujjar*, and the *Ansor Youth Movement*, are still being utilized and further advocated. However, progress is slow in addressing economic and Islamic cultural issues.

At least, we can still see how the journal *Tashwirul Afkar* continues to exist today, indirectly driven by figures such as Gus Dur, Gus Mus, Ulil Abshar Abdalla, and Abdul Mun'im DZ. Meanwhile, *Lesbumi* has begun to

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<sup>32</sup> Anam, KH. *Abdul Wahab Chasbullah*, 206-213.



resurface under the leadership of young artists Zastrow, Jadul Maula, and Aguk Irawan, as evidenced by the publication of the *Lesbumi* journal titled *Kalimah* in 2008. Kiai Wahab was also an active figure in the arts, particularly in *pencak* and *hadrah* arts. This was evident when he established the Indonesian *Hadrah* Arts Association (ISHARI) in 1959.<sup>33</sup> This contribution once again proves that Kiai Wahab Hasbullah's commitment to struggle and thought was focused on fighting against colonialism, continuing the national revolution, and filling the void of independence.

Reviving the values of pluralism framed within the spirit of nationalism, such as justice that is not merely about fulfillment, but also the importance of protecting the right to life for all religions and beliefs, so that society is free from prejudice and enjoys peace. This concept of Islam-based nationalism in education has made a significant contribution to the Islamic world. In the modern era, Kiai Wahab's ideas have become a bulwark for protecting humanity, preventing the emergence of tyrannical rulers, and upholding justice, all of which are essential missions of religion. Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah's political *ijtihad* is reflected in his efforts to establish *Nahdlatul Wathan*, *Nahdlatul Tujjar*, *Tashwirul Afkar*, the *Hijaz Committee*, and *Nahdlatul Ulama*.<sup>34</sup>

Returning to John Obert Voll's theory, he states that Islamic society has two major dynamics: continuity (continuation of tradition) and change (contextual change). Movements and figures in Islam can be traditionalist, yet still adaptive. They can also change structures, yet remain within the framework of Islamic values. Continuity can be seen when KH. Wahab Hasbullah preserved the *pesantren* tradition, the chain of knowledge, the yellow books, and the authority of the *kiai* as an authentic Islamic educational system that preserves the teachings of *Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah* within local culture (*Islam Nusantara*). Furthermore, Change (*Perubahan*) is evident in his response to the times by forming social-political organizations such as NU, adapting modern organizational systems to strengthen the position of Muslims in the national order, and formulating *pesantren* education that teaches religious knowledge and shapes nationalist character.

Furthermore, the contribution to the current Islamic education model is that it still inherits the classical *pesantren* system, which has been updated with the *madrasah* system and the integration of the national curriculum.

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<sup>33</sup> Rifai, KH. *Wahab Hasbullah*, 157-159.

<sup>34</sup> Abdurahman Wahid, *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita: Agama Masyarakat Negara Demokrasi*. (Jakarta: Democracy Project, 2011), 160.

Many pesantren combine religious and general subjects and support Pancasila, which helps preserve the values of religious nationalism, love for the homeland, and religious moderation, which are taught in the pesantren curriculum and culture. Kiai Wahab's ideas also help maintain harmony, brotherhood, and tolerance as the foundation for a moderate religious approach in Indonesia's Islamic education.

## Conclusion

The concept of Islamic-based nationalism education, according to Kiai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah's perspective, is to establish educational institutions to foster a spirit of nationalism among young people towards their homeland. At the same time, Mas Mansur had just returned from Egypt. The two met, shared the same vision, and eventually agreed to establish an educational institution, which served as the embryonic organization for the founding of Nahdlatul Ulama. This can be seen from the pattern of its establishment, where Nahdlatul Wathan was established as a medium to strengthen ideological and nationalist ideals, so that the youth would become aware of colonialism and the necessity to resist it. To foster cooperation between Muslims and nationalists through Tashwirul Afkar and strengthen the economy through Nahdlatul Tujjar, which was later activated through the Hijaz Committee. Kiai Wahab developed a nationalist education concept rooted in Islam through the establishment of Nahdlatul Wathan, whose curriculum included nationalist and religious education, with the vision that young people would understand that nationalism does not conflict with religion but is fully aligned with the teachings of Islam.

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