

Hendra Setiawan, KH Wahab Hasbullah: A Trequartista Political Activist And Initiator Of Nahdlatul Ulama Youth Organisation From The City Of Santri (Jombang)

KH Wahab Hasbullah: A Trequartista Political Activist And Initiator Of Nahdlatul Ulama Youth Organisation From The City Of Santri (Jombang)

Hendra Setiawan¹

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri

E-mail: hensa12345@gmail.com¹

Abstract

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia, founded in 1926 in Surabaya. Speaking about NU inevitably recalls K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari as the first Rais Am, yet the establishment of NU cannot be separated from the pivotal role of Kiai Wahab Hasbullah. His brilliant ideas were instrumental in NU's birth, earning acceptance across diverse groups—traditionalists, modernists, and even communists. Wahab Hasbullah was deeply committed to preserving religious traditions while addressing Indonesia's pressing social issues, including colonial oppression and widespread educational backwardness. His dedication manifested in a spirit of struggle that inspired social change and raised national awareness. In modern Indonesian history, few ulama were as controversial yet influential as Wahab Hasbullah. Across decades of Islamic discourse, his actions often stirred strong emotions. He emerged as a dynamic leader for traditionalist Muslims, guiding them through times of crisis with vision and courage. This study applies a qualitative case study approach supported by literature review. Data sources include key informants, historical documents, books, and both national and international journals relevant to the subject. The analysis uses content analysis techniques to interpret Wahab Hasbullah's ideas, examining them critically within broader religious and socio-political contexts. The research concludes that Wahab Hasbullah resembled a trequartista in football: a strategist who not only knew when to defend or attack but also mastered off-the-ball movements. Like a trequartista reading the opponent's tactics, Wahab anticipated challenges and positioned traditionalist Islam as a vital force in Indonesia's modern history.

Keyword: *Nahdlatul Ulama; Trequartista; Wahab Hasbullah; Activist; Santri*

Abstrak

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) merupakan organisasi Islam terbesar di Indonesia, didirikan pada tahun 1926 di Surabaya. Membicarakan NU tentu mengingatkan kita pada K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari sebagai Rais Am pertama. Namun, berdirinya NU tidak dapat dilepaskan dari peran penting Kiai Wahab Hasbullah. Gagasan-gagasan cemerlangnya sangat berpengaruh dalam kelahiran NU, sehingga diterima oleh berbagai kalangan—baik tradisional, modernis, maupun komunis. Wahab Hasbullah memiliki komitmen besar dalam menjaga tradisi keagamaan sekaligus merespons persoalan sosial bangsa Indonesia pada masa itu, termasuk penindasan kolonial dan keterbelakangan pendidikan. Kepedulian terwujud dalam semangat perjuangan yang tulus untuk mendorong perubahan sosial dan menumbuhkan kesadaran nasional. Dalam sejarah Indonesia modern, sedikit ulama yang kontroversial sekaligus berpengaruh seperti Wahab Hasbullah. Selama beberapa dekade, kiprahnya dalam dinamika Islam kerap memunculkan respon yang kuat. Ia tampil sebagai pemimpin dinamis bagi kalangan tradisional, membimbing mereka melewati masa-masa krisis dengan visi dan keberanian. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus yang diperkuat kajian literatur. Sumber data berasal dari informan terpilih, dokumen sejarah, buku, serta jurnal nasional dan internasional yang relevan. Analisis data dilakukan dengan teknik analisis isi untuk mengkaji pemikiran Wahab Hasbullah secara kritis dalam konteks keagamaan dan sosial-politik yang lebih luas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Wahab Hasbullah dapat diibaratkan sebagai *trequartista* dalam sepak bola: seorang pengatur strategi yang tahu kapan bertahan dan menyerang, sekaligus piawai membaca taktik lawan. Dengan kecerdikan itu, ia mampu menempatkan Islam tradisional sebagai kekuatan penting dalam sejarah modern Indonesia.

Introduction

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is the largest Islamic community organisation in Indonesia, born in 1926 in Surabaya. Talking about NU, what comes to mind is of

course K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari as the first Rais Am and as a respected figure by various scholars in the country, but when looking further into the story of the history of the establishment of NU, it certainly cannot be separated from the fruit or the results of the thoughts, struggles and roles of Kiai Wahab Hasbullah in an effort to establish it. He is a scholar who has brilliant ideas for the birth of NU. From his thoughts, he was accepted by many circles, both traditionalists, moderns and communists. His concern for protecting tradition with religious values made him able to become a great scholar that Indonesia has ever had, as well as having a high concern for the social problems that were facing the Indonesian people at that time, where the Indonesian people were still educationally backward and colonised by Japan. His concern for society was certainly evident in his sincere spirit of struggle, in order to achieve great change and awareness for the people of Indonesia. Few ulama have been more controversial in modern Indonesian history than Wahab Hasbullah. Over the last half century, in various events related to Islam - he was present with his actions that caused strong emotions. Wahab Hasbullah was an inspiring and dynamic cleric, who emerged with decisive leadership for traditionalist Muslims in times of crisis. He was like a Trequartista in football: a general of the game who not only understood when to defend and when to attack, but was also adept at playing moves without the ball. At the same time, a Trequartista is also a keen reader of the opponent's tactics and strategy.

Method

The approach used by the author in this research is a qualitative approach with a type of case study research supported by literature review. The data sources of this research come from experienced selected informants or documents related to the focus of the research and books as well as national and international scientific journals and articles related to the topic. Data analysis in this study uses content analysis techniques, namely data processing in a separate way related to the discussion of several ideas or thoughts of religious figures, which are then described, discussed and criticised in accordance with the concept of trquartista in the figure of Abdul Wahab Hasbullah. In addition, similar data will be categorised and analysed critically to get a concrete and precise formulation. As for what is researched are texts that will provide an overview of. The research conducted is descriptive in nature. Therefore, this research has the aim of making descriptions of various events or situations that occur.

Results And Discussion

Definition and Implementation of Trequartista in KH Abdul Wahab Hasbullah

Trequartista comes from the Italian word for "three quarters". This refers to the role of a player in the $\frac{3}{4}$ area of the field, while the Spanish call the trequartista role "Enganche", which means hook. I don't know what the Bojong people call it. Simply put, a trequartista is a player who sits $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pitch behind the striker. Trequartista has a role in the team to coordinate the attack. Not just organising when the attack starts, but also how, in what way and who is involved in each attack they make. More than that, the brains and life of the game as well as the responsibility for the smooth flow of the ball from midfield to the forwards rests at the feet of the trequartista. Just as a team is bread, the trequartista is the raisin that gives it flavour and passion. Like an orchestra, trequartistas are the conductors and the spirit of the performance. They play the ball at their feet with artistry. Their presence on the field provides calmness and their genius will determine the direction of the game.¹

Just like KH Wahab Hasbullah, he is like a Trequartista in football: a general of the game who not only understands when to defend and when to attack, but is also fluent in playing movements without the ball. At the same time, a Trequartista is also keen to read the tactics and strategies of the opponent's game. Kyai Haji Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, born in Jombang on 31 March 1888, was the founder of Nahdatul Ulama with KH Hasyim Asyari. His father, KH Hasbulloh Said, was the caretaker of the Tambakberas Islamic Boarding School in Jombang, East Java, while his mother was named Nyai Latifah. His title as an Indonesian National Hero was only pinned on 7 November 2014 by President Joko Widodo. Wahab's political ijtihad, however controversial, managed to open anyone's eyes that NU has a concrete mass that has great power and cannot be underestimated. He also understood that as an ijtihad, what he did could be right and could be wrong. However, he also did not forget that both correct and incorrect ijtihad were equally rewarded. Wahab Hasbullah is a figure known as an expert in ushul fiqh (methodology for exploring Islamic law). His attitude and views are always flexible. In many issues of daily life or even political and state issues, Wahab is famous for his flexible and out of the box views.²

¹ "Trequartista, N.," in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oed/5398155779>.

² M. Najich Syamsuddini, M. Zainuddin M. Zainuddin, and Achmad Khudori Soleh, "THOUGHTS KH. WAHAB HASBULLOH ABOUT THE CONCEPTS UNITY IN ISLAM," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 47, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v47i2.1099>.

KH Abdul Wahab Hasbullah Activist of Nahdlatul Ulama and the Indonesian State

Abdul Wahab Hasbullah was the man who brought the largest Islamic mass organisation in Indonesia, NU, into the political sphere. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah not only established organisations under NU to accommodate the needs of the Nahdiyyin, but also established NU-owned mass media. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah was a great scholar who pioneered freedom of thought among Indonesian Muslims. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah was a person who acted more than spoke, even though he was modern-minded, he never abandoned traditional values. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah's important role can also be seen in his involvement in Nahdlatul Ulama by establishing the Ansor organisation. The existence of Ansor originated from the differences between traditional figures and modernist figures that emerged within Nahdotul Wathan, an organisation engaged in the field of Islamic education for the development of preachers and cadre development. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah played an important role in forming the Syubbanul Wathon organisation (Pemuda Tanah Air). This organisation was the forerunner of the Ansor Youth Movement.³

The establishment of the organisation was preceded by a debate with influential figures in the development of Islam in the country around 1922. One of these figures was KH Mas Mansur who was usually present at the preparatory meetings for the formation of the Syubbanul Wathon organisation. The debate was exciting and each camp insisted on its own opinion. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah's followers proposed the name Da'watus Syubban (Youth Call), while KH. Mas Mansur's camp (Youth from Muhammadiyah) proposed the name Mardi Santoso, the historic meeting finally did not produce anything. Until then KH Mas Mansur broke away and entered Muhammadiyah. The position of head teacher of Nahdlatul Wathan was finally handed over to a young scholar, KH. Mas Alwi Bin Abdul Aziz. As the spirit of its establishment, Ansor must always refer to the basic values of Sahabat Ansor, namely as a helper of fighters and even pioneers in broadcasting, upholding and fortifying the teachings of Islam. Two years after the split, in 1924 the youth who supported KH Abdulshab Hasbulloh - who later became the founder of NU - formed a forum under the name Syubbanul Wathan (Pemuda Tanah Air). This organisation became the forerunner of the Ansor Youth Movement after previously undergoing name changes such as Persatuan Pemuda NU (PPNU), Pemuda NU (PNU), and Anshoru Nahdlatul Oelama (ANO).

³ Ali - Mutaqqin, "PELAKSANAAN PENDIDIKAN ASWAJA UNTUK MENANGKAL PAHAM RADIKALISME DI UNIVERSITAS KH. A. WAHAB HASBULLAH JOMBANG," *DINAMIKA : Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Dan Keislaman* 5, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.32764/dinamika.v5i2.1028>.

The name Ansor was suggested by KH Abdul Wahab Hasbullah - a great scholar and teacher of the youth at that time, which was taken from the name of honour given by the Prophet Muhammad SAW to the people of Medina who had contributed in the struggle to defend and uphold the religion of Allah.⁴

Thus, ANO is intended to take lessons and examples from the attitude, behaviour and spirit of struggle of the Prophet's companions who received the Ansor title. The ANO movement must always refer to the basic values of Ansor's companions, namely as helpers, fighters and even pioneers in broadcasting, upholding and fortifying the teachings of Islam. Although ANO was declared as part of NU, it was not formally included in NU's organisational structure. It was only at the 9th NU Congress in Banyuwangi, on 10 Muharram 1353 H or 24 April 1934, that the ANO was accepted and ratified as part of the NU youth department. The inclusion of ANO as one of the departments in the NU institutional structure was thanks to the struggle of young kiai such as KH Machfudz Siddiq, KH A Wahid Hasyim, KH Dachlan. In terms of politics, his most phenomenal if not controversial decision was when NU left Masyumi in 1952. Wahab's reason was very simple: NU was only used as a cash cow for Masyumi. NU for Masyumi, according to Wahab, is more or less like the Arabic adage *wujuduhu kaadamihi*, the existence is the same as its absence.⁵

Understandably, because within Masyumi at that time there were many modernist figures who often gave a pejorative view to NU politicians with *pesantren* backgrounds. They considered that *pesantren* people did not understand anything about politics, let alone about managing the state. Mr Saleh, a Muhammadiyah representative of one of the modernist elements who was also the Mayor of Yogyakarta, said at the Masyumi congress in 1949 that politics was not the business of huts and *pesantren*. Political issues are too broad to simply be discussed while clutching prayer beads. This remark certainly fuelled the NU people's explosive anger. The situation worsened when the NU was denied the post of Minister of Religious Affairs. The *nahdliyin* increasingly felt that they were just a cash cow. Even though the majority of Masyumi's votes come from the NU mass base. Wahab's attitude, who at that time served as Rais Aam PBNU, was very firm: NU must leave Masyumi. For this attitude, many parties consider that Wahab is the first figure to be held responsible if there is a

⁴ Bisri Effendy, "Pesantren Dan Kebangsaan," *PUSAKA* 7, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.31969/pusaka.v7i2.259>.

⁵ Mahathir Muhammad Iqbal, "Nahdlatul Ulama Dalam Pusaran Politik: Sebuah Otokritik Orientasi NU Dalam Politik Perspektif Insider," *Jurnal Inovasi Ilmu Sosial Dan Politik* 1, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.33474/jisop.v1i2.4852>.

division of Muslims. However, conditions showed different things. In the 1955 General Election, NU flew by perched at number three. Masyumi's votes were eroded. Five years later, Masyumi was disbanded by Sukarno because some of its leaders were involved in the PRRI / Peresta rebellion.⁶

In fact, two years before making up his mind to leave Masyumi, Wahab had given a signal to anyone, especially NU residents. The signal was later standardised as the "Kredo Pergerakan", which was pronounced in Jakarta in 1950. "Many NU leaders in the regions and also the centre are not sure of the strength of NU, they believe more in the strength of other groups. These people are influenced by the whispers of people who breathe propaganda so that they are not sure of their strength. Nahdlatul Ulama strength is like a cannon, a real cannon. But their hearts are shaken by extraordinary propaganda that incites as if the weapon is not a cannon, but only gelugu, aka coconut trunk. The NU actually adheres to a religious political ideology that places the highest priority on social protection of the position of Islam and its followers. This conclusion is not so surprising when viewed through the lens of the pesantren scientific tradition. The santri understand how to apply the most fundamental leadership theory: tsaharruful imām alar raiyyah manūthun bil maslahah (a leader's policy towards his people depends on the benefit).⁷

Interestingly, Masyumi circles regarded Wahab as an iron-fisted figure who often used his kekiaian authority for political tactics. He was not only skilful in utilising political capital, but also autocratic and precocious. Those with opposing political views forget that Wahab was actually the sole factor in NU's withdrawal from Masyumi. Wahab Hasbullah died in Jombang, 29 December 1971, 49 years ago. He died at a relatively old age, 83 years old, and still served as Rais Aam Syuriah of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board. Forty-one years after his death, on 7 November 2014, Wahab was ordained as a National Hero. For the nahdliyin, the ulama, including Wahab Hasbullah, are not just national heroes. They are the heroes of humanity.⁸

Conclusion

⁶ Siti Honiah Mujiati, Ulfiah Ulfiah, and Ujang Nurjaman, "Relasi Aswaja An-Nahdliyah Dan Negara," *Ar-Rihlah: Jurnal Inovasi Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.33507/ar-rihlah.v7i1.570>.

⁷ Ani Lestari, "PEMIKIRAN KH. ABDUL WAHAB HASBULLAH TENTANG DAKWAH ISLAMIYAH," *UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SULTAN MAULANA HASANUDDIN BANTEN*, 2015.

⁸ Fini Himatul Aliyah, Faiz Karim Fatkhullah, and Cecep Muhtadin, "Analysis of Syubbanul Wathan Poetry By KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah," *Lisanan Arabiya: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.32699/liar.v7i1.4429>.

After some of the writing in the chapter above has been completed, it can be concluded that Kiai Wahab Hasbullah is a figure who made a major contribution to the struggle of the Indonesian nation and a smaller scope helped to foster the birth of Nahdlatul Ulama, a religious organisation that can also be referred to as a traditional Islamic movement organisation. His contribution shows us that how a figure or leader has a full obligation to do so in a trustworthy manner. He is a traditional cleric who has modern, progressive and moderate thinking, when he sees a group of people who have a personal belief pattern being pestered who are actually one religion that only differs in personal patterns and mindsets related to the branch of the religious issue, Kiai Wahab as a person who knows that it should be given a solution by way of respect, trying to bridge and solve the problem by way of deliberation so that the group that suppresses does not berate.

Reference

- "Trequartista, N.," in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oed/5398155779>.
- Alhilar Yusril Hawari, Utang Suwaryo, and Dede Sri Kartini, "Perbandingan Peran Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Dan Muhammadiyah Dalam Politik Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Pemerintahan Dan Kebijakan (JPK)* 5, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.18196/jpk.v5i1.19187>.
- Ali - Mutaqqin, "PELAKSANAAN PENDIDIKAN ASWAJA UNTUK MENANGKAL PAHAM RADIKALISME DI UNIVERSITAS KH. A. WAHAB HASBULLAH JOMBANG," *DINAMIKA : Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Dan Keislaman* 5, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.32764/dinamika.v5i2.1028>.
- Ani Lestari, "PEMIKIRAN KH. ABDUL WAHAB HASBULLAH TENTANG DAKWAH ISLAMIAH," *UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SULTAN MAULANA HASANUDDIN BANTEN*, 2015.
- Bisri Effendy, "Pesantren Dan Kebangsaan," *PUSAKA* 7, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.31969/pusaka.v7i2.259>.
- Dkk Anis Masykur, *Ensiklopedi Islam Nusantara Edisi Budaya*, Pendis Press, 2018.
- Fini Himatul Aliyah, Faiz Karim Fatkhullah, and Cecep Muhtadin, "Analysis of Syubbanul Wathan Poetry By KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah ," *Lisanan Arabiya: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.32699/liar.v7i1.4429>.

- Firdaus Muhammad, "DINAMIKA PEMIKIRAN DAN GERAKAN POLITIK NAHDLATUL ULAMA," *KALAM* 10, no. 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.24042/klm.v9i1.320>.
- Hartono Margono, "KH. Hasyim Asy'ari Dan Nahdlatul Ulama: Perkembangan Awal Dan Kontemporer," *Media Akademika* 26, no. 3 (2011).
- Hilyah Ashoumi and Ahmad Nasrullah, "Manajemen Pembelajaran Tafsir Tarbawi Dalam Nuansa Islam Moderat Di Universitas KH. A. Wahab Hasbullah," *Al-Idaroh: Jurnal Studi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.54437/alidaroh.v6i2.604>.
- I Supriyatna, "Pergulatan Politik KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah: Studi Analisis Terhadap Hubungan NU Dan Negara," *Repository.Uinjkt.Ac.Id*, 2006.
- Ibnu Elmi A.S Pelu, "EPISTEMOLOGI PENEMUAN HUKUM NAHDLATUL 'ULAMA (NU)," *JURNAL AL-QARDH* 3, no. 1 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.23971/jaq.v1i1.626>.
- Khulsum Umi and Sirojudin Didin, "Implementasi Pendidikan Akhlak KH. Abd Wahab Hasbullah Di MAUWH Bahrul Ulum Tambakberas Jombang," *Journal of Education and Management Studies* 2, no. 6 (2019).
- M. Najich Syamsuddini, M. Zainuddin M. Zainuddin, and Achmad Khudori Soleh, "THOUGHTS KH. WAHAB HASBULLOH ABOUT THE CONCEPTS UNITY IN ISLAM," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 47, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v47i2.1099>.
- Mahathir Muhammad Iqbal, "Nahdlatul Ulama Dalam Pusaran Politik: Sebuah Otokritik Orientasi NU Dalam Politik Perspektif Insider," *Jurnal Inovasi Ilmu Sosial Dan Politik* 1, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.33474/jisop.v1i2.4852>.
- Marahalim, Katimin, and Elly Warnisyah Harahap, "Khittah Nahdlatul Ulama," *Al-Ulum* 23, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v23i2.4124>.
- Masmuni Mahatma, "Paradigma Politik Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Dalam Bernegara," *MAWA'IZH: JURNAL DAKWAH DAN PENGEMBANGAN SOSIAL KEMANUSIAAN* 8, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.32923/maw.v8i1.695>.
- Mesiono et al., "Jurnal Tarbiyah," *Tarbiyah* 24, no. Juli-Desember 2017 (2017).
- Moh Muslih, "THE ROLE OF NAHDLATUL ULAMA (NU) IN FIGHTING FOR RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIA," *International Seminar " ISLAM, MULTICULTURAL AND RADICALISME' In The Mobility Program Held*

Hendra Setiawan, KH Wahab Hasbullah: A Trequartista Political Activist And Initiator Of Nahdlatul Ulama Youth Organisation From The City Of Santri (Jombang)

Indoenesia Higher Institution Under The Supervision Of The Minister of Religious Affairs Of Indonesia, In International Islamic University College Selango 2–24 (2019).

Muhammad Ilham Gilang, "DASAR NEGARA ISLAM ATAU PANCASILA : SIKAP POLITIK PARTAI NAHDLATUL ULAMA DALAM MAJELIS KONSTITUANTE," *Jurnal Candrasangkala Pendidikan Sejarah* 4, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.30870/candrasangkala.v4i1.3433>.

Munawir Haris, "Potret Partisipasi Politik NU Di Indonesia Dalam Lintasan Sejarah," *Jurnal Review Politik* 2, no. 2 (2012).

Siti Honiah Mujiati, Ulfiah Ulfiah, and Ujang Nurjaman, "Relasi Aswaja An-Nahdliyah Dan Negara," *Ar-Rihlah: Jurnal Inovasi Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.33507/ar-rihlah.v7i1.570>.

Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "ULAMA DAN PESANTREN DALAM DINAMIKA POLITIK DAN KULTUR NAHDLATUL ULAMA," *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam*, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v0i0.2377>.