



THE DIALECTICS OF REFORMISM AND REVIVALISM IN NU'S INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ISLAM NUSANTARA AND FIQIH PERADABAN



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Abstract

This study investigates how reformism and revivalism interact dialectically within Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) contemporary intellectual movement. Background: Responses to modernization, religious pluralism, and transnational Islamic movements have driven NU to develop new paradigms like Islam Nusantara and Fiqih Peradaban. However, existing scholarship predominantly views NU through a binary lens as either traditionalist or moderate – progressive, neglecting its internal epistemological dynamics. The research focuses on the discursive construction of Islam Nusantara and Fiqih Peradaban, examining how NU reconciles classical authority with contemporary social transformation. Employing a qualitative, library – based approach using discourse analysis, the study analyzes primary organizational documents including *Bahtsul Mas'ail* decisions and *Munas Alim Ulama* proceedings alongside secondary academic literature. Findings reveal that reformism and revivalism function as mutually reinforcing epistemological frameworks rather than opposing ideologies. While Islam Nusantara contextualizes Islamic teachings locally, Fiqih Peradaban expands this framework toward global, civilizational concerns. Ultimately, NU formulates a model of "tradition-based reformism" that reconstructs classical Islamic authority to drive contextual renewal within modern, pluralistic societies.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana reformisme dan revivalisme berinteraksi secara dialektis dalam gerakan intelektual kontemporer Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Respons terhadap modernisasi, pluralisme agama, dan gerakan Islam transnasional mendorong NU mengembangkan paradigma baru seperti Islam Nusantara dan Fiqih Peradaban. Namun, studi terdahulu cenderung memandang NU secara dikotomis sebagai organisasi tradisional atau moderat-progresif saja, sehingga mengabaikan dinamika epistemologis internalnya. Penelitian ini berfokus pada konstruksi diskursif Islam Nusantara dan Fiqih Peradaban, serta bagaimana NU mempertemukan otoritas klasik dengan transformasi sosial kontemporer. Penelitian ini, menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan analisis diskursus, penelitian ini menganalisis dokumen resmi organisasi seperti keputusan *Bahtsul Masa'il* dan *Munas Alim Ulama* yang ditriangulasi dengan literatur akademis. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa reformisme dan revivalisme berfungsi sebagai kerangka epistemologis yang saling menguatkan, bukan ideologi yang bertentangan. Islam Nusantara berperan mengontekstualisasikan ajaran Islam secara lokal, sedangkan Fiqih Peradaban memperluasnya ke ranah peradaban global. Pada akhirnya, NU merumuskan model "pembaharuan berbasis tradisi" yang merekonstruksi otoritas Islam klasik untuk mendorong pembaharuan kontekstual di masyarakat modern yang plural.



Background

The intellectual development of contemporary Islam has increasingly been shaped by the dynamic interaction between the preservation of religious traditions and the demand for renewal in response to rapidly changing social, political, and global realities. Muslim societies are challenged not only to maintain the continuity of classical Islamic scholarship but also to formulate religious perspectives capable of addressing contemporary issues such as democratization, religious pluralism, globalization, environmental crises, technological transformation, humanitarian conflicts, and the growing influence of transnational Islamic movements. Consequently, the relationship between tradition and reform has become one of the central debates in contemporary Islamic thought, attracting considerable scholarly attention across various academic disciplines.

Within this broader discourse, Indonesia occupies a distinctive position as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, where Islamic intellectual traditions have evolved through continuous interaction between local cultures, religious diversity, and modern nation-building. Rather than developing through a rigid dichotomy between conservatism and modernism, Indonesian Islam demonstrates a complex process of negotiation between inherited religious authority and contextual reinterpretation. This dynamic has enabled Indonesian Muslim organizations to formulate approaches that preserve the normative foundations of Islam while responding constructively to the changing needs of society. Consequently, Indonesian Islamic thought has increasingly been recognized as an important reference for understanding alternative models of Islamic reform beyond the experiences of the Middle East.

Among the various Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) represents one of the most influential intellectual and religious institutions in shaping contemporary Islamic discourse. Historically, NU has been widely recognized as a guardian of the Sunni scholarly tradition (*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jam'ah*) through its commitment to classical Islamic jurisprudence, *pesantren* education, and the authority of traditional *ulama*. Nevertheless, the contemporary intellectual trajectory of NU demonstrates that the organization is far from being a static traditionalist institution. Instead, NU has continuously reconstructed its intellectual foundations through various conceptual initiatives, most notably *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqih Peradaban*, which represent strategic efforts to reinterpret Islamic tradition in response to contemporary national and global challenges.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been widely characterized as a traditionalist Islamic organization, distinguished by its firm adherence to the authority of the classical schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*madhhab*), the *pesantren* educational system, and the preservation of religious practices embedded in local cultural traditions¹. This orientation is succinctly articulated in NU's long standing normative principle of *al-muḥfaẓah 'ala al-qadīm al-ṣalīḥ wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadīd al-aṣlaḥ* (the commitment to safeguard established traditions deemed beneficial while selectively incorporating innovations that better serve the public good)².

¹ Muhammad Jauhari Sofi, Sofwan Manaf, dan Jauhar Ali, "Pesantren in Dynamic Transformation: Harmonizing Classical Roots and Modern Practices," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 49, no. 2 (7 Oktober 2025): 333, <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v49i2.1459>.

² Hasse Jubba, Jaffary Awang, dan Siti Aisyah Sungkilang, "The Challenges of Islamic Organizations in Promoting Moderation in Indonesia," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 6, no. 1 (10 Agustus 2021): 43–54, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v6i1.12948>.

This transformation is most visible in the proliferation of intellectual paradigms within NU, including *Fiqih Sosial* (social jurisprudence), *Islam Nusantara*, and *Fiqih Peradaban* (civilizational *fiqh*). These frameworks signal a deliberate effort to recalibrate Islamic normative reasoning in response to contemporary socio – political realities, while remaining anchored in the epistemological foundations of the *pesantren* tradition³. Conceptually, these discourses situate NU within a dialectical tension between two dominant trajectories of modern Islamic thought: reformism, which foregrounds methodological renewal and contextual interpretation, and revivalism, which emphasizes the reaffirmation of classical Islamic norms as the basis of religious authenticity⁴. Rather than endorsing a binary alignment with either trajectory, NU's intellectual orientation reflects a synthetic approach, wherein reformist impulses are mediated through, rather than detached from, the continuity of tradition.

This dialectical posture acquires particular significance in the Indonesian context, a plural society marked by profound ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity⁵. The historical diffusion of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago was characterized by sustained processes of acculturation between Islamic teachings and local cultural forms, producing distinctive socio – religious practices such as *tahlilan*, *selametan*, *maulidan*, *pesantren* – based religiosity, and culturally embedded religious arts⁶. This accommodative mode of religious transmission has contributed to the formation of a typology of Indonesian Islam that is broadly moderate, inclusive, and socially embedded⁷. Within this socio – historical configuration, *Islam Nusantara* emerges as NU's conceptual articulation of an Islam that is culturally rooted, oriented toward social *maṣlaḥah*, and explicitly positioned against religious extremism and rigid puritanism.

At the same time, Indonesia has not been immune to the growing influence of transnational Islamic movements that promote forms of radical revivalism characterized by textualist and exclusionary orientations⁸. These movements frequently challenge locally rooted religious practices, labeling them as *bid'ah* (unwarranted innovations) or deviations from normative Islam, thereby generating discursive tensions within Indonesia's Islamic public sphere⁹.

Recent scholarship has extensively examined the intellectual transformation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) from various analytical perspectives. One group of studies

³ Ronald Lukens – Bull, "The Traditions of Pluralism, Accommodation, and Anti – Radicalism in the Pesantren Community," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 2, No. 1 (1 Juni 2008): 1, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2008.2.1.1> – 15.

⁴ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511973062>.

⁵ Thita M. Mazya, Kholis Ridho, dan Ali Irfani, "Religious and Cultural Diversity in Indonesia: Dynamics of Acceptance and Conflict in a Multidimensional Perspective," *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review* 07, no. 07 (11 Juli 2024), <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V7-i7-32>.

⁶ Dody S. Truna, "The Illustrations of Indigenization of Islam in Indonesian Cultural Landscape," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama dan Lintas Budaya* 5, no. 3 (20 September 2021): 337 – 46, <https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v5i3.13804>.

⁷ Robert W. Hefner, "Islam and Institutional Religious Freedom in Indonesia," *Religions* 12, no. 6 (7 Juni 2021): 415, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060415>.

⁸ Zuly Qodir dan Bilveer Sight, "Contestation of Contemporary Islam: Conservative Islam versus Progressive Islam," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 23, no. 2 (8 Januari 2023), <https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v23i2.4316>.

⁹ Kunawi Basyir, "Fighting Islamic Radicalism Through Religious Moderatism in Indonesia: An Analysis of Religious Movement," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 21, no. 2 (31 Oktober 2020): 205 – 20, <https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v21i2.2313>.

primarily interprets NU as a traditional Islamic organization whose intellectual authority is deeply rooted in the pesantren tradition, classical Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and the theological framework of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. A second body of literature presents a different perspective by highlighting NU's progressive engagement with democracy, religious moderation, multiculturalism, civil society, and human rights. Nevertheless, they generally focus on the socio – political implications of NU's intellectual initiatives while paying relatively limited attention to their underlying epistemological foundations.

More recent studies have begun to explore the emergence of *Fiqh Peradaban* as a new paradigm introduced by NU in response to global humanitarian, environmental, technological, and civilizational challenges. Unlike previous concepts that primarily emphasized cultural contextualization, *Fiqh Peradaban* seeks to reposition Islamic jurisprudence within broader discussions concerning global ethics, international cooperation, sustainable development, and the future of human civilization. Although this emerging scholarship demonstrates that NU continues to develop innovative intellectual frameworks, most analyses remain descriptive and normative, concentrating on the practical relevance of the concept rather than examining the epistemological transformation through which it emerged.

While previous studies have enriched the understanding of Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) intellectual development, they often treat *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqh Peradaban* as isolated projects and view reformism and revivalism as opposing orientations, leaving a theoretical gap regarding how NU reconciles traditional authority with contemporary reform. To address this limitation, the present study employs discourse analysis to examine the dialectical relationship between reformism and revivalism through the lenses of *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqh Peradaban*, conceptualizing them as complementary processes. Ultimately, it seeks to explain the epistemological mechanisms through which NU integrates continuity and renewal, demonstrating how contemporary Islamic thought negotiates, constructs, and legitimize reform without abandoning its classical foundation.

Nevertheless, existing academic scholarship on NU has largely remained confined within dichotomous analytical frameworks. NU is often portrayed either as a predominantly traditionalist organization¹⁰ or, conversely, as a moderate – progressive force¹¹, without sufficiently unpacking the internal epistemological dynamics that underpin its intellectual evolution. Most of the literature prioritizes historical or sociological analysis by focusing on NU's political orientation¹², educational institutions¹³,

¹⁰ Afidatul Asmar, "Old Order, New Order, NU Order (Existence of NU Today)," *Journal of Nahdlatul Ulama Studies* 1, no. 2 (31 Juli 2020): 210 – 16, <https://doi.org/10.35672/jnus.v1i2.210> – 216.

¹¹ Zakiya Darajat, "Muhammadiyah dan NU: Penjaga Moderatisme Islam di Indonesia," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (31 Januari 2017): 81 – 96, <https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.001.1.05>.

¹² Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "Ulama dan Pesantren dalam Dinamika Politik dan Kultur Nahdlatul Ulama," *Ulul Albab Jurnal Studi Islam*, 17 September 2013, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v0i0.2377>.

¹³ Mamat Rahmatullah dan Sunaryanto Sunaryanto, "Membangun Pendidikan Pesantren Neo – Modernisme Berbasis Nahdlatul Ulama: Perspektif Teori Kepemimpin," *Dinamika Penelitian: Media Komunikasi Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 24, no. 01 (10 Agustus 2024): 171 – 86, <https://doi.org/10.21274/dinamika.2024.24.01.171> – 186.

organizational responses to state policies¹⁴, or treating *Islam Nusantara* primarily as a normative discourse¹⁵. What remains underexplored is a systematic examination of how the dialectic between reformism and revivalism operates as an underlying intellectual framework within NU's contemporary thought, particularly through *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqih Peradaban* as key sites of its ongoing intellectual production.

Addressing this lacuna, the present study aims to analyze the patterns of dialectical interaction between reformism and revivalism in NU's intellectual movement as articulated through the discourses of *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqih Peradaban*. It seeks to elucidate the epistemological construction through which NU responds to the forces of modernization, globalization, and the realities of social and religious pluralism in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study conceptualizes *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqih Peradaban* not merely as ideological narratives but as methodological frameworks employed by NU to cultivate modes of Islamic practice that are moderate, inclusive, and contextually grounded. More broadly, the study aspires to contribute to the theoretical development of Indonesian Islamic thought by offering a nuanced account of the synthesis between tradition and renewal as a distinctive model of Islam in the Nusantara, one that remains both rooted in its local epistemic heritage and responsive to contemporary civilizational challenges.

This study argues that Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) intellectual dynamics cannot be framed within a binary choice between reformism and revivalism, but rather as complementary epistemological processes through which NU continuously reconstructs its religious authority alongside evolving realities. Guided by three core research questions, the study uses discourse analysis to examine primary official documents including *Munas Alim Ulama* proceedings, *Bahtsul Masā'il* decisions, and PBNU publications to analyze how the paradigms of *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqih Peradaban* synthesize continuity and renewal. By re-evaluating these paradigms beyond mere organizational narratives or socio-political strategies, the research offers significant methodological and theoretical advancements through its proposed model of "*tradition-based reformism*." Ultimately, it demonstrates that religious continuity and intellectual renewal are mutually constitutive dimensions, presenting an important epistemological model for how contemporary Muslim societies reconcile classical authority with modern, plural, and interconnected global contexts.

This study employs a qualitative library-based research design to investigate the epistemological construction of reformism and revivalism within Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) contemporary intellectual discourse, specifically through the paradigms of *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqih Peradaban*. Primary data sources consist of authoritative NU documents such as official PBNU statements, *Bahtsul Masa'il* decisions, *Munas Alim Ulama* proceedings, and key writings of prominent scholar selected through purposive sampling based on institutional legitimacy and relevance. These primary texts are

¹⁴ Masmuni Mahatma, "Paradigma Politik Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) dalam Bernegara," *Mawa'izh: Jurnal Dakwah dan Pengembangan Sosial Kemanusiaan* 8, no. 1 (1 Juli 2017): 31–54, <https://doi.org/10.32923/maw.v8i1.695>.

¹⁵ Luthfi Hadi Aminuddin dan Isnatin Ulfah, "Epistemology of Islam Nusantara: Transformation of Islamic Legal Thought in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)," *Justicia Islamica* 18, no. 2 (29 November 2021): 355–74, <https://doi.org/10.21154/justicia.v18i2.3095>. Sudarto Murtaufiq, "Promoting Islam Nusantara: A Lesson from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)," *Al-Insyiroh: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 2, no. 2 (12 Oktober 2018): 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.35309/alinsyiroh.v2i2.3319>.

complemented by secondary sources including peer – reviewed articles, academic books, and publications on Indonesian Islamic thought.

The research utilizes Norman Fairclough's three – dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to examine how religious authority and traditional renewal are constructed and legitimized. The analytical process operates across three levels: textual analysis of key terminologies and narratives, examination of discursive practices surrounding the production and dissemination of these ideas, and exploration of broader social practices. This third stage considers contextual factors such as Indonesian pluralism, globalization, and responses to transnational Islamic movements, illustrating the dialectical interplay between continuity and renewal within NU's tradition. Data analysis involves data reduction, thematic categorization—focusing on religious methodology, traditional authority, moderation, and modernization—and critical interpretation to articulate NU's epistemological patterns. To ensure credibility, trustworthiness, and interpretative consistency while minimizing subjectivity, the study incorporates source triangulation. This is achieved by systematically cross – examining official organizational documents with academic literature and prior scholarly evaluations of Islamic reformism and discourse studies. This study employs qualitative library research and discourse analysis. Primary data are derived from official NU documents, *Bahtsul Masā'il* deliberations, proceedings of Munas Alim Ulama NU, and the intellectual works of prominent NU scholars.¹⁶ Secondary data consist of scholarly publications related to Indonesian Islamic thought, Islamic reformism, and contemporary religious discourse.

Constructive Dialectics between Reformism and Revivalism

The analysis of official Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) documents demonstrates that reformism occupies a central position in the organization's contemporary intellectual discourse. However, unlike the dominant understanding of Islamic reformism that is frequently associated with the rejection of inherited traditions or the purification of religious practices, NU constructs reformism as a process of contextual renewal grounded in the continuity of classical Islamic scholarship. Within this discourse, reform is not interpreted as a rupture with tradition but rather as an intellectual effort to reinterpret established religious principles in response to changing historical, social, and civilizational circumstances.

At the textual level, official documents concerning *Islam Nusantara* consistently employ concepts such as *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *maṣlaḥah*, moderation (*wasatīyyah*), contextualization, and public benefit to justify the necessity of intellectual renewal. These recurring concepts indicate that NU does not frame reform as an ideological departure from classical Islamic jurisprudence but as a legitimate extension of the long – standing tradition of *ijtihād*. The discourse therefore positions reform as an internal mechanism within Islamic scholarship rather than as an external project imposed by modernity.

From the perspective of discursive practice, the production of reformist discourse is closely associated with NU's institutional mechanisms, including *Bahtsul Masā'il*, the *Musyawah Nasional Alim Ulama*, national congresses, and official deliberations of the Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU). These institutional forums function not merely as arenas for religious decision – making but also as discursive spaces through which new interpretations are negotiated, legitimized, and disseminated. Consequently,

¹⁶ Yahya Cholil Tsquf, *Hasil-Hasil Munas Alim Ulama dan Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama 2019* (Jakarta: LTN PBNU, 2019), 58.

reformist ideas emerge through collective scholarly deliberation rather than individual intellectual authority, reinforcing NU's commitment to institutional consensus and the continuity of religious legitimacy.

At the level of social practice, the emergence of reformist discourse reflects NU's response to profound transformations occurring within Indonesian and global Muslim societies. Increasing religious pluralism, democratization, globalization, technological development, environmental challenges, humanitarian crises, and the expansion of transnational Islamic movements have generated new questions that cannot be adequately addressed through literal interpretations of classical jurisprudence alone. In this context, reformism functions as an adaptive strategy that enables Islamic legal reasoning to remain relevant without abandoning its normative foundations. Rather than opposing tradition, reformism reconstructs tradition as a dynamic intellectual resource capable of responding to contemporary realities.

The findings therefore indicate that reformism within Nahdlatul Ulama should not be understood as an attempt to replace traditional Islamic authority with modernist interpretations. Instead, it represents an epistemological process through which inherited religious knowledge is continuously reinterpreted, negotiated, and institutionalized in order to address emerging social and civilizational challenges. This distinctive construction of reformism provides the intellectual foundation upon which subsequent paradigms, including *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqih Peradaban*, are developed.

This study concludes that the dialectical interaction between reformism and revivalism within NU's intellectual movement has produced a distinctive Nusantara – oriented model of Islamic renewal that is tradition – based, moderate, context – sensitive, and civilizational in orientation. *Islam Nusantara* functions as a cultural – identity framework through which Islamic values are grounded in Indonesia's plural socio – cultural reality, while *Fiqih Peradaban* operates as a methodological instrument enabling NU to formulate juridical and ethical responses to the challenges of the modern world. It is this sustained dialectic that positions NU not merely as a traditionalist organization, but as an intellectual force capable of balancing the continuity of inherited traditions with the imperatives of renewal in a coherent and constructive manner.

Based on a discourse analysis of a wide range of NU's intellectual texts and official documents, including the scholarly works of main NU figures, *Bahtsul Masa'il* resolutions, organizational statements, and publications on *Islam Nusantara* and *Fiqih Peradaban*, this study finds that NU's intellectual movement exhibits a pattern of constructive dialectics between reformism and revivalism rather than an oppositional relationship of mutual negation. NU's reformist orientation is reflected in its efforts to renew the methodology of *istinbat al-ahkam* and to reorient Islamic teachings toward greater contextual engagement with contemporary social – political problems, even as conflict resolution¹⁷. This is evident in the growing emphasis on *maqasid al-shar'ah*, the adoption of *Fiqih Sosial* as an analytical framework, and the development of *Fiqih Peradaban* as an expansion of juridical concern beyond ritual observance toward public welfare and social development. At the same time, revivalist elements remain integral to NU's intellectual posture in the form of a sustained affirmation of *pesantren* authority, adherence to the classical schools of jurisprudence, and the preservation of classical Islamic scholarly

¹⁷ Yahya. Cholil Tsafuf, *Hasil-Hasil Munas Alim Ulama dan Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama 2019*, ed. oleh Mahbub Ma'afi (Jakarta: Lembaga Ta'lif wan Nasyr PBNu, 2019). 58

disciplines¹⁸. These elements function as the epistemological foundation of reform, ensuring that renewal remains anchored in established chains of Islamic knowledge (*sanad*). Consequently, NU articulates a model of tradition – based reformism one that is neither radical nor puritanical, but grounded in the continuity of the Islamic intellectual heritage (*turath*).

The finding that NU's intellectual movement exhibits a pattern of constructive dialectics between reformism and revivalism underscores a distinctive model of Islamic renewal within NU that is integrative rather than antagonistic in nature¹⁹. In theories of Islamic renewal, reformism is commonly associated with the rationalization of religious thought, the reinterpretation of authoritative texts, and openness to modern concepts such as social justice, democracy, and pluralism. Revivalism, by contrast, is often understood as an effort toward purification through a return to the authority of foundational texts and classical traditions in order to safeguard the authenticity of Islamic teachings²⁰. This study demonstrates that NU does not position these two currents as mutually exclusive or oppositional. Instead, NU constructs a dialectical relationship in which revivalism functions as an epistemological foundation and source of traditional legitimacy, while reformism operates as a mechanism of adaptation to changing social contexts²¹. This dialectic enables NU to maintain continuity with the Islamic intellectual heritage (*turath*) without succumbing to intellectual stagnation.

The reformist orientation of NU is particularly evident in the renewal of its methodology of *istinbat al-aḥkam*, which no longer concentrates solely on individual ritual obligations but is increasingly directed toward addressing contemporary social, national, and humanitarian concerns²². The mainstreaming of *maqāṣid al-shar'ah* signifies a paradigmatic shift in NU's jurisprudential reasoning from a predominantly textual – normative approach toward a teleological and context – sensitive orientation that foregrounds universal objectives of public welfare, including the protection of life and intellect, social justice, and communal cohesion²³. The framework of *Fiqih Sosial* further reinforces this paradigm by integrating social reality analysis as an essential component of legal reasoning. Within this trajectory, *Fiqih Peradaban* represents the apex of NU's reformist articulation, marking an expansion of the scope of Islamic jurisprudence from the domains of personal ritual and narrowly defined *mu'amalat* to broader concerns such as societal development, interreligious relations, socio – political governance, and global ethics²⁴. This evolution highlights NU's capacity to engage with modernity by

¹⁸ Mukti Tabrani, "Maqāṣid Revitalization in Global Era: Istidlāl Study from Text to Context," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 13, no. 2 (31 Desember 2018): 310 – 33, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v13i2.1814>.

¹⁹ Neng Hilma Mimar dan Kristining Seva, "Integritas Nilai Budaya pada Peradaban Organisasi Masyarakat Nahdlatul Ulama dalam Membangkitkan Era Baru," *Focus* 5, no. 1 (4 April 2024): 1 – 12, <https://doi.org/10.26593/focus.v5i1.7791>.

²⁰ Suyadi Suyadi, "Mainstreaming the Knowledge of Islamic Education with Progress and of Islam Nusantara Education," *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 24, no. 1 (18 September 2019): 39, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v24i1.1613>.

²¹ Ilham Dwitama Haeba, Anis Malik Thoha, dan Rasinah Ahim, "Wacana Dinamis Nahdlatul Ulama: Analisis Kritis terhadap Perubahan Sosial," *Tasfiah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 8, no. 1 (19 Maret 2024): 125 – 58, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiah.v8i1.11613>.

²² Aminuddin dan Ulfah, "Epistemology of Islam Nusantara: Transformation of Islamic Legal Thought in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)."

²³ Cholil Tsauq, *Hasil-Hasil Munas Alim Ulama & Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama 2019*, 7.

²⁴ Achmad Syahid, *Islam Nusantara: Relasi Agama-Budaya dan Tendensi Kuasa Ulama* (Depok: Rajawali Pers, 2019), 71.

reinterpreting classical jurisprudence to address complex contemporary issues, thereby ensuring the relevance of Islamic law in a rapidly changing world.

Conversely, the persistence of revivalist elements that manifested in the reinforcement of *pesantren* authority, adherence to the classical legal schools, and sustained engagement with traditional Islamic scholarly disciplines, indicates that NU does not regard tradition as a historical burden but as a vital form of intellectual capital²⁵. *Pesantren* function as centers for the transmission of scholarly *sanad*, ensuring the continuity of Islamic methodology grounded in the authority of learned scholars and the disciplinary rigor of the *madhhab* tradition. Continued reliance on classical texts (*kitab kuning*) and the frameworks of *uṣūl al-fiqh* affirms that NU's reform does not adopt a model of unrestricted *ijtihad* detached from the legacy of earlier scholars²⁶. Revivalism within NU, therefore, does not assume a puritanical, anti-cultural, or exclusivist form. Rather, it takes the shape of a revitalization of tradition that provides epistemological stability within processes of religious innovation.

It is precisely this synthesis between methodological renewal and fidelity to tradition that gives rise to what may be termed "tradition-based reformism" a moderate model of Islamic renewal that mediates between conservative stagnation and modernist radicalism²⁷. This pattern highlights the distinctiveness of NU's intellectual posture in comparison with reformist movements that tend to sever ties with the *turath*, as well as revivalist groups that reject modernization in its entirety²⁸. Through tradition-based reformism, NU succeeds in constructing a mode of Islamic thought that is responsive to social change while preserving the scholarly and spiritual authenticity of Islam.

At the societal level, the reformism-revivalism dialectic within NU has significant implications for the formation of Indonesia's moderate Islamic landscape, one that is accommodative toward cultural diversity and social pluralism²⁹. By remaining rooted in *pesantren*-based scholarly traditions while advancing a jurisprudence that is contextual and oriented toward public welfare, NU positions Islam as a moral force that is conciliatory rather than confrontational, and relevant to the lived realities of the nation-state³⁰. This model simultaneously serves as an ideological counterweight to transnational religious radicalism, which often advances rigid dichotomies between religious purity and national or civic belonging.

The discourse of revivalism within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) differs significantly from the understanding of revivalism commonly associated with scriptural literalism, religious purification, or the rejection of local traditions. Rather than advocating a return to Islam through rigid textualism, NU constructs revivalism as the revitalization of the classical Islamic intellectual heritage (*turāth*) while preserving its relevance within contemporary social realities. Consequently, revivalism is understood not as a restoration of the past but

²⁵ Asrizal Saiin et al., "Islamic Law in Indonesia: Baḥsul Masail Ijtihad and the Production of Knowledge," 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211014.007>.

²⁶ Haeba, Thoha, dan Ahim, "Wacana Dinamis Nahdlatul Ulama: Analisis Kritis terhadap Perubahan Sosial."

²⁷ Fazlur Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam," in *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), 632–56, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521219495.009>.

²⁸ Jubba, Awang, dan Sungkilang, "The Challenges of Islamic Organizations in Promoting Moderation in Indonesia."

²⁹ Faried F. Saenong, "Nahdlatul Ulama (NU): A Grassroots Movement Advocating Moderate Islam," in *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements* (BRILL, 2021), 129–50, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004435544_009.

³⁰ Qodir dan Sight, "Contestation of Contemporary Islam: Conservative Islam versus Progressive Islam."

as the continuous revitalization of authoritative religious knowledge capable of guiding Muslim societies in changing historical contexts.

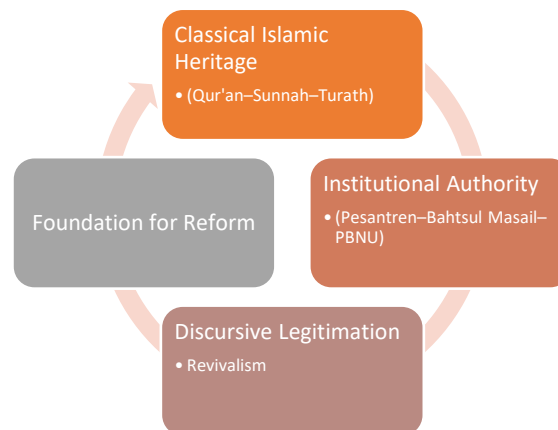


Diagram Reformism, source: researcher, 2026

At the textual level, NU's official documents consistently reaffirm the authority of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, classical jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the four Sunni schools of law (*al-madhāhib al-arba'ah*), and the theological principles of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. These textual references function not merely as theological affirmations but as discursive mechanisms through which religious legitimacy is continuously reproduced. The repeated invocation of classical authorities demonstrates that contemporary intellectual innovation within NU is firmly anchored in an inherited scholarly tradition rather than detached from it.

The analysis of discursive practices further reveals that revivalist discourse is institutionalized through pesantren networks, religious councils, *Bahtsul Masā'il* forums, national congresses, and the scholarly authority of senior ulama. These institutional structures play a decisive role in preserving interpretative continuity while simultaneously allowing new legal and intellectual formulations to emerge through collective deliberation. Consequently, revivalism within NU should be understood as an institutional process of safeguarding religious authority while facilitating controlled intellectual adaptation.

At the level of social practice, revivalist discourse represents NU's response to multiple contemporary challenges, including religious fragmentation, ideological polarization, the expansion of transnational Islamic movements, and the increasing tendency toward textual simplification in religious interpretation. Within this broader context, the reaffirmation of classical Islamic scholarship serves not as resistance to change but as an epistemological strategy for maintaining intellectual stability amid rapid social transformation. Revivalism therefore provides the normative foundation that enables reform to occur without undermining the continuity of Islamic scholarly tradition.

The findings suggest that revivalism within Nahdlatul Ulama should not be interpreted as the opposite of reformism. Instead, it constitutes the epistemological foundation upon which reformist initiatives acquire religious legitimacy. Whereas reformism emphasizes contextual adaptation and intellectual renewal, revivalism safeguards the continuity of authoritative religious knowledge. Together, these two dimensions form an integrated framework through which NU continuously negotiates the relationship between tradition and change in contemporary Islamic thought.

***Islam Nusantara* as a Cultural–Identity Discourse and a Methodological Paradigm**

This study further finds that *Islam Nusantara* functions simultaneously as a cultural–identity discourse and a methodological paradigm, rather than merely as an ideological label. Within NU's textual corpus, *Islam Nusantara* is articulated as a model of Islamic religiosity that acknowledges Indonesia's cultural plurality and legitimizes processes of acculturation between Islam and local traditions, provided they do not contravene the core principles of the *Sharī'ah*³¹. This discourse represents NU's response both to the heterogeneous social fabric of Indonesian society and to the penetration of transnational Islamic ideologies that tend to be exclusivist and antagonistic toward local cultural expressions³². By framing Islamic values within the contexts of nationhood, tolerance, and moderation, *Islam Nusantara* operates as a cultural strategy aimed at sustaining social cohesion and reinforcing the integration of religion and culture in the life of the nation.

The finding that *Islam Nusantara* operates as both a cultural–identity discourse and a methodological paradigm underscores that the concept cannot be reduced to a mere ideological slogan or a symbolic marker of NU affiliation³³. From a discourse–analytical perspective, *Islam Nusantara* functions as a mode of meaning production that shapes how NU understands, interprets, and practices Islam within Indonesia's plural social reality³⁴. It constructs an Islamic identity that is non–monolithic and context–sensitive, that Islam is socially grounded, dialogical with local cultures, and that treats tradition as a medium for the expression of Islamic values³⁵. In this sense, *Islam Nusantara* operates not only at the symbolic level but also as an epistemological framework that informs NU's approaches to da'wah, education, and the processes of legal reasoning (*istinbat al-aḥkam*).

NU's recognition of cultural plurality and its legitimation of acculturative religious practices reveal a methodological orientation grounded in the principles of '*urf*, *maṣlaḥah*, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*³⁶. Within the framework of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, local customs ('*urf*) that do not contradict the objectives of the *Sharī'ah* may legitimately inform legal considerations. *Islam Nusantara* actualizes this principle in practice, enabling local expressions of Islam such as *selamatan*, *tahlilan*, *maulidan*, *ziarah wali* and religiously inspired local arts, to be understood not as deviations from Islamic norms, but as culturally embedded manifestations of Islamic values³⁷. This approach distinguishes *Islam*

³¹ Royyan. et. al Habibi, *Ijtihad Politik Islam Nusantara: Membumikan Fiqih Siyasa Melalui Pendekatan Maqashid asy-Syariah* (Kediri: Lirboyo Press, 2015).

³² Hirshi Anadza dan Rommel Utungga Pasopati, "Globalization, Islam Nusantara, and contemporary character empowerment," *Journal of Social, Humanity, and Education* 1, no. 2 (22 Januari 2021): 79–89, <https://doi.org/10.35912/jshe.v1i2.372>.

³³ Akhmad Rizqon Khamami, "Nasionalis–cum–Nahdliyin: a new identity for nominal Javanese Muslims," *Contemporary Islam* 16, no. 2–3 (12 Oktober 2022): 507–27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-022-00505-6>.

³⁴ Murtaufiq, "PROMOTING ISLAM NUSANTARA: A Lesson from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)."

³⁵ Aru Lego Triono, "Halaqah Fiqih Peradaban: 4 Perubahan Dunia menurut Gus Yahya yang Harus Direspons NU," 2022, <https://nu.or.id/nasional/halaqah-fiqih-peradaban-4-perubahan-dunia-menurut-gus-yahya-yang-harus-direspons-nu-f6fQh>.

³⁶ Cholil Tsauq, *Hasil-Hasil Munas Alim Ulama & Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama 2019*, 267.

³⁷ Aslinda Aslinda et al., "Islam Indonesia: Telaah Kontruksi Identitas Muslim Tradisional dan Muslim Modernis," *Progressive of Cognitive and Ability* 3, no. 3 (30 Juli 2024): 219–29, <https://doi.org/10.56855/jpr.v3i3.1150>.

Nusantara from puritanical models of Islam that reject local particularities and seek to rigidly standardize religious practice based on Middle Eastern normative templates.

The preceding analysis demonstrates that reformism and revivalism within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) should not be understood as mutually exclusive intellectual orientations. Instead, both constitute complementary epistemological processes that collectively shape the development of NU's contemporary religious thought. This dialectical interaction becomes particularly evident in the emergence of *Islam Nusantara*, which represents not merely a cultural expression of Indonesian Islam but a comprehensive epistemological framework through which continuity and renewal are systematically reconciled.

At the textual level, the discourse of *Islam Nusantara* consistently emphasizes principles such as moderation (*wasatiyyah*), contextual interpretation, public welfare (*maṣlahah*), tolerance, and respect for local cultural traditions. These concepts are repeatedly articulated in official NU documents as legitimate expressions of Islamic teachings rooted in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the classical juridical tradition. Consequently, *Islam Nusantara* does not introduce a new theological doctrine but rearticulates established Islamic principles within the socio-cultural realities of Indonesia. The textual construction therefore reflects a continuous dialogue between inherited religious authority and contemporary contextual demands.

The analysis of discursive practices further indicates that *Islam Nusantara* was not produced through individual intellectual initiatives but through institutional deliberation involving national congresses, *Baḥsul Masā'il*, academic forums, pesantren networks, and official publications of Nahdlatul Ulama. These institutional processes transformed the concept from an internal scholarly discourse into an officially recognized intellectual paradigm capable of guiding religious interpretation and public engagement. Through this process, *Islam Nusantara* acquired both scholarly legitimacy and organizational authority, enabling it to function as a collective framework rather than a personal intellectual project.

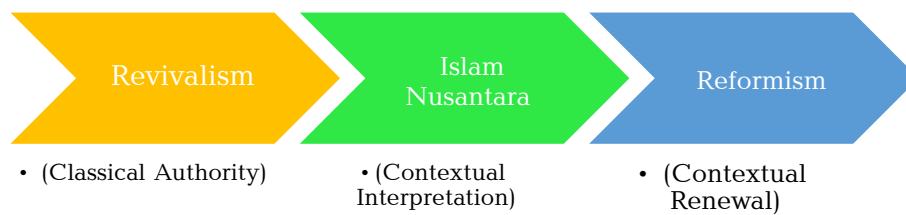
At the level of social practice, the emergence of *Islam Nusantara* reflects NU's response to increasing religious polarization, ideological contestation, and the expansion of transnational Islamic movements advocating homogenized interpretations of Islam. Rather than confronting these challenges through ideological confrontation, NU constructs *Islam Nusantara* as a discourse that integrates Islamic orthodoxy with Indonesia's pluralistic socio-cultural realities. In this respect, contextualization becomes an epistemological strategy for preserving the universality of Islamic values while acknowledging the diversity of historical and cultural experiences through which Islam is practiced.

More broadly, the discourse of *Islam Nusantara* represents NU's strategic response to Indonesia's social heterogeneity and to the growing influence of transnational Islamic ideologies marked by exclusivism. Amid global contests over religious identity, NU advances *Islam Nusantara* as a counter-narrative that emphasizes the compatibility of Islam with culture, nationalism, and democracy³⁸. This strategy is not merely theological but also politico-cultural in a constructive sense, insofar as it aims to produce a form of public Islamic identity capable of maintaining social stability and preventing religion-based polarization. Through *Islam Nusantara*, NU positions Islam not as a force of cultural

³⁸ Slamet Effendy Yusuf (ed.), *Hasil-Hasil Muktamar NU Ke-33 Nahdlatul Ulama* (Jakarta: LTN PBNU, 2015), 153.

homogenization, but as an integrative moral resource that respects ethnic, linguistic, customary, and religious differences.

The diagram of Islam Nusantara represents a meeting point, source: Researcher, 2026



Within the broader framework of religious moderation, *Islam Nusantara* functions as a cultural mechanism for cultivating tolerance and peaceful coexistence.³⁹ Moderation in this context is not understood as a compromise of doctrinal principles, but as the capacity to manage difference in a just and proportionate manner. *Islam Nusantara* provides a narrative foundation for religious practices that reject rigid textual extremism on the one hand and theological relativism on the other⁴⁰. It charts a middle path that combines doctrinal steadfastness with social flexibility that a hallmark of Indonesian Islam shaped by the *pesantren* tradition and local cultural engagement.

Taken together, this analysis demonstrates that *Islam Nusantara* constitutes a key methodological instrument through which NU constructs a contextual and civilizationally oriented paradigm of Islamic religiosity⁴¹. Far from being a mere identity slogan, it represents a discursive formation that structures NU's modes of thinking, preaching, and juridical reasoning. Through this discourse, NU consolidates its position as an agent of culturally grounded Islamic renewal, capable of synthesizing normative Islamic teachings with Indonesia's plural social reality, thereby producing a model of moderate Islam that remains relevant to nation – building and contemporary civilizational challenges.

***Fiqh Peradaban* as an Articulation of NU's Epistemological Reformism**

The analysis indicates that *Fiqh Peradaban* represents a significant intellectual development within Nahdlatul Ulama's contemporary discourse. Rather than replacing *Islam Nusantara*, this paradigm expands its epistemological foundations from the context of Indonesian Islam to broader questions concerning global civilization. While *Islam Nusantara* primarily emphasizes the contextualization of Islamic teachings within Indonesia's socio – cultural diversity, *Fiqh Peradaban* reorients this intellectual framework toward addressing universal challenges affecting contemporary humanity. This shift illustrates the continuity of NU's intellectual trajectory, in which local contextualization becomes the basis for broader civilizational engagement.

At the textual level, the discourse of *Fiqh Peradaban* consistently employs concepts such as human dignity, global justice, peacebuilding, environmental responsibility, sustainable development, technological ethics, and international cooperation. These concepts are framed not as departures from classical Islamic jurisprudence but as

³⁹ Triono, "Halaqah Fiqh Peradaban: 4 Perubahan Dunia menurut Gus Yahya yang Harus Direspons NU."

⁴⁰ Robin Bush, *Nahdlatul Ulama & the struggle for power within Islam & politics in Indonesia* (Pasar Panjang: ISEAS Publishing, 2009).

⁴¹ Cholil Tsauq, *Hasil-Hasil Munas Alim Ulama & Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama 2019*.

contemporary manifestations of the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*). Consequently, the discourse extends the scope of Islamic legal reasoning beyond conventional legal issues toward broader ethical and civilizational concerns while remaining grounded in authoritative Islamic scholarship.

In the perspective of discursive practice, *Fiqih Peradaban* emerged through institutional deliberation within Nahdlatul Ulama, particularly during the formulation of official organizational documents, national conferences, scholarly forums, and intellectual discussions involving senior ulama and Muslim scholars. The discourse was subsequently disseminated through academic publications, international conferences, public lectures, and organizational programs, transforming *Fiqih Peradaban* into a collective intellectual agenda rather than an isolated theological proposition. This institutionalization reflects NU's commitment to developing an adaptive yet authoritative Islamic discourse capable of engaging with contemporary global realities.

At the level of social practice, the emergence of *Fiqih Peradaban* reflects increasing awareness that contemporary Muslim societies face challenges extending beyond national and cultural boundaries. Issues such as armed conflict, forced migration, ecological degradation, digital transformation, economic inequality, and global humanitarian crises require forms of Islamic reasoning capable of engaging with the complexity of modern civilization. Within this context, *Fiqih Peradaban* functions as a civilizational discourse that seeks to reposition Islamic jurisprudence as an ethical framework for promoting coexistence, justice, sustainability, and global responsibility.

Rather than confining itself to the determination of individual legal rulings, *Fiqih Peradaban* expands the horizon of Islamic jurisprudence to encompass broader societal agendas, including social justice, human development, interreligious relations, and state governance⁴². Discourse analysis indicates that *Fiqih Peradaban* operates as a synthetic medium, integrating the legacy of classical jurisprudential methodologies, such as *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *qawā'id fiqhiyyah*, and *madhhab*—based legal reasoning, with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach and insights drawn from modern social sciences⁴³. This synthesis reinforces NU's position as a moderate reformist actor that does not abandon its revivalist foundations, but rather mobilizes them as a source of epistemological legitimacy for renewal.

This framework ensures that processes of *ijtihad* remain embedded within established scholarly disciplines and collective legal reasoning. Simultaneously, the reformist dimension is manifested in the integration of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and the strategic use of social sciences as contextual analytical tools for engaging with the complexities of modern life⁴⁴. Through this approach, legal reasoning extends beyond textual validity and classical precedent to encompass considerations of social impact, human dignity, and civilizational sustainability.

This synthetic model underscores that *Fqih Peradaban* is not a project of deconstructing classical Islamic jurisprudence, but rather a process of creative

⁴² Firmanda Taufiq dan Ahalla Tsauro, "Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the *Fiqih* of Civilization (Fikih Peradaban): Strategies, Contributions, and Challenges in Overcoming the Humanitarian Crisis," *International Journal Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* 26, no. 1 (20 Juni 2024): 173–83, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.26.1.20255>. Lihat juga Yahya Cholil Tsaqif, *Hasil-Hasil Munas Alim Ulama Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama 2019*, 104.

⁴³ Effendy Yusuf, *Hasil-Hasil Mukhtamar Nu Ke-33 Nahdlatul Ulama*. 153

⁴⁴ Tabrani, "Maqāṣid Revitalization in Global Era: Istidlāl Study from Text to Context."

recontextualization⁴⁵. Tradition is not framed as a constraint that impedes renewal; instead, it is treated as an epistemological resource that provides theological and scholarly legitimacy for methodological innovation. It is precisely here that NU's distinctive reformist character becomes evident: a form of renewal that is deeply rooted in the continuity of the Islamic intellectual heritage (*turath*). NU neither adopts a radical purificatory path that severs ties with the legacy of the legal schools that often associated with puritanical revivalism, nor does it embrace a liberalization of law that negates the authority of tradition⁴⁶. Instead, NU advances a mode of moderate, tradition-based reformism, in which *ijtihad* unfolds within the expanded yet disciplined parameters of classical methodology.

In light of this discussion, it can be asserted that *Fiqih Peradaban* represents the culmination of NU's reformism – revivalism dialectic. Reformism is articulated through the expansion of jurisprudential agendas into social and civilizational domains, alongside the deployment of *maqasid al-shari'ah* and social – scientific approaches; revivalism, meanwhile, operates as a legitimizing foundation through the sustained continuity of classical methodological heritage and the authority of the *pesantren* tradition. It is this synthesis that enables NU to transcend its characterization as a merely traditional religious community and to emerge instead as a key agent of methodological renewal in Indonesian Islam that one capable of offering a model of Islamic religiosity that is moderate, adaptive, and responsive to the needs of plural societies in the modern era.

Islamic Moderation as a Civilizational Vision

This dialectical relationship is evident in the progressive evolution of NU's contemporary intellectual paradigms. *Islam Nusantara* represents the first stage of this synthesis by demonstrating that contextual interpretation does not require abandoning classical Islamic authority. Instead, it illustrates how inherited religious traditions may be reinterpreted in accordance with Indonesia's diverse socio – cultural realities while preserving their normative foundations. Building upon this contextual framework, *Fiqih Peradaban* extends the scope of Islamic reasoning beyond national concerns toward broader questions of global civilization, humanitarian ethics, environmental responsibility, technological transformation, and international cooperation. Consequently, both paradigms should be understood as successive stages within a continuous epistemological trajectory rather than as isolated intellectual initiatives.

NU consistently grounds its contemporary discourse in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, classical jurisprudence, and the intellectual legacy of the Sunni scholarly tradition. At the level of discursive practice, these authoritative texts are reinterpreted through institutional mechanisms such as *Bahtsul Mas'ail*, national conferences, and scholarly deliberations, ensuring that intellectual innovation remains collectively negotiated rather than individually asserted. At the level of social practice, the resulting discourse enables NU to respond constructively to the complex realities of contemporary Muslim societies while maintaining its commitment to religious authenticity.

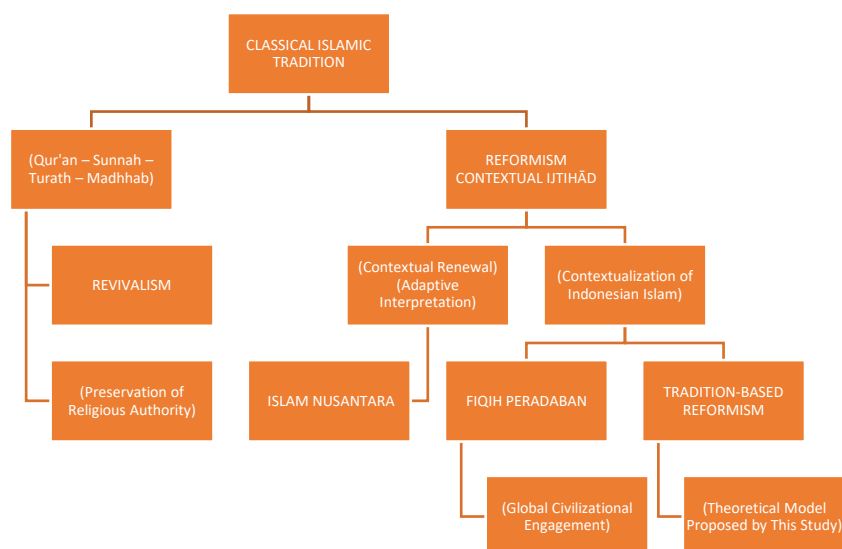
The dialectical interaction between reformism and revivalism therefore produces what this article conceptualizes as tradition – based reformism. Unlike conventional models of Islamic reform that frequently position tradition and modernity as competing

⁴⁵ Syahid, *Islam Nusantara: Relasi Agama-Budaya dan Tendensi Kuasa Ulama*.

⁴⁶ Yusqi Muhammad Isom, "Mabadi 'Asyrah Islam Nusantara," 2015, <https://nu.or.id/opini/mabadi-lsqoasyrah-islam-nusantara-igs6B>.

paradigms, tradition –based reformism recognizes classical Islamic scholarship as the principal source of legitimacy while simultaneously encouraging continuous reinterpretation in response to emerging social realities. In this framework, reform derives its authority from tradition, whereas tradition preserves its relevance through reform. This reciprocal relationship constitutes the defining characteristic of NU's contemporary intellectual movement. The identification of Islamic moderation as a civilizational vision underscores that moderation within NU is not conceived merely as an individual religious disposition, but as an ideological orientation and a form of social praxis aimed at constructing a peaceful and inclusive social order⁴⁷. Moderation (*wasatiyyah*) is understood as a middle path that resists religious extremism in its various manifestations, whether in the form of rigid textual radicalism or the politicization of religion through exclusionary identity claims and opposes all attempts to instrumentalize Islam for sectarian conflict and political polarization⁴⁸. In this discourse, NU positions itself as a producer of public Islamic narratives that seek to shift the understanding of Islam away from an ideological symbol of conflict toward an ethical framework for civilizational coexistence grounded in human dignity.

The production of this moderation discourse is carried out systematically through NU's intellectual and institutional infrastructures, including *Bahtsul Masa'il* deliberations, academic discussions, national and international conferences, scholarly publications, and the strategic utilization of digital media⁴⁹. The multiplication of these platforms significantly broadens the reach of NU's intellectual transformation, extending it beyond the *pesantren* milieu and traditional constituencies into national and even global public spheres⁵⁰. In this context, the role of the ulama undergoes a notable transformation, from that of ritual authority and legal adjudicator to that of social and intellectual agents actively shaping national discourse, engaging democratic developments, and articulating Islamic values that can be meaningfully embedded within multicultural societies.



Finding Relation. Source: Researcher, 2026

⁴⁷ Bush, *Nadhlatul Ulama & the struggle for power within Islam & politics in Indonesia*.

⁴⁸ Cholil Tsaqif, *Hasil-Hasil Munas Alim Ulama & Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama 2019*, 103.

⁴⁹ Effendy Yusuf, *Hasil-Hasil Muktamar Nu Ke-33 Nahdlatul Ulama*.

⁵⁰ M. Anis Masduqi, *Bunga Rampai Fikih Peradaban dan Isu-Isu Global* (Yogyakarta: Istana Agency, 2023).

NU's paradigm of moderation further asserts the compatibility of Islam with nationalism, democracy, and cultural plurality, thereby offering a counter – narrative to transnational ideological claims that frame Islam as inherently opposed to the nation – state or democratic governance. Through an inclusive religious posture, NU understands nationalism as part of the ethical endeavor to safeguard the common good (*ḥifẓ al-waṭan min al-īman*) and conceptualizes democracy as a modern mechanism of deliberation consistent with the Islamic principle of *shūra*⁵¹. Recognition of cultural plurality is expressed through the acceptance of diverse local Islamic expressions, provided they do not violate the fundamental principles of the *Sharī'ah*⁵². Moderation, therefore, is not equated with doctrinal compromise or theological relativism, but rather with an ethical approach that affirms substantive Islamic commitments while respecting social diversity.

Taken together, this discussion illustrates that NU's narrative of Islamic moderation constitutes an integral component of the broader civilizational vision of *Islam Nusantara*, its an effort to cultivate a religiously grounded yet humanistic, democratic, and harmonious society⁵³. Moderation is not only theorized at the conceptual level but is also projected as a practical civilizational agenda that bridges intellectual engagement with social responsibility. This positioning reinforces NU's distinctive character as a religious organization that successfully combines traditional scholarly authority with modern social sensibilities, framing Islam as a unifying moral force for the nation while offering a constructive alternative model for peaceful Islamic civilizational development in an increasingly polarized global context.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Nahdlatul Ulama's contemporary intellectual movement is best understood through the lens of a constructive dialectic between reformism and revivalism, rather than through dichotomous classifications that portray NU as either purely traditionalist or progressively reformist. The analysis demonstrates that NU's reformist initiatives that manifested in the renewal of juridical methodology, the mainstreaming of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and the expansion of Islamic jurisprudence into social and civilizational domains are consistently grounded in revivalist commitments to *pesantren* authority, classical legal schools, and the continuity of Islamic scholarly transmission (*sanad*). This synthesis produces a distinctive model of tradition – based reformism that avoids both intellectual stagnation and radical rupture with the Islamic intellectual heritage.

Within this framework, *Islam Nusantara* emerges not merely as an identity slogan, but as a discursive and methodological paradigm that legitimizes cultural plurality, acculturation, and moderation as integral components of Islamic religiosity in Indonesia. By contrast, *fiqh peradaban* represents the most systematic expression of NU's epistemological reformism, reorienting Islamic jurisprudence toward public ethics, social justice, interreligious relations, and civilizational responsibility in a globalized world. Together, these paradigms enable NU to articulate a civilizational vision of Islamic moderation that affirms the compatibility of Islam with nationhood, democracy, and

⁵¹ Cholil Tsauqif, *Hasil-Hasil Munas Alim Ulama & Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama 2019*.

⁵² Mimar dan Seva, "Integritas Nilai Budaya pada Peradaban Organisasi Masyarakat Nahdlatul Ulama dalam Membangkitkan Era Baru."

⁵³ Saenong, "Nahdlatul Ulama (NU): A Grassroots Movement Advocating Moderate Islam."

pluralism, while simultaneously functioning as an intellectual counterweight to transnational forms of religious extremism and exclusivist revivalism.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on contemporary Islamic thought by demonstrating that NU offers a viable model of Islamic renewal rooted in local epistemic traditions yet responsive to global challenges. The NU experience illustrates how the continuity of tradition can serve not as an obstacle, but as a critical resource for methodological innovation and civilizational engagement. In this sense, NU's intellectual trajectory provides an important reference point for understanding alternative pathways of Islamic modernity beyond the binaries of conservatism and liberalism.

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