

# The Role of the Religious Leader in Combating Radicalism and Terrorism

## (Discourse Analysis of the NU's *Da'wah* Political Language)

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### ABSTRACT

The government of Indonesia has developed anti-terrorism regulations, particularly since the Bali bombing in 2002. The regulation is prepared to counter radical ideologies, and for this reason, the government cooperates with many stakeholders, particularly religious institutions. The participation of religious organisations plays a vital role in maintaining religious harmony in society, particularly political stability. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is one of Indonesia's leading Islamic organisations, which means the NU has actively contributed to social welfare and nation-building. Within the concept of Islam Nusantara (Archipelagic Islamic), NU has captured the attention of scholars, both local and overseas, and it is massively used to counter radicalism. Islam Nusantara is the typology of Muslim Indonesia. This paper employs descriptive analysis to critically examines the SAS's speeches on the Islamic discourse and the political role of the NU at the anniversary of Fatayat NU 73 in 2019.

**Keywords:** Discourse analysis, speech analysis, and Islam Nusantara

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is ethnically, culturally and religiously heterogeneous. Politically, this situation has positive and negative implications for the state. For instance, the negative side is the vulnerable potential for social conflict at the grass-root level, especially religious and ethnic-based. However, as a country with a long history under the Dutch occupation for about three and a half centuries, Indonesia had not felt down in serious religious and ethnic-based conflict [1]. Therefore, most historians and analysts identify that government stability cannot be separated from its religious leaders' participation and role as the majority, such as of *Kyai* and *ulama'* in *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) [2]; [3].

The NU is one of the leading Islamic organisations in Indonesia. This organisation is a prominent Muslim organisation with more than 90 million members with a strong social base in the villages, and it has a strong contribution to nation-building [4]; [5]; [6]. This organisation was established on 31 January 1926 in Surabaya, East Java, with the first leader KH. Hasyim

Asyari<sup>1</sup>. The organisation's main purpose is to respond to Wahabism in the Middle East via social activities rather than via a political platform [7]. NU is popularly known follow *manhaj Ahlus Sunnah Wal-Jamaah* [4].

KH. Said Agil Siradj's (hence forth SAS) is the chairman of the NU executive council (Ketum PBNU). As the chairman, SAS has initiated and introduced a new brand of the NU - Islam Nusantara "Archipelagic Islam" (IN)<sup>2</sup>. The root/foundation of IN is to promote and understand Islam with an inclusive perspective that acknowledges local culture and heritage. The speeches of SAS are influential in constructing and producing an inclusive Islamic discourse and its dissemination. SAS, within his position, constructs a social hegemony through his speeches which convey and portray NU's

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<sup>1</sup> KH. Hasyim Asy'ari is known as the great teacher or called as *Hadratus Syaikh (Maha Guru)*. He was born in Jombang 10 April 1875, and died in July 26, 1947 [4].

<sup>2</sup> At the 33<sup>rd</sup> National Congress or "Muktamar" in 2015, Jombang, East Java NU has tabled and deliberated the Islam Nusantara as the role model of Islam in Indonesia.

ideological position. This position contrasts with the religious discourse of other Muslim groups, particularly transnational Islamic movements. The essence and the spirit of IN aim to provide a counter-narrative to the violent transnational Islam such as Salafi-Wahabis that flourish in Indonesia [8]. However, the concept of IN and its explanation has prompted debate, and even rejection, for some Muslim communities in Indonesia, for instance, Muslim society in West Sumatra [9].

The debates surrounding IN explicitly illustrate the vital role of language in expressing and conveying an idea. Through language, people communicate, interact, negotiate, and express ideas with others. Language also contributes to developing and sustaining social relationships and social structures [12]. In its broader aspects, language also functions as a text of discourse and social practice.

The field of linguistics studies the context of language and its role in social phenomena. To reveal social phenomena, the scholars have introduced the study of language as discourse across fields such as Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis, Ethnolinguistics and Psycholinguistics [10]. This article uses discourse and descriptive studies to examine SAS's register forms in his speeches. This article presents and illustrates how the speech was used to protect the NU members and combat radical discourses and groups that flourish in Indonesia.

**2. METHODOLOGY**

This article uses a descriptive qualitative approach and the theory of Discourse Analysis (DA) to describe the Islamic terms or Register in SAS's political speeches in Fatayat NU's anniversary in 2019. The analysis illuminates the key discourse strategies and ideological hegemony of SAS's speeches. DA enables a diverse picture and understandings of different phenomena [11]; [12].

**3. ANALYSIS**

Discourse is the central category in every context of DA. In further, discourse is a general term that identifies a unit of language, a speech or orderly expression of thoughts in a text. It is not restricted to a single sentence and functions above the level of a sentence. Discourse is used widely in pragmatics and sociolinguistics, often with nuanced meanings across the different disciplines

In general, SAS's speeches structure reflects the generic speech format of introduction, content and closing. In the content of SAS's speech at the anniversary of Fatayat NU 73 in 2019, however, he addressed a critical opinion on current religious issues in Indonesian society. As the leader of a large Islamic organisation, SAS shared his concerns about the growing appeal and membership of Muslim intolerance groups that threaten NU members and resist NU's inclusive position, particularly on religious practice in

society. SAS further identified how the features of these groups are easy to blame and call the tradition in NU as *bid'ah*<sup>3</sup>. SAS, using directive statements, instructed NU members to promote harmonious relationships with other religious institutions to protect NU members and to support the government's anti-terrorism agenda.

The following discussion details key aspects of the DA process using excerpts from SAS's speech:

Excerpt 01

“Listen! Listen! *Syuhuudan siyaasiyan, [role of politics]*. So in 2019, must be the winner in order that the NU plays a role *syuhuudan siyaasiyyan [role of politics]*, *syuhuudan [role]? siyaasiyyan, siyaasiyyan [politics]*, *Alhamdulillah, understood, especially mothers.*”

**3.1 Register forms**

A register is defined as “a linguistic repertoire that is associated, culture-internally, with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices” [14]. The following table shows the distribution of the speaker's register forms and their function within the Islam Nusantara discourse.

**a. Opening/introduction**

		Register		
N	Word	Position	Meaning	Function
o	[w]/phrase [p]			
1	<i>Assalamu'a laikum wr. wb [p]</i>	Openin g	may peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessing	Greeting expression. It is used to open religious events, and this term is also used when Muslims meet with others or visiting their neighbour and so forth.
2	<i>Bismillah [w]</i>	Openin g	In the name of Allah	It is kind of a ritual expression to begin the religious activities, i.e. reciting the Qur'an.
3	<i>Alhamdulillah</i>	Openin	praise is	A statement is used to express

<sup>3</sup> Bid'ah is innovation in religion. For Salafi-wahabi groups some religious practice that adopted local culture identified as bid'ah and it contradicts with the religious practice from the traditionalist Muslim.

	<i>ah [w]</i>	g	due to Allah	feeling happy and thanks to God. So it is recited when a Muslim get feeling happy and so forth.
4	<i>wassalaamu 'alaa sayyidinaa wa maulana [p]</i>	Openin g	Peace be upon him, the chief of the prophet	Ritual expression is used as the attribution name or <i>shalawat</i> to the prophet Muhammad as the messenger of Allah.

The Islamic terms above are used by many speakers or preachers while opening and greeting religious events. It is used to describe the habitual action to greet his members in religious moments such as religious speech. Meanwhile, other preachers can be varied to use this kind of expression with different construction or order. However, a special term commonly used in the NU's community is the term “‘ala sayyidinaa” when calling the prophet's name. This term is attributed to the name prophet Muhammad SAW. For instance, “‘ala sayyidina Muhammad”, when stating *shalawat* “Allahumma shalli ‘ala sayyidina Muhammad”.

### b. Content

Register				
No	Word [w]/phrase [p]	Position	Meaning	Function
1	<i>tahajjud [w]</i>	content	Praying <i>sumnah</i> in the night or done after praying Isya' and before praying Subuh	Praying at night to initial religious activities. To ask forgiveness to God
2	<i>istighosah</i>	content	Praying together	Praying together to initial religious activities. To ask forgiveness to God
3	<i>ummat [w]</i>	content	Society. This word is adopted from the Qur'an. It becomes a religious	This word refers to the community or society. It is used to call a Muslim community

				term in the Muslim community.
4	<i>hafidz [w]</i>	content	People who memorised al-Qur'an	To mention the person that memorises Qur'an. Meanwhile, the word "hafidzah" is used to call for woman.
5	<i>bid'ah[w]</i>	content	innovation in religion	To mention the religious innovation in Islam.
6	<i>akhlaaqul kariimah[p]</i>	content	a good attitude in accordance with the teachings of Islam	The speaker used the term "akhlaqul karimah" to describe how to have a good attitude. It is used to mention a good attitude in accordance with the teachings of Islam
7	<i>Muslimat[w]</i>	content	Muslim women	The speaker used the term "Muslimat" to mention Muslim women.
8	<i>Syuhuudan siyaasiyya n[p]</i>	content	The role of politics	the speaker used this term to refer political role. It is used to mention the political role.
9	<i>an-Nisa[w]</i>	content	Verse of an-Nisa	the speaker used the term "an-Nisa" to refer verse in Qur'an. It used to mention verse in Qur'an
10	<i>Syahid[w]</i>	content	Martyrdom or a Muslim who is dead when fighting or fighting in the way of Allah	The speaker used term "syahid" used to describe the history of Islam about first women in Islam who died in keeping her faith.
11	<i>Qiyas [w]</i>	content	Qiyas or the analogy to find the	the speaker used the term "qiyas" to describe the analogy in Islam. It is used

			religious decision	as a method and a way to make religious decision.
12	<i>Khalifah [w]</i>	content	Khalifah, leader. It most commonly refers to the leader of a Caliphate after Muhammad period	the term "khalifah" refers to leadership in Islam after Muhammad period. In this context, the speaker used to mention Umar (Umar bin Khattab) as the figure in his story.
3	<i>Tawassut [w]</i>	content	smart	the term "tawassut" used to describe smart people
4	<i>Tasammuh [w]</i>	content	moderate	The term used to explain for moderate people.
5	<i>Radical [w]</i>	content	intolerance	to explain about the people who do not have tolerance attitude in their life.
6	<i>Husnul khaatimah [p]</i>	content	a beautiful closure in life	happy ending at the end of our life. This all expectation of the Muslim to get "husnul khaatimah"

				and thanks to God. So it is recited when a Muslim get feeling happy and so forth.
2	<i>Wassalaamu'alaikum wr. wb [p]</i>	closing	and may peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessing	Greeting expression to close the session of the speech.

In the closing session, SAS used expressive statements to end his speech. He used the term "Alhamdulillah" to give praise and flattery to Mr President. As the ritual, SAS ended his session speech by saying "wassalaamu'alaikum wr. wb" in the last order.

Throughout the speech, SAS used religious terms to articulate and to explain his ideas, such as "alhamdulillah, wasathan, tasammuh, syuhada', tsaqafiyyan, a'adzdzahullaah, syuhuudan diiniyyaan" and so forth. These terms are uttered while he greeted, opened and closed the speech.

In Muslim society, particularly NU, it is common to refer to the Qur'an and hadith to justify an argument and/or position. The sources used aim to strengthen their argumentation while informing the *fatwa*<sup>4</sup>. In the context of the speech SAS delivered at the anniversary of Fatayat NU 73 in 2019, he used familiar religious terms and the Qur'an and Hadith to build trust and legitimate the position of NU to the audience.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, SAS's speech at the anniversary of Fatayat NU 73 in 2019 consists of politics and religious issues. SAS addresses various forms of Islamic terms (register) when delivering the speech. The terms are used to emphasise social relations, community identity and effectively convey NU's religious message. Additionally, Islam Nusantara is also raised and introduced for NU groups' need to address the perceived threat of radical groups to a harmonious society. Furthermore, SAS has successfully utilised his position as an NU leader to support Jokowi (incumbent president) in the presidential election in 2019.

The speaker used these religious terms in his speech content to explain any kind of religious context. For instance, SAS utilized a directive statement to give advice and expectation. For this case, he advised his audience to be "tawassut" and "tasammuh". Then the speaker also prays to be *Husnul khatimah* at the end of their life. The speaker also informed that "tawassut" and "tasammuh" are NU members' identity that differentiates them from other Muslim groups. Excerpt 02

*All our grandchildren tawassut tasaamuh nahdhiyyin all (aamiin). Insyallah later on husnul khaatimah (aamiin)*

#### c. Closing

Register				
No	Word [w]/phrase [p]	Position	Meaning	Function
1	<i>Alhamdulillah [w]</i>	closing	praise is due to Allah	A statement is used to express feeling happy

<sup>4</sup> a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority. In Indonesia, MUI (the Indonesian Ulama Council) is the body that issues the fatwa.

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