

IDEOLOGICAL CONTESTATION ON YOUTUBE BETWEEN SALAFI AND NAHDHATUL 'ULAMA IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: This research highlights the use of YouTube as a platform to attract Muslims and spread Salafi and Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) doctrines in the context of ideological contestation in Indonesia. This objective is motivated by the struggle for religious authority between NU and Salafi that has occurred in Indonesia since the beginning of Salafi's emergence in the 1970s. The doctrine of Puritanism brought by Salafis became the key to ideological battles with NU which has the opposite doctrine. Thus, the contestation extends to the struggle for the masses. The use of YouTube is driven by their realization that YouTube is an effective platform for preaching and arguing with each other. Therefore, this study explores the ideological contestation of the two groups from the aspect of the doctrines they spread and the ways they attract the masses by analyzing lecture videos from YouTube channels affiliated with each group. It follows that the massive methods allegedly used by Salafis are slowly becoming a strong challenge to the existence of NU. The method used is the theory of Heidi A. Campbell's theory of online authority.

Keywords: Ideological Contestation, Nahdhatul 'Ulama, Religious Authority, Salafi, YouTube.

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Introduction

In Indonesia, social media is used as social control by some Islamic religious groups. They guide the use of the internet as well as possible, presenting useful content and safeguarding Islamic religious values.¹ For instance, the website www.nu.or.id affiliated with NU posted an article on Muslim ethics towards the government. The article clearly outlines the prohibition on the expression of hate against the government, the suggestion to obey all applicable regulations and pray for a safe and peaceful country. This article is a response to current Indonesian Muslims who express their aspirations toward the government harshly and violently.²

The presented content by religious groups may be employed as social control of a member of the community. The group creates a private group to explain values and doctrines. HSI (Halaqah Silsilah 'Ilmiyah) is one of the communities learned about Islam that is in line with Salafi's understanding. The community establishes a private group on Whatsapp that specifically serves material for members. The teacher gives the transcription to be studied and commands participants to answer the questions in the presented discussion on the website. As a result, religious leaders may protect their community's understanding and deploy the doctrines aggressively.³

The effort to negotiate religious groups with social media not only serves as social control but also as a challenge to religious authority. Therefore, religious figures are beginning to realize that the internet has shifted their authority in real life.⁴ This fact was caused by social media giving plausible and implausible information that is abundant and fast,⁵ making it easier for users to find out information about Islamic literature from various countries.⁶

In the case of Indonesia, religious authority shifted from the ‘Ulama and religious institutions (such as Nahdhatul ‘Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah) to transnational Islamic groups. The groups have developed in Indonesia are PKS (Prosperous Justice Party), Hizb at-Tahrir, and Salafi. Bruinessen argued that the presence of transnational Islamic movements cannot be avoided and may recede and vice versa.⁷ Additionally, strengthened by the state of Amin Abdullah “with the rapid growth of internet access and extensive usage of social media platforms among Indonesians, these enable the Muslim community to express their religiosity openly”.⁸ Among the transnational movements that often face NU is Salafi. The conflict between Salafi and NU is often related to religious practices that adopt local traditions. NU tends to practice and maintain local religious traditions, such as tawasul, tahlil, sholawatan, grave pilgrimage, etc.⁹ By contrast, Salafi condemned the religious tradition which was not exemplified by the Salaf generation.¹⁰ The debate between them has often caused chaos and violence.¹¹ However, the religious authority faded because of two points. The first is a large-scale movement that has spread to several countries and has militant cadres in the country itself. The second is supported by firm and straightforward arguments. The third is the massive propagation of dakwa through mosques, educational institutions, radio, television, and the Internet.¹²

Progressively, the religious authority between the two groups are evident in cyberspace. There are 34 *iMuslim websites* affiliated with Salafi group, such as www.arahmah.com, www.nahimunkar.net, www.voaislam.com, etc. While which NU aims to fight accusations of Salafi, radicalism, terrorism, and Syi’a teaching, has 100 websites, for instance, www.nu.or.id, www.dakwahnu.id, etc. Both of them, Salafi and NU, argue with each other, claim the truth, and express hate speech.¹³

Based on reality, this research aims are to highlight how social media interact with ideological struggles, and how the creation of social media becomes a focal point of the contest overpower in Indonesia. This investigation provides the reality that social media in Indonesia has been a key in deploying religious understandings and sustaining collective activities of the Islamic movement,¹⁴ in particular, Salafi and NU. This research is limited only to explore the ideological contestation of the two groups from the aspect of the doctrine they spread on YouTube and the ways they attract the masses by analyzing lecture videos from YouTube channels affiliated with each group.

The research uses YouTube as a platform of free expression for exploring debates between Salafi and NU. As Strangelove said, “A considerable number of video bloggers on YouTube engage in debates over religion”.¹⁵ Moreover, Burgess and Green asserted that “YouTube could be a medium for an antagonistic debate between one or more YouTubers that can sometimes be based around controversial debates (especially religion, atheism, or politics)”.¹⁶

The freedom of expression embodied by YouTube involves Muslims utilizing it for different motivations. One of the example is used for communicating Islam.¹⁷ Islam is known as a peaceful religion and rejects all forms of violence and terrorism. Other factors are self-expression and social recognition.¹⁸

Those motivations do not fully represent Muslim in the use of YouTube. Al-Rawi argues that YouTube does not only act as a platform for free expression, but also as a crucible for division and hatred for Muslims.¹⁹ Unsurprisingly, Islam is the second-largest theme, after music videos. Islam is the most popular debate topic among YouTubers, and some 4900 videos were tagged regarding Islam and uploaded in a week.²⁰

YouTube is used as an ideological contestation tool to claim the truth and fight followers. Strangelove asserted that “YouTube is not just a new window on the frontlines of regional and global conflicts. It has become a battlefield, a contested ground where amateur videographers try to influence how events are represented and interpreted”.²¹ This is because YouTube is an effective platform for reintellectualization of Islam.

Ideological contestation between Salafi and NU on YouTube has been undertaken in several ways; by competing for ideas and arguments, organizing content as creatively as possible, and deploying abundant information. These methods are carried out by influencing Muslim thought and action.

For instance, in the video of Rodja TV channel, Yazid Abdul Qadir Jawas, one of the Salafi figures, conveyed that following their path was a compulsory matter. Salafi is Islam itself, which is inherited by Rasulullah saw. He claimed that Salafi was the path that was given to *Nikmat Sunna*. *Nikmat Sunna* is a giving of free from false teaching and understanding, such as doing *bid'ah* practices. People practicing *bid'ah* have to be invited and shown the true way.²²

In Indonesia, NU is a group that is always regarded as a *bid'ah* performer. The group asserted that *maulid* (commemoration of the Prophet's birth), *tawasul* (intermediary), and *tabarruk* (seeking blessing) are not *bid'ah*.²³ Nevertheless, these practices were recommended by Nabi Muhammad. Therefore, to overcome various allegations, NU Channel uploaded a video about it.

In the video, Qosim Arsyadani Shomad explained the prayer intended for people who have died and how it would be conveyed. Not only the prayer is dedicated by the children to their parents, but also the prayer can be dedicated to everyone else. Shomad's opinion is based on the prayer which is read at the third *raka'at* of prayer for the body. The goal of the prayer

is to request Allah's kindness for people who have died. In addition, Shomad discussed the argumentation of grave pilgrimage practice. It was stated in the hadiths, "I once forbade you to make a pilgrimage to the grave, so now please make a pilgrimage." Therefore, Muhammad allowed it.²⁴

Methodology

The paradigm of this research is qualitative. The data sources in the study are based on secondary data by collecting YouTube videos affiliated with Salafi and NU groups. The YouTube accounts chosen are Rodja TV, Yufid TV-Pengajian dan Ceramah Islam, and Halo Ustadz as representations of Salafi. Moreover, the YouTube accounts affiliated with NU are NU Channel, Al-Bahjah TV, and Tafaqquh Online. These accounts were considered because of having three aspects as above: relevant argumentation, creative content, and having more than 80k subscribers.

The method used to determine the involvement of both groups on YouTube is the authority online theory, which was developed by Campbell. This theory is used to prove that "The question of authority in religious engagement online involves investigating multiple layers of authority...Researchers must identify what specific form or type of authority is being affected."²⁵ To Campbell, the multiple layers consist of religious hierarchy, structures, ideology, and text. First, religious hierarchy centered on comments on the roles and perceptions of religious leaders or authority figures concerning the internet. Second, religious structures focused on systems of community practices. Third, religious ideology focused on constructing the image of a single or global religious community. The last, religious text is defined as references or appeals to a religious text used to support an argument.²⁶

Results

The Consciousness of Salafi and NU in Contributing on YouTube

After Google and Facebook, YouTube is the third most popular site. Its popularity has never subsided since its release in 2005. Because of its effectiveness in providing information, a recent survey shows “YouTube now accounts for 20-35% of the entire Internet traffic with approximately 448 million videos and 47.3 million uploaders”²⁷ and features over 40 million videos and enjoys 20 million visitors each month.²⁸ Moreover, videos are uploaded to YouTube in the 60 days that all three US television networks have been created in 60 years.²⁹

YouTube is a social space. The site offers an alternative space to express an opinion in a different form from mainstream media news,³⁰ freely accessible and uncensored. The space may reflect the cultural politics at this time and affect the emotional experience. In the community of YouTube, people are free to access racist, sexist, homophobic, and verbally violent debates over elections, religion, and armed conflict.

The awareness of the use of YouTube as a medium to disseminate doctrines causes polemics among religious groups, especially between Salafi and NU. This part explains awareness and motivation, encouraging the two Islamic groups to employ YouTube. In addition, this section spotlights multiple layers that motivate the use of YouTube.

Based on a search of several YouTube accounts that are affiliated with Salafi and NU, it was determined that their motivations are denying accusations, lashing out at other groups, and winning ideological contestations. These motivations were revealed directly by the figures of both groups contained in various videos that had been uploaded.

Among the two groups who clearly expressed their motivation

in preaching on YouTube was NU. One of NU's official organizers, Pituduh, demonstrated that "Nowadays, Muslims have encountered a rush of content both positive and negative." It is time for members of the NU community to master the era of digital transformation by becoming the biggest YouTube content owners.³¹ He added that to achieve this victory, it is necessary to create viral content and become a trending topic.

This was confirmed by the chairman of the East Java PWNU, KH. Marzuqi Mustamar, regarding the NU Channel YouTube account. He relied upon that,

"Through NU Channel, it is possible to study the right knowledge, 100% *Ahl as-Sunah wa al-Jamâ'ah*. It may connect our knowledge through 'Ulama to the Messenger of Allah. It gets balanced insights between the insights of humanitarianism and nationalism. Through NU Channel, we will be mature and enlightened".³²

Based on the message conveyed by the two NU figures above, NU's involvement as a YouTube producer is important. The involvement was caused by the undeniable fact regarding content assaults on NU, which wants to win the battle in the era of digital transformation. This can be seen from the amount of content produced even though it only joined YouTube in 2017.

Unlike the accounts affiliated with Salafi, Rodja TV, and Yufid TV Groups-Islamic Studies and Lectures, through searching for these videos, the author did not explicitly find the characters of the community who conveyed the motivation for involvement in producing the content. However, implicitly, I can conclude that YouTube is used to disseminate doctrine, maintain the understanding of members of their groups, respond to accusations, and often attack groups seen by *Ahl al-Bid'ah*.

Regarding the consciousness and motivation of the groups above, based on Campbell's view of online authority, it can be discussed that multiple layers are present in the above case. Three layers might be investigated in these cases, including religious hierarchy, religious ideology, and religious structures. Nevertheless, religious texts are not explicitly found. The awareness of the two groups is based on facts faced in real life, not on the texts that encourage them to be involved.

In the case of the NU Channel, religious structures are the authorities in producing content. This is evidenced by the role of NU official organizers in managing, recommending, and influencing community members to create content massively. Moreover, information about the needs and interests of social media, especially YouTube, is often echoed directly by NU figures in various activities held by the NU community.

Another authority is the religious ideology contained on Yufid TV. In the YouTube description of Yufid TV, it is stated that the account Yufid TV is the Islamic lectures, recitation of the *Ahl as-Sunah wa al-Jamâ'ah*, guidelines for the rule of praying, fasting, zakat, umrah, and pilgrimage according to the Sunnah, based on the Qur'anic and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, inline the understanding of the *Salaf as-Salih* (the companions, tabi'in and tabi' at-tabi'in). Yufid TV contains 4K and HD quality videos delivered by expert and trusted teachers or figures *Ahl as-Sunah wa al-Jamâ'ah* (Yufid TV). This information is informed through his official account to confirm or control the religious identity construction of Salafi.

The religious hierarchy appears as an authority on the YouTube of Yufid TV. In a five-minute video, one of the teachers said that "Yufid TV made a video clip about the study. If the video is used for good things, it is approved".³³ This statement was emphasized by the community leader who showed support for the use of YouTube.

Religious hierarchy is not only contained in the Salafi, but also NU YouTube accounts. The video content produced by NU contained the most lectures relied on by its scholars. This shows that religious leaders not only advocate being involved in proselytizing through YouTube but are also directly involved in its dissemination. This phenomenon is due to the diverse roles of NU ulama. NU Ulama has experienced many of the educational, economic, political, cultural influences, and their responses—both individual and collective.³⁴ Some ulama have opted to participate directly in politics or government services, while others have placed more of an emphasis on community-based activities, such as preaching, speaking to study groups, and directing local development or welfare programs, such as microfinance and Islamic banking. Still, others have focused on enhancing their educational role, either by integrating with the state-sponsored national system or by emphasizing a traditional, non-state approach to Islamic schooling.³⁵

Discussion

The Dynamics of Ideological Contestation: Disseminating the Doctrines

This section is the answer to the questions proposed in this research. Two points taken into consideration in ideological contestation were competing for ideas and arguments and providing creative content. Information about these two things will show how Salafi and NU maintain and spread their ideology and attract Indonesian Muslims to follow their thoughts and understanding.

Competing the Ideas and Argumentations

The most important things in ideological contestation are the clarity of the doctrines delivered, strong arguments accompanied

by valid propositions, and interesting *dakwa* rhetoric. Those important things were searching for by them to show the truth of their understanding. They realized that YouTube might be the best platform for spreading their doctrines.

Moreover, In several videos, they showed accusations and clarification to affirm their ideas and to be accepted by the Muslim community. Some of the issues that often become a polemic on YouTube between them are truth claims, *bid'ah* practices, and “Walisongo”.

Truth Claim

The debate between religious groups always leads to ‘a claim’. Their methods include claiming to be the more truthful group, emphasizing the strongest argument, or considering the most acceptable to the citizen. These are mostly found in YouTube videos both affiliated with Salafi and NU. The issue that has become a debate between the two Islamic groups is about the Salaf generation and the methodology of propositioning.

Based on a search of the Salafi videos, the truest, safest, and most scientific claim was presented by a teacher of Salafi, Abdullah Taslim. He stated that the specialty of the Salafi is “always the spirit of spreading true understanding accompanied by refuting deviant people” and having a moderate attitude, which is not excessive and is not too soft in responding to religious deviations.³⁶

The similarity of the idea was conveyed by the teacher of Salafis, Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawaz. He explained that the way taken by the Salafi group was the only way that was left by the Prophet. In light of this, the Prophet Muhammad said:

لقد تركتكم على المثل البيضاء ليلها كنهارها لا يزيغ عنها بعدي إلا هالك

I inherited you, the pure white values, at night like noon, and did not leave the pure white teachings, but that person must perish”.³⁷

These claims were then mentioned by Buya Yahya, one of the scholars from NU. He supports the understanding that the best generation is the generation of the Salaf. The generations of Rasulullah, the Companions, and Tabi'in are the generations to be followed. He obliged Muslims to become Salafi. However, the requirement to become a salaf is to follow the methodology or signs carried out by previous companions and 'Ulama in understanding al-Qur'an and Hadits. This methodology is no longer used by people who currently claim to be a Salafi group. As a result, they cannot be said to be followers of the *Salaf* generation.³⁸

Andirja in Rodja TV explained the methodology for taking this argument. He compared the method of taking the arguments of the Salafi and *Ahl al-Bid'ah* groups. The term *Ahl al-Bid'ah* in the context of Indonesia has specifically pointed to the NU group who is always considered to have traditional religious practices. He concluded that the method used by the Salafis was to follow what was conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad and the Companions without reducing it or exaggerating it. However, the method used by *Ahl al-Bid'ah* consists of three points. He cited that “The first method has rejected the syar'i texts, which are not in line with their passions.” Secondly, they have not engaged the core of religious principles. The last is that they have made new methods”.³⁹

The methodology of the Salafi refers directly to the Messenger of Allah and the Companions provides an opportunity for the NU group to criticize it. In one of the NU events which is uploaded on YouTube, a figure responds that by referring directly to Rasulullah and the companions, they will experience four

hermeneutical leaps. According to him, “The first hermeneutic was that the Prophet experienced a phase of real life.” The second leap was called “narrative,” or “story.” The third hermeneutic leap was historiography or writing. The fourth was ideology”.⁴⁰

Critics toward Salafi were also proven by Buya Yahya He said that:

“Salafi damaged the earth and made the people crack. People become ill-formed. The damage on this earth has been caused by slanderers who declared themselves *Ahl as-Sunah wa al-Jamâ’ah*, but in reality, they were far from *Ahl as-Sunah wa al-Jamâ’ah* values. For a moment, they claimed Salafi, but did not know what model Salafi was”.⁴¹

An interesting point in the debate between them is that both of them use the term “*Ahl as-Sunah wa al-Jamâ’ah*” to name the understanding of each group. The use of the term “*Ahl as-Sunah wa al-Jamâ’ah*” was caused by both relying on Rasulullah and the Companions. The difference between them is their methodology in engaging arguments.

The Salafi claims to be *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah* because it is based on “ستفترق أمتي على ثلاث وسبعين فرقة، كلها في النار إلا واحدة” “My *Umma* would be divided into 73 groups: 72 groups go to hell, one goes to heaven”. The intended group of survivors is *al-Jama’ah*. Then, reinforced by another history, the Prophet said that a group of survivors was: “ما أنا عليه وأصحابي” “Those who follow me and my friends.” The Salafi claimed that *al-Jama’ah* is the same as Salafiyyun. Thus, they established *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah* as their understanding.⁴²

Although, the NU group named their understanding *Ahl as-Sunah wa al-Jamâ’ah* which referred to Abu Hasan al-Asy’ari. He affirmed that the belief of Muslims today is from Abu Hasan al-Asy’ari or Maturidi. Abu Hasan al-Asyari did not

bring anything new, but he sorted out the true believers from the parasites of other religions so that his belief was authentic as it originated from Rasulullah and the Companions.⁴³

Bid'ah Practices

One of the issues that often alluded to and tried to be rectified by them is *bid'ah*. The exemple of *bid'ah* mentioned by the Salafis, are tawasul, grave pilgrimage, reading Yasin Sura at certain times, and others. The motivation for *dakwa* is carried out massively by the group. Moreover, in every official YouTube account traced by theme, most of the videos mention the issue of *bid'ah* and *shirk*. Furthermore, every lecture delivered by a Salafi figure always begins with a Hadits of the Prophet regarding *bid'ah*:

خير الحديث كتاب الله، وخير الهدي هدي محمد
وشر الأمور محدثاتها، وكل بدعة ضلالة وكل ضلالة في النار

One of the videos uploaded by Salafi contains an explanation of the Hadits which is mentioned above. Abdullah Zaen, a Salafi figure, explained that the word *bid'ah* in the Hadits means “all”, not “partially”. Therefore, people who divide *bid'ah* into two points, namely *hasanah* and *dhalalah* are not true.⁴⁴ This argument was confirmed by Badrussalam in another video where the opinion regarding the division of *bid'ah* contradicted what was conveyed by the Prophet.⁴⁵

Buya Yahya has a different view of understanding *bid'ah* in the Hadits. According to him, *bid'ah* needs to be seen from its definition in etymology and *syari'a*. In etymology, *bid'ah* means “everything new.” Moreover, Ibnu Hajar al-Atsqalani said there was a *bid'ah hasanah*. This was evidenced by the collection of Mushaf at the time of Sayyidina 'Utsman and the office building during the time of Umar bin Khaththab. Therefore,

Buya Yahya ensured that *bid'ah* was divided into *bid'ah hasanah* and *bid'ah dhalalah* in etymology.⁴⁶

The *bid'ah* according to the syari'a is طريقة في الدين مختراة تضاهي شريعة يقصد بسلوك عليها المبالغة في التعبد "A method of religion that is engineered to exaggerate the religious life." Based on this definition, *bid'ah* is misguided. For example, adding raka'at to the obligatory prayer. The meaning of مختراة means to make something that does not exist. The action is *bid'ah* when there was no argument in the Qur'an and Hadits. By contrast, the action that is based on al- Qur'an and Hadits is not categorized as *bid'ah*. An example is dikir which is done together. Even though the Prophet never did dikir with his friends, Rasul advised the people to do *dzikr*. Consequently, the practice is not *bid'ah*.⁴⁷

Tawasul, which is performed at the time of grave pilgrimage, is a religious practice that is considered *bid'ah* by Salafi groups. The practice is considered a big sin and can be excluded from Islam. Salafis consider tawasul to be a Quraish practice. This is because humans are used as a medium to get closer to God. The difference between the disbelievers of Quraish and the doers of tawasul is a medium. The unbelievers of Quraish worshipped *Manna*, *Latta*, and *Uzza* as intermediaries. Although, at this time, the graves of the 'Ulama were used as intermediaries for doing tawasul.⁴⁸

The accusation of shirk was then responded to by the NU. The response highlighted the wrong views of the Salafi in understanding tawasul. According to Buya Yahya, tawasul is "begging Allah to bring something which is loved by Allah, including good deeds". He explained more deeply that tawasul is divided into two, namely *tawasul bi al-du'a* and *du'a bi al-tawasul*. *Tawasul bi al-du'a* is asking for prayer for others, even though you can pray for yourself. This was once taught by Rasul when Umar bin

Khaththab would perform the Hajj. Whereas *du'a bi al-tawasul* is begging Allah to bring the person he loves. This was exemplified by begging God to bring his loved ones, namely the 'Ulama. Buya Yahya confirmed that the two types of *tawasul* were permitted and were not classified as a big sin.⁴⁹

Walisongo

Walisongo is the nine 'Ulama who spread Islam in Java, Indonesia. They had the same characteristics in preaching, lineage, and scientific knowledge. Walisongo consisted of Sheikh Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Muria, Sunan Kudus, and Sunan Gunung Djati. They lived in the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries AD.

The spread of Islamic dakwa by Walisongo was considered effective for the Muslim community at that time. The preaching method used by Walisongo is based on patterns of adaptation and development of the culture of the community. They combined universal values, the wisdom of locals, and the teachings of Islam. This effectiveness is evidenced by the current Muslim population of Indonesia, which is the majority among other religious believers.⁵⁰ Among the preaching that preserves local culture is da'wah through wayang, gamelan, mosque architecture, and others.

The Walisongo dakwa method was adopted by the NU to protect the distinctive Islamic culture in Indonesia. This is because Islamic culture is an inheritance that must be preserved. This legacy is Muslim wealth in Indonesia, which is different from other countries. In light of this, NU pioneered the Nusantara Islam movement as an effort to preserve Islamic culture in the archipelago by following the dakwa method carried out by Walisongo.⁵¹

These efforts led to various responses from the Salafi. In response to this, Salafi highlighted the history of Walisongo. In the video, Abidin explained that “Walisongo is divided into two groups. There are the ‘Ulama of Walisongo who had a Puritan understanding. They included Sunan Ampel, Sunan Giri, and Sunan Derajat” (Rodja TV, 2016). Sunan Ampel protested the method of preaching of Sunan Kalijaga through wayang, gamelan, and others. Sunan Ampel considers that this method is *bid’ah*. The protest was supported by Sunan Kudus. However, Sunan Kudus allowed the method of preaching Sunan Kalijaga because the local culture was difficult to eliminate. Accordingly, it is expected that there is a generation after Walisongo who can continue Puritan preaching. Based on this history, Abidin believes that Salafi *dakwa* is a necessity to continue the struggle of the ‘Ulama of Walisongo.⁵²

Based on the debate above, both assumed that the method of *da’wah* used today refers to Walisongo preaching. However, NU seemed to be more serious about applying Walisongo *dakwa* and preserving the teachings of Islam that adopted local wisdom. Salafi does not attempt to show that preaching is still applied today by Sunan Ampel, Sunan Kudus, and Sunan Derajat.

Providing the Creative Contents

In the context of ideological contestation, the quantity of content, creation, and editing of content, and how to convey messages in a video are important. This section explains how YouTube can facilitate the propagation of doctrine.

Abundant Information

The massive preaching on YouTube can be traced through the quantity of content distributed. This part explains the efforts to spread messages and the methods of distribution that are in

demand. Following this, the author describes the table of videos, viewers, and subscribers for both groups:

Salafi

Table 1. The Quantity of Content and Devotees of the YouTube Channel Affiliated with Salafi

YouTube Accounts	Released	Videos	Viewers	Subscribers
Yufid TV	January 7, 2011	15.115	529.500.278	3.38M
Rodja TV	January 2012	11, 4.212	45.613.735	485K
Halo Ustadz	September 2018	19, 1.647	4.679.027	83.6K
Total		20.974	579.793.040	3.94M

Source: Yufid TV (2022); Rodja TV (2022); Halo Ustadz (2022).

Nahdhatul 'Ulama

Table 2. The Quantity of Content and Devotees of the YouTube Channel Affiliated with NU

YouTube Accounts	Released	Videos	Viewers	Subscribers
Tafaqquh Online	March 2012	18, 1,957	30,020,301	1,93M
Al-Bahjah TV	May 26, 2015	10,202	512,422,722	4,26M
NU Channel	June 20, 2017	4,757	75,713,083	783K
Total		16,916	618,156,106	6,97M

Source: Tafaqquh Online (2022); Al-Bahjah TV (2022); Nu Channel (2022).

The search above reveals several things. First, The effort to spread Salafi doctrine is massive. This can be seen from the videos or content shared by Salafi more than NU. Second, Salafis realized the importance of YouTube in this ideological contestation earlier than the NU group. Salafi released its YouTube account in 2011. Although NU is more recent. These facts show that NU, a religious group whose understanding has taken root in society is slowly being challenged by the Salafi group.⁵³

Third, among all Salafi and NU channels, Yufid TV is the channel with the most videos and viewers. This shows the interrelated growth of production and consumption. Content production is increasing due to the large number of viewers. Therefore, this data confirms Al-Zaman's research that the growth in content production and consumption is evidence of increased user understanding of the ideology that the channel is spreading. This data also shows that Salafi has a strong enough influence to shift the authority of NU.⁵⁴

Fourth, NU viewers and subscribers are away more than Salafi, even though the videos uploaded are far less than Salafi. This is showed that NU still has charisma, appeal in the community, and influence in providing religious directives in offline and online societies.⁵⁵ This finding is confirmed with the view of Amin Abdullah. According to him, universities in Indonesia are a stronghold for moderate Islam, particularly those at state or national Islamic universities run by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). Additionally, Islam in Indonesia has always been accommodative, re-engaging with other spiritualities, Javanese local cultures, and beliefs through syncretism. In contrast to the Middle East, Indonesian Muslims have also succeeded in building a modern nation-state and resolving ideological and political conflicts, which has kept them from being subjugated or delegitimized by transnational Islamist groups or other forms of oppositional Islam.⁵⁶

Contents of Creation

In the ideological contestation, each group tries to make the video as effective as possible for proselytizing. These efforts are the issues raised; the presentation of creative content that is interesting to visit and be seen; and the duration is short but interesting and can be clearly understood and straightforward.

Based on the search for determining videos, the issues discussed by Salafi, and NU have similarities. The two groups raised issues regarding their daily practice guidelines, tauhid, the study of interpretations of the Qur'an, statehood, Islamic law, children's education, family relations, manners and morals, sexual education, classical book studies, Hadits studies, and even health consultations.

The above material is mostly delivered by religious leaders in the form of lessons which are recorded and then uploaded to YouTube. The method of presenting the preach is in the form of questions and answers between listeners and speakers as well as monologue lectures. However, there are several video content packaged in interesting and unique ways. For instance, Rodja TV performs medical consultations with talk shows with doctors who experts in certain health issues. Then NU presents special content, talk show for students. While the theme delivered around learning motivation, early marriage, reading interest, and others. Those contents are intended for millennials to be interested in watching other videos.



Figure 1. Tanya Dokter of Rodja TV, 2018.⁵⁷

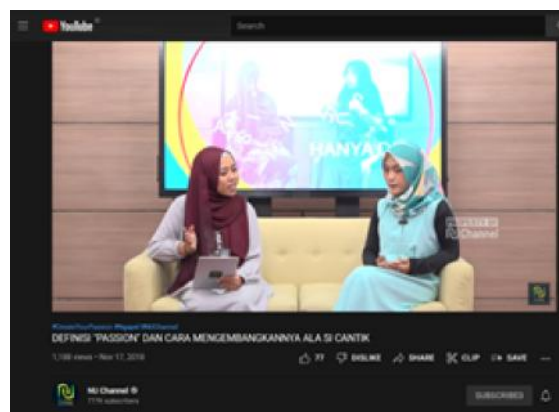


Figure 2. Definisi “Passion” dan Cara Mengembangkannya Ala Si Cantik of NU Channel, 2018.⁵⁸

The other unique and different video content is a short movie. The content is packaged by Yufid TV in a short time and involved actors to convey messages, so that it does not seem boring. The material delivered is about daily prayer and ethics.



Figure 3. Doa Masuk Kamar Mandi of Yufid TV, 2019.⁵⁹

Some videos are packaged with a short, clear, and neatly arranged duration, such as Buya Yahya's lecture on Al-Bahjah TV. The short duration is a consideration for YouTube users to access a video and make it easier to look for religious issues. It had proven that a short and straightforward explanation video was more effective and was in demand by YouTube users. This can be strengthened by the number of Al-Bahjah TV viewers that exceeds the number of Rodja TV viewers (with abundant videos). The duration of about 30 minutes to 3 hours presented by Rodja TV creates boredom for those who want to watch it. This finding is different from Al-Zaman's research. He concludes that the length of videos has less of an impact on user involvement, both positively and negatively.⁶⁰

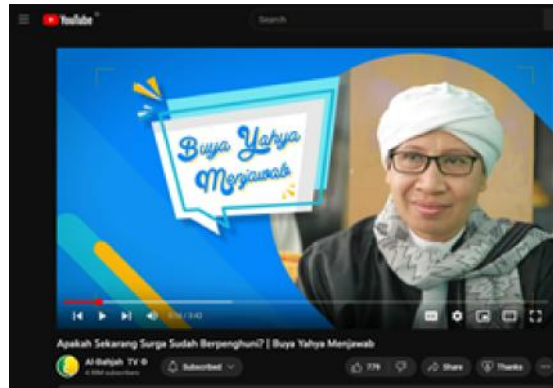


Figure 4. Buya Yahya Menjawab of Al-Bahjah TV, 2022.⁶¹

Conclusion

The debate between Salafi and NU in Indonesia is difficult to put together. Misunderstanding in interpreting a religious practice triggers attacks on one group and claims that is the correct one. Moreover, the methodology for understanding of the Qur'an and Hadits is the main difference between the views of the two groups. Thus, one group violently and massively considers the other groups to be heretics. While, the other group did not accept it if his religious practice was accused of being heretical and polytheistic.

This circumstance continuously to be debated in cyberspace. Attracting arguments and presenting content as interesting as possible are two things that will get a great attention. The problem that has been debated among the groups is about privilege and the obligation to follow their understanding of *bid'ah* practices and Walisongo. Based on this research, although NU is still able to maintain its charisma in both offline and online communities, NU is experiencing delays in realizing the importance of YouTube in proselytizing. Whereas the Salafi have already been aware and have massively spread their understanding, as evidenced by the number of videos that have surpassed the NU YouTube account.

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