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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDONESIAN POLITICS

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From August 29 to September 1, 1994, the PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan) held its third national congress at the Asrama Haji in Pondok Gede, East Jakarta. The party had been formed in the framework of a general overhaul of the political party system in 1973. In that year the nine parties that were still allowed, and which had participated with Golkar in the 1971 elections, had been obliged to amalgamate to form two new ones. The four Islamic parties – the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), Parmusi (Partai Muslimin Indonesia), Perti (Pergerakan Tarbiyah Islamiyah), and PSII (Partai Sarikat Islam Indonesia) – had then founded the PPP. Although an Islamic party, in principle the PPP was ‘open’ to people of other religions as well. It was forbidden to include any reference to its Islamic background in its name, and later was obliged to substitute its chosen party symbol, the Ka’bah, with a star. The other five parties – the PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia), IPKI (Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia), Murba, Partai Katolik, and Parkindo (Partai Kristen Indonesia) – had formed the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI).

For most of the intervening period the relationship between the two largest segments of the PPP – the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muslimin Indonesia (MI), the name under which Parmusi had continued as a non-political organization – was an uneasy one. Particularly in the period between 1979 and 1989, when the PPP was chaired by Naro, they competed with each other for leadership positions in the PPP, clashed over the composition of the lists of candidates for the general elections, and thus also over who should become members of the representative bodies, and had differences of opinion about the appropriate reaction to the Government’s Pancasila policy.

The relationship between the two segments is coloured by political ambitions as well as by differences in religious outlook and regional strength. The Parmusi had been founded as a political organization in the early years of the New Order with a view to accommodating voters who in the past had supported Masjumi. In the 1950s, this party had attracted the bulk of its voters and leaders from the non-Javanese regions. The Nahdlatul Ulama, on the other hand, derives its strength mainly from the religious leaders, the ulama, and their followers and is particularly strong in Java. Moreover, the leaders of Parmusi, a party that had been established

1 Unless otherwise stated, this survey is based on Indonesian newspaper reports.
Recent Developments in Indonesian Politics

under close government supervision, tended to adopt a more accommodating attitude towards the government than some of their NU counterparts.

Voicing its frustration at the developments in the PPP at its 27th congress, held at Situbondo in 1984, the Nahdlatul Ulama had subsequently decided to return to the Khittah 1926, or ideals of 1926, the year of its foundation as a socio-religious organization. It had formally disassociated itself from politics and withdrawn its exclusive support for the PPP, deciding it would no longer maintain formal ties with any political organization. It had declared its members free to vote for the PPP, PDI or Golkar, and forbidden, in theory, the combination of leadership positions in any political party, including the PPP, with official functions in the NU. In this freedom of choice, some influential NU members, such as Chalid Mawardi and K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, its general chairman, had opted for Golkar. The latter, in fact, between 1987 and 1992 represented Golkar as a member of the People's Congress, and was still considered as a member of the Golkar cadre by Golkar's General Chairman, Harmoko, not to mention others, as late as June 1994, in spite of Wahid's critical attitude to government policy and his change of view about Golkar. As a leading figure in the Forum Demokrasi, Wahid, describing his current position in June, alleged that the government had become allergic to him and that people who associated with him were viewed as political outcasts. Some ulama also joined the PDI, albeit in smaller numbers.

The main factor responsible for the Nahdlatul Ulama's profession of a politically neutral stance had been the feeling that Muslimin Indonesia had arrogated a position of dominance in the PPP, while its own representatives had only a limited say in party affairs. This was in stark contrast with the results of the 1971 election — the first and only New Order general election in which the old political parties had participated — which were a good indicator of the relative strengths of the two parties, with the NU winning 19% of the votes and Parmusi only 5.3%, as the NU leaders pointed out. Though the NU provided the PPP with the lion's share of its votes, this was not reflected in the composition of the party's executive board or in the distribution of other important political functions in it. This had become painfully clear in 1981, when the PPP had submitted two different lists of candidates for the forthcoming general election to the government for its approval and the government had accepted that drawn up by Naro, who had become PPP general chairman in 1979. As a result, NU members of the People's Congress and Parliament who had clashed with the government in the previous years did not figure on the PPP list or were assigned too low a place here to stand any chance of re-election. These were the members who had been most outspoken in their opposition to the

2 The new NU policy affected the PPP's election results, the latter's seats in Parliament dropping from 99 to 61 after the elections of 1987.
government, in particular over the draft of the Guidelines for the Internalization and Implementation of Pancasila (Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila). This so-called ‘P-4’ was a centre-piece of the government’s policy with regard to the role of religion in Indonesian society, which was a very sensitive issue for the Islamic community. The government’s insistence on its acceptance as a decree of the People’s Congress had placed relations between it and certain sections of the Indonesian Islamic community under serious strain in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the legislative bodies this had culminated in March 1978 in a ‘walk-out’ by PPP members from the sessions of the People’s Congress in which the matter was to be decided. A similar show of opposition, this time involving only NU members, had occurred during the parliamentary debates on the revision of the Election Act in February 1980.

The Naro period in the PPP had ended after the party’s national congress in 1989. Naro, who had displeased the government by putting himself forward as a candidate for the national vice-presidency during the General Session of the People’s Congress the previous year, had been replaced as PPP general chairman by Ismail Hasan Metareum. Under the latter’s leadership an attempt had been made to eliminate some of the sources of tension within the PPP by giving NU leaders a greater share in the running of the party as well as of the available political positions. Metareum had moreover tried to foster good relations with the NU ulama by paying them and their pesantren visits. Gradually a rapprochement had taken place, in a general atmosphere in which the emphasis came to be increasingly on religious values, which also extended to the government. This change had been facilitated by the material assistance provided by the government and Golkar for the construction or renovation of mosques, as well as for development projects managed by Islamic leaders and institutions. Widely publicized visits were made to pesantren by President Soeharto and high-ranking politicians, including the general chairman of Golkar, Harmoko, who goes on a ‘Ramadan Safari’ during the fasting month each year, as well as by army officers, which indicated how much they all valued ulama support. By January 1994, this phenomenon had gained so much momentum that a group styling itself Forum Komunikasi Generasi Muda NU (Communication Forum of the Younger Generation of the NU; abbreviated as FKGNU) felt constrained to protest that pesantren should remain independent institutions and avoid becoming politicized or being made the object of a political tug of war.

This increased attention from the government and the armed forces had been regarded by some NU leaders as an indication that the past had been at least partially forgotten, that the ‘walk-outs’ were no longer held against them, and that the government would not object to NU members playing a more prominent role in politics – or, as one of them, Hamzah Haz, put it in June 1994, that the government was giving the NU people a greater opportunity to be active in the political arena. He accordingly
urged that the NU should take the best possible advantage of this newfound trust. One of the more opportune moments for this was at the PPP’s third national congress.

The Nahdlatul Ulama’s formal rehabilitation to its original status as a socio-religious organization no longer directly involved in ‘practical politics’ does not imply that its members do not form an important block within the PPP. Many Nahdlatul Ulama supporters and members have continued to vote for the PPP, and influential ulama and other NU leaders still play a role within that party. For some of them the forthcoming PPP national congress provided a favourable opportunity for regaining a position of strength in the PPP. In the months leading up to this congress, key NU figures – religious leaders as well as PPP politicians – began manœuvring to ensure that their influence in the party would be stronger after the PPP congress than before. One of their objectives was to secure the PPP general chairmanship and to have H. Ismail Hasan Metareum, who had his roots in the Muslimin Indonesia, replaced by someone from the NU.

In the attempt to achieve this goal, prominent members of the Nahdlatul Ulama – and a little later also others of the PPP who opposed H. Ismail Hasan Metareum’s re-election – emphasized the weaknesses which in their eyes had marked the PPP in the past few years. Some of the criticism concerned the way in which Ismail Hasan Metareum had headed the party. His opponents had found him too high-handed, taking all the important decisions himself, without bothering to listen to the advice of other members of the central board, among them the secretary-general of the PPP, Matori Abdul Djalil, a NU member, with whom relations had been bad.

Another argument for a change focused on the PPP’s public appeal. As it was, this allegedly put the party at a grave disadvantage in comparison with the PDI and Golkar. This was connected partly with the PPP’s Islamic background. In NU circles it was believed particularly that the PPP should show its identity as an Islamic party more clearly, and that the only way of doing so was by allowing NU politicians and Islamic scholars a more prominent role in the running of the party. This fitted in with the more general feeling among the NU leaders that the role they were allowed to play in the PPP at that moment bore no relation to the voter support they could muster. It was the NU voters that made up the majority of the PPP electorate, they asserted – mentioning a figure of thirty to forty million. This ratio should be mirrored in the party structure and in the composition of its various boards. Hamzah Haz, who was ‘co-ordinator’ of the NU politicians within the PPP, argued that the venerated Islamic scholars, or ulama, should no longer be denied access to places higher than the PPP’s advisory council, or Majelis Pertimbangan Partai (MPP), but that these religious leaders should also be allowed to sit on its central board, as well as NU politicians.

Another point of criticism concerned the position of the MPP, which was subordinate to the central board. This was in diametric opposition to
the situation in the Nahdlatul Ulama, where the Religious Advisory Board, or Dewan Syuriah, is the most authoritative body. Accentuating the religious point of view, it checks the decisions of the executive board, or Tanfidziyah. At the time of the PPP's foundation, it had also had a Dewan Syuriah besides an advisory council, but this institution had been abolished under J. Naro at the party's first national congress in 1984. To give the role of the religious leaders within the PPP new prominence and to underline that party's religious background more clearly, either the Dewan Syuriah should be reconstituted, as some advocated, or the authority of the advisory council should be enhanced. Hamzah Haz and others, pointing to the great esteem in which the ulama were held by their fellow-Muslims, argued that the PPP could only benefit from this. Or, as the influential ulama K.H. Syansuri Badawi put it, the PPP had done well when the party had still been led by people from the NU, but its election results had begun to deteriorate after the MI leaders had taken over.

This downward trend had in fact started in 1982, when the PPP share of the votes had dropped from 29% to 27%. This had eroded still further, to 15.9%, in 1987, after the NU’s return to the Khittah. Although the party had regained some of its former ground under the leadership of Ismail Hasan Metareum, scoring 17% of the vote in 1992, the gain had been small in comparison with that of the PDI, which had benefited more from the drop in Golkar votes. Of the seventeen seats lost by Golkar, only one had gone to the PPP, and sixteen to the PDI. With 56 of its members in Parliament, the PDI faction here now is almost as large as the PPP one, which has 62 seats.

Convinced that it was they and not the MI politicians who constituted the PPP’s major asset as vote-catchers, the NU leaders were certain that the PPP would do well in the next general election if only the ulama were given more influence in party affairs. This might also give the PPP a clearer identity, as one of them, K.H. Yusuf Hasyim, suggested – an identity which he believed the party lacked and put it at a disadvantage vis-à-vis Golkar as the party of the government and the bureaucracy and vis-à-vis the PDI as the party of the ordinary man, and hence that of the future.

Non-NU politicians, among them Sri Bintang Pamungkas, a member of the ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiaawan Muslim se-Indonesia) who had been recruited by Metareum to enhance the role of young intellectuals within the PPP (he is 49 years of age), also laid part of the blame here. Pamungkas’ career in this party had not been uncontroverisal, and he had won himself a reputation as a ‘vocal’ politician, while some fiery speeches of his during the campaign period had called down a ban by his own party on his election tour in 1992. He had moreover criticized President Soeharto’s account of the government’s policies of the past five years at the General Session of People’s Congress. Sri Bintang Pamungkas was one of the politicians who pleaded in favour of a stronger emphasis on Islam in the PPP. He was most explicit about this in an interview in Sinar in...
September 1994, where he said that calling the PPP an ‘open party’ was a betrayal of its principles. The PPP was not an open party, a party of which anyone could become a member, irrespective of his or her religion, as the government desired, or a party stressing a programme instead of an ideology or religion. On the contrary, it was an Islamic party (*Sinar* 5-9-1994).

From time to time comparisons were drawn with the PDI in another respect as well. The PDI national congress in July 1993 had been a turbulent one, beleaguered by demonstrations and conflicts. Although it had elected a board, this had not been recognized by some, and Megawati Soekarnoputri had only become its general chairwoman months later, at an extraordinary congress in December 1993, after lengthy debates. To some this appeared as an example. They saw Megawati Soekarnoputri’s ultimate choice as a victory for popular opinion, or arus bawah (= undercurrent), with the government having this choice forced on it. For others the events at the PDI congress had been a nightmare of the kind to be avoided at all costs. Ismail Hasan Metareum for his part had argued that there was no such thing as an undercurrent, saying that the forthcoming PPP congress would be peaceful and not fraught with turmoil.

Over against the arus bawah there was the influence the government exercised on the PPP’s policy and on the composition of its board – the ‘X factor’ or ‘role of the superstructure’, as it was sometimes referred to. One of the criticisms levelled at Ismail Hasan Metareum by Sri Bintang Pamungkas, among others, was that he was more responsive to opinions from above than from the people below, so that the PPP and its leaders continued to be dependent on those in power. In fact, the PPP gave the impression that it owed its existence to its dependence on the authorities, Sri Bintang Pamungkas asserted in mid-August. It had forsaken its image as an independent party acting in the interests of the people.

For some it was a foregone conclusion that Ismail Hasan Metareum would be re-elected. In spite of the extra attention that had been given to pesantren, it was he and not an NU candidate who still had the backing of the government. They observed that any attempt to have anyone else elected by the national congress would be futile. So two *kiai*, K.H. Badri Masduqi and K.H. Sochieb Bisri, speaking out against the nomination of an NU candidate a few weeks before the national congress, pointed out that the government and armed forces were still in favour of an MI member as leader of the PPP. The government had not yet forgotten the walk-outs, the former cautioned. Expressing fears that Metareum’s re-election might cause many votes to go to the PDI in the next general election, he said he had sent a letter to Metareum asking him to accept a charismatic NU leader with wide popular support as deputy general chairman. If the PDI had Megawati, a daughter of Soekarno, and Golkar had Tutut, a daughter of Soeharto (others who drew the same comparison occasionally mentioned Harmoko, though less so as an example of a charismatic figure), the PPP
should also have an important figure – for instance, K.H. Yusuf Hasyim (the first name to spring to his mind) or Abdurrahman Wahid, a son and grandson respectively of K.H. Hasyim Asyari, one of the founders of the NU – as one of its top leaders.

In his defence against all the criticism of his leadership, Ismail Hasan Metareum claimed that he had ensured the restoration of peace within the party, which was no longer riddled with internal conflicts. Moreover, in the years he had headed the party no PPP members of the representative bodies had been recalled from Parliament or party leaders dismissed. And, as he observed in August, the conflicts that had come into evidence on the eve of the national congress were the result of differences between individual members and specific groups rather than friction between the NU and MI as such. After the party congress, calm would be restored. He believed that any calls for a prominent role for the segments came from outsiders. As regards the role of the ulama in the PPP, he viewed the latter as protectors of the party. This function they could exercise in any capacity inside or outside the party structure. The best place for them was in the advisory council, however.

The ulama's contest for the PPP general chairmanship

Plans conceived by the NU to secure the general chairmanship of the PPP took concrete shape in mid-April, when on the initiative of Hamzah Haz about fifty prominent NU members met in the Taman Mini Indonesia Indah in Jakarta. Here a steering committee, the Majelis Pengendali Muktamar, was formed to prepare the ground for this. Chaired by K.H. Syansuri Badawi, a Member of Parliament from Jombang, East Java, and chairman of the PPP advisory council, its members included K.H. Cholil Bisri, also a PPP Member of Parliament, from Rembang, who was to play a crucial role in the NU discussions in the months to come.

There was more than one candidate for the position. Three people whose names were frequently mentioned in this connection were Matori Abdul Djalil, general secretary of the PPP; Hamzah Haz, a PPP chairman who also chaired the PPP faction in Parliament (DPR); and Karmani, chairman of the provincial PPP branch of Central Java. All three were active PPP politicians but had no kiai status. As Matori Abdul Djalil put it in August, however, a PPP general chairman supported by the ulama equals a thousand public figures.

Shortly after the Jakarta meeting it was announced that a number of ulama would meet at Rembang in Central Java, at the pesantren of K.H. Cholil Bisri, on June 26th as a follow-up to that meeting. This news caused some consternation in NU circles. There were differences about who should be invited and what subjects should be discussed. The opposition was prompted partly by a suspicion that some NU members might try to use this meeting to further their own ambitions for nomination as the NU
candidate to take on Ismail Hasan Metareum in the bid for the PPP general chairmanship. More importantly, for some the political aims of this meeting, which would touch on political matters, represented a clear deviation from the 'back to 1926' policy. Consequently a number of ulama had reportedly approached the local authorities at Rembang with the request to refuse permission for the meeting to be held.

The stated aim of the Rembang meeting, to which ulama from all over Indonesia were to be invited, was to discuss how the kiai and ulama could extend their influence in the PPP. Initially, it was represented as an exclusive ulama affair. NU politicians without ulama status would not attend – which stipulation would affect Hamzah Haz, Matori Abdul Djalil, and Karmani – even though some of them were involved in its organization. So Matori Abdul Djalil had to deny publicly that he was 'the architect of the meeting', while Hamzah Haz alternately styled himself the 'facilitator' and 'coördinator' of the Rembang meeting. It was Hamzah Haz, too, who approached the armed forces chief of staff for political and social affairs, Lieutenant-General R. Hartono, to arrange for the necessary permission. Hartono in turn announced that army headquarters had no objection to the meeting, as its aim was to improve the PPP's performance. Hence the armed forces would assist in obtaining the necessary permission.

It was rumoured from the start that the objective of the Rembang meeting was to make preparations for an NU take-over of the PPP general chairmanship, to consult about possible NU candidates for this, and even to discuss the possibility of the ulama’s 'defection' from the PPP in the 1997 elections in the event of the NU’s failure to secure the general chairmanship. In May and June those involved were still denying that this was indeed the purpose of the meeting, however. The host of the meeting, K.H. Cholil Bisri, asserted that the discussions were intended to provide the PPP congress with a well-considered 'input' rather than to prepare a bid for the party’s general chairmanship. At most the criteria which such a person should meet would be discussed. Similar assurances were given by Karmani and Hamzah Haz, the former stating that no names of candidates would be mentioned at Rembang, as this would only stir up problems within the NU itself. A question that might be raised was what was more important for the future of the PPP, its leadership or its programme. Hamzah Haz, for his part, asserted that the meeting would be a mere manifestation of the ulama's commitment to the PPP, giving expression to their concern about the challenges the party might face in the near future. What particularly worried him was the PPP’s failure in past elections to win over the millions of young people who were casting their vote for the first time.

Matori Abdul Djalil, Hamzah Haz, and Karmani, whose names were most frequently mentioned as possible NU candidates, were all in favour of the Rembang meeting. K.H. Yusuf Hasyim and K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid were more critical of it, on the other hand. The former, who had been present at the Taman Mini meeting and allegedly was speaking also on behalf of the
Rois Aam (general chairman of the Dewan Syuriah) of the NU, K.H. Ilyas Ruhiat, reiterated that the NU should not let itself be dragged into politics. He believed the Rembang meeting to be teetering perilously on the brink of this and inclined to the view that, if the *ulama* wanted to hold a meeting, they should convene either as members of the PPP or as private individuals, but not as members of the NU. They should not, for instance, style it a meeting of ‘NU exponents in the PPP’. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid likewise expressed the hope that the meeting would not use the name of the NU, as the NU as an organization was not aspiring to the PPP general chairmanship. Though those who were to meet at Rembang might be NU members of the PPP, they were not acting on behalf of the NU.

The pitch to which the emotions had risen was revealed in mid-June, when about 15 prominent NU members met to celebrate the end of the school year at K.H. Yusuf Hasyim’s Tebuireng *pesantren* in Jombang. The meeting had originally been scheduled for July, but had been brought forward to precede the Rembang meeting. Also present at the public ceremony at the *pesantren* were the commander of the armed forces, Feisal Tanjung, and Lieutenant-General R. Hartono. K.H. Yusuf Hasyim denied to the press that this was an indication that he had the armed forces’ support for his candidacy for the PPP general chairmanship. The presence of the two senior officers at Jombang and the blessings they had given to the Rembang meeting might even so be interpreted as an indirect sign that the armed forces agreed that someone from the NU should become the next PPP leader. He went on to explain that the NU leaders’ determination to play a more prominent role in the PPP was inspired by the fact that 1997 would be a critical year. To illustrate his point, he recalled the year 1963, when the NU had instituted the Barisan Serba Guna (Banser) of its youth organization, Pemuda Ansor, as well as a number of drum bands, whereby he was alluding to the NU’s subsequent role in the suppression of the PKI after September 1965.

After the formal ceremony, the NU members present held a separate meeting to discuss recent developments in connection with the approaching PPP congress. This was also attended by people like Hamzah Haz, Karmani and Cholil Bisri, to name only three, who had taken an active part in planning the Rembang meeting. Judging from the press reports, this was a tense meeting, lasting about two hours, at which, as one of those present later stated, K.H. Cholil Bisri had been ‘on trial’. K.H. Yusuf Hasyim for his part refused to use this expression, though he admitted that questions had been asked about the Rembang meeting, such as who would be invited, what would be the subjects of discussion, and – in view of an announcement by the FKG MNU that it would stage a protest rally at Rembang – whether any special measures had been taken to prevent demonstrations. K.H. Cholil Bisri had kept silent. Denying afterwards that he had felt offended by the way he had been treated, he explained that he had not reacted for fear of spoiling the atmosphere in the months...
immediately preceding the PPP congress. He moreover felt that it had not been up to him to react, but to the chairman of the steering committee, K.H. Syansuri Badawi, who had signed the invitations to the Rembang meeting. It also transpired that one of the more delicate points touched on in the discussions at the pesantren had been that the conveners of the Rembang meeting had not initially intended to invite K.H. Yusuf Hasyim, but that K.H. Syansuri Badawi had insisted that they should. Although K.H. Yusuf Hasyim would hence be invited after all, he reacted by stating that the chances of his attending were slight, as he already had another engagement. Another factor which the reports claimed had contributed to the tense atmosphere had been the reading out by Agus Miftach, one of the younger NU members, of suggestions for the procedure at the Rembang meeting about which Hamzah Haz had not been consulted. This fuelled rumours that Hamzah Haz was being put on the sidelines. By this time people started speaking of the ‘Karmani-Matori duo’, and speculations were rife that this duo, supported by such figures as K.H. Cholil Bisri, planned to prevent Hamzah Haz from playing a role of any importance at Rembang.

By mid-June the controversy over the Rembang meeting and the opinions for and against had assumed such proportions that public warnings were issued against people who were bent on exploiting the meeting to further their own political ends. One such warning came from Lieutenant-General Hartono, who addressed a request to outsiders not to meddle in NU affairs by playing up the discussions, and expressed the hope that the differences about the plans to hold the meeting would not cause any rifts in the NU. There were no signs of this as yet, he asserted, expressing his confidence that the NU board would be perfectly capable of dealing with such a potential situation. Most outspoken of all was K.H. Yusuf Hasyim, who suggested that there were people sponsoring the meeting financially in order to influence developments in the PPP, and urged journalists to investigate whether members of the Rembang committee had indeed tried to bribe ulama into going to Rembang by offering to pay their travel expenses. This, he told them, was more than an ‘issue’, more than a mere rumour. If he himself wanted to control the PPP, he would certainly be prepared to spend ten billion rupiah, he said, hastening to add that he had neither the ambition nor the financial wherewithal.

As planned, about 80 NU ‘exponents in the PPP’ met at Rembang on June 26th. The meeting lasted from 9.30 a.m. till about midnight. K.H. Syansuri Badawi pointed out in one of the speeches here that the meeting did not represent a deviation from the NU’s policy not to become involved in politics. The ulama had not come to Rembang on behalf of the NU or the PPP, but as private individuals. The Rembang meeting had no sponsors and was intended to do no more than examine how the PPP’s performance could be improved as a vehicle for NU ulama supporting that party. The
participants also included the ‘non-\textit{kiai}’ Karmani, Matori Abdul Djalil, and Hamzah Haz, the latter of whom denied allegations that the meeting was aimed at securing the general chairmanship of the PPP. The absentees included Soeleiman Fadeli, chairman of the PPP’s East Java branch, and K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid.3

One of the decisions reached at this meeting was that Soeharto’s re-election as President would be endorsed. As K.H. Syansuri Badawi explained to the press, Islam does not recognize any restriction on the number of years a person may hold office; in fact, such a restriction is contrary to Islamic law. The \textit{ulama} moreover agreed to try and strengthen the position of the PPP’s advisory council.

No formal decision was taken about the candidate for the PPP general chairmanship to be put forward by the NU. Only the criteria such a candidate should meet were discussed. The \textit{ulama} had not decided on any names for the sake of preventing a rupture, K.H. Cholil Bisri later explained, denying reports that this had been one of the conditions imposed by the government for its permission to hold the meeting. It had been agreed by Hamzah Haz and Lieutenant-General Hartono beforehand that no names should be mentioned. Even so, participants in the meeting indicated that three people could count on the support of the \textit{ulama} present there, namely Matori Abdul Djalil, at that time already tipped as the favourite candidate, Hamzah Haz, and Karmani.4 Consequently K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid dubbed the announcement that the Rembang meeting had not come up with any names ‘political skulduggery’. Although no names might have been mentioned aloud, names had been whispered, which was even more effective.

The Rembang meeting did not put an end to the confusion and the rumours about the NU’s likely candidate for the PPP general chairmanship. K.H. Syansuri Badawi and Hamzah Haz were obliged almost immediately to deny reports that the \textit{ulama} had spoken out in favour of Matori Abdul Djalil and to point out that the text of a putative ‘Rembang Agreement’, stating among other things that the NU intended to ‘seize’ the PPP general chairmanship, which had been handed out to journalists at the house of K.H. Cholil Bisri, was false – which qualification was later modified to its

3 K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid had phoned Bisri’s brother, K.H. Cholil, a few days before the meeting to welcome him home after his return from the hajj. The call had provoked a variety of rumours, which were all denied by K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, who asserted that he would not be present at Rembang and had offered his excuses for being unable to attend but that he would have endorsed the candidacy of Karmani and Matori, and so on.

4 K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid had stated about two weeks previously that Hamzah Haz and Matori Abdul Djalil had asked him for his blessing for their candidacy and that he had granted their request. Hamzah Haz denied that he had ever done so. K.H. Yusuf Hasyim also reacted rather strongly, saying that he did not need the blessing of the NU central board and warning that if a ‘blessing’ were given to more than one person, this might result in ‘war’.
Recent Developments in Indonesian Politics

description as an 'unedited draft'. The official Rembang statement – not containing the phrase about the seizure of the general chairmanship – was made public at a meeting in Hamzah Haz’s office in Parliament House on July 1st, which had been promoted among other reasons as a sign of a reconciliation between Hamzah Haz and Matori. This document, apart from making general political promises, such as that the party would play an active role in Indonesia’s national development, called for a change in the function of the advisory council in the PPP. The name of the NU candidate, however, was kept secret until just a few days before the PPP congress, though it became increasingly clear that this was indeed Matori Abdul Djalil.

About two weeks after the Rembang meeting, K.H. Syansuri Badawi, K.H. Cholil Bisri and K.H. Alawy Muhammad, an influential kiai from Madura who became one of the Rembang group’s principal spokesmen, visited Lieutenant-General R. Hartono, accompanied by Hamzah Haz, to inform him of the results. They asked him to help them arrange a meeting with Soeharto, to which, according to Hamzah Haz, Hartono consented. Aside from the wish to inform the President of what had been decided about the national leadership at Rembang, the ulama had hopes of obtaining Soeharto’s blessing for the candidate put forward by the NU, as K.H. Cholil Bisri stated later.

In the meantime, K.H. Yusuf Hasyim’s supporters had not remained idle, either. In East Java a number them, including the chairman of the East Java provincial branch, Soeleiman Fadeli, had spoken out in favour of him, pointing out that he had a great deal more stature and charisma than Hamzah Haz or Matori Abdul Djalil. A day after the representatives of the Rembang group had made it clear that they were hoping for a meeting with Soeharto, they announced a similar wish. They decided to inform Soeharto of their choice by letter. Meanwhile, Secretary of State Moerdiono had shown a lukewarm initial reaction to the Rembang group’s request for an opportunity to meet Soeharto. Asked whether the latter would be prepared to receive the ulama, Moerdiono had only said that he could not speak on behalf of the President, but was sure that Soeharto valued the aspirations fostered in all three of the political organizations. A few days later he indicated that he had received a letter with a request for an audience from Hamzah Haz, but that the President was too busy to meet the ulama. This should not be taken as an indication that Soeharto did not agree to a member of the NU becoming general chairman of the PPP, however. The President would refrain from interference in the proceedings of the PPP’s national congress. In August the request to see Soeharto earned the ulama the scorn of former Minister of Internal Affairs Rudini, who alleged that the candidates were all looking for external support and were even competing with each other for a chance to meet the President. He felt that they should not look for external backing but should act independently and try to find support within the PPP itself.
The ulama were thus not going to be received by Soeharto—a sign which they well understood. Significantly, the head of the armed forces information centre, Brigadier-General Syarwan Hamid, at the end of July praised Ismail Hasan Metareum’s performance as PPP general chairman, singling out in particular his skill in interacting with the authorities as well as his subordinates. This was viewed as another indication that the armed forces and the government favoured Ismail Hasan Metareum. To Dr. Saleh Al Djufri, from K.H. Yusuf Hasyim’s ‘Jombang camp’, it was as plain as day that the armed forces had given their blessing to the latter’s re-election. He told people to be realistic and ‘marry’ K.H. Yusuf Hasyim and Ismail Hasan Metareum to each other, in other words, to make sure that if the one became general chairman, the other should become head of the advisory council. The secretary-general should still be an NU member. Others had not yet lost hope, however. So Mahmud AM, chairman of the Malang branch, felt that there was nothing special about Syarwan Hamid’s statement. Anyone who was about to vacate a function was praised, even if he might in fact have done a better job. Those in East Java who had supported the Rembang decisions would continue to do so, he assured his listeners.

Other contestants

By no means everybody in the MI was pleased with Ismail Hasan Metareum as PPP general chairman, either. Those who opposed his re-election included influential party leaders like former PPP general chairman H.J. Naro, and Hartono Mardjono, who had been Ismail Hasan Metareum’s main rival for the general chairmanship at the previous PPP national congress. Naro asserted that many PPP members had become disappointed with the way Ismail Hasan Metareum had led the party over the past few years. Accusing the latter of having deviated from party rules, he cited examples like the appointment of inexperienced people to leadership positions in the PPP and Ismail Hasan Metareum’s reluctance to listen to suggestions by other members of the board. Hartono Mardjono criticized the role still played by the ‘segments’ in the PPP. To remedy this situation he proposed K.H. Yusuf Hasyim as general chairman and Cholil Badawi, deputy chairman of the Supreme Advisory Council (DPA) and a member of the PPP’s advisory council, and Husni Thamrin, both from the MI, as deputy general chairman and general secretary respectively in June.

Later, on the eve of the congress, there was furthermore talk about frequent meetings of a ‘Group of Eight’ (minus Metareum), formed by MI

5 ‘Kodel’ (Kelompok Delapan), in the acronymic jargon of the day. The eight were: Yusuf Syakir, Hartono Mardjono, Cholil Badawi, Faisal Basyir, Mohammad Sulaiman (Deputy Chairman of the MPP), Husni Thamrin, Ny Aisyah Aminy, and Ismail Hasan Metareum. Their first choice in 1989, when the struggle for the leadership had been particularly fierce, had been Hartono Mardjono. A new board had been installed only
leaders at the time of the previous congress in 1989 to topple Naro as general chairman. These were reportedly opposed to Metareum’s reelection. The truth of these reports was almost immediately denied by Ny Aisyah Aminy, however, who together with Yusuf Syakir, a deputy secretary-general of the PPP, continued to support Ismail Hasan Metareum. There were various rumours circulating about the intentions of the remaining ‘Group of Five’. According to one they were going to select a number of names from each segment and to then jointly support the person who won the government’s support, or, as it was phrased, got the ‘green light from on high’. According to another report they were championing the candidature of Yusuf Hasyim and Cholil Badawi and, with respect to the groups within the NU, were siding with Hamzah Haz instead of Matori Abdul Djalil. Their main candidate was Cholil Badawi, however.

A third person who was very outspoken in his opposition to Ismail Hasan Metareum was Dr. Sri Bintang Pamungkas, who had announced his candidacy at an early stage. He was an MI Member of Parliament, but, as he was to state on a number of occasions, did not consider himself a member of any segment, though if he did belong to any, it was that of Islam. By way of explanation he pointed out that he had only been told just before his appointment as a Member of Parliament that only members of one of the segments constituting the PPP were eligible for such a function. He, too, stated himself to want to put an end to the predominance of the segments in the PPP, which he blamed on Metareum and Matori Abdul Djalil. He then went on to criticize both the MI and the NU for failing to put forward young Muslim intellectuals who could change the course of the party. Those who came into prominence here were the older leaders, who tended to put their own interests and those of their segment first and would not be able to respond adequately to the changing circumstances. At one point he even announced he would found his own party should Ismail Hasan Metareum be re-elected, provided that a majority of his supporters asked him to.

At the time of the Rembang controversy, Ismail Hasan Metareum himself avoided committing himself about serving another term. This changed in mid-July, when representatives of almost all of the provincial PPP branches, most of them reportedly affiliated to the MI, met at Ismail Hasan Metareum’s house and spoke out in his favour. The meeting had been convened by Yusuf Syakir, at his request, in view of the explicit wish of many branch leaders to come together in Jakarta to show their support for Ismail Hasan Metareum. This was, as the chairman of the Yogyakarta

three months after the congress and after the mediation of the then Minister of

Internal Affairs.

6 Koma (Kelompok Lima).

7 Also present here were Cholil Badawi and Husni Thamrin. Hartono Mardjono had not been invited.
branch, Alfian Darmawan, put it, because internal conflicts in the PPP had been kept to a minimum during Ismail Hasan Metareum's term in office – an achievement for which there would also be a need in the future.\footnote{Around the same time, it was attempted to summon Ismail Hasan Metareum before the PTUN Court in Jakarta over an earlier decision by the PPP Central Board to sack the deputy chairman of the North Sumatra provincial branch, Jamaluddin Batubara, and to appoint Bachtiar Chamzah in his stead after the incumbent chairman of this branch had died.}

As in the case of other meetings intended to muster support for one or other candidate, the significance of this meeting was judged differently by the different camps. Ismail Hasan Metareum announced the following week that 26 of the 27 provincial branches had spoken out in his favour in writing. The one exception was North Sulawesi, though its chairman had pledged his support when Ismail Hasan Metareum had visited Manado. He rebutted statements like that by Yusuf Syakir, when commenting on this meeting, that only four provincial branches had supported him and that the members of the others had spoken not as representatives of these branches but as individual members of the respective provincial boards. The fact was that not all the statements had been signed by the general chairman and secretary of the relevant branches – who were often though not always members of different segments – but by the deputy chairman, or sometimes only the secretary, for instance. Others were quick to point out that, even if what Ismail Hasan Metareum said was true, this did not mean that all was already won, or that the persons who had signed the statements represented the prevailing mood in the respective provincial branches. At the national congress the representatives of the provincial branches would constitute only a tiny minority and would be outnumbered by far by those of the kabupaten and kotamadya branches, about whom K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid claimed that if they were free to vote for the candidate of their choice at this congress, Matori Abdul Djalil stood a good chance of becoming general chairman. For the MI was stronger on the boards of these branches than the NU, whereas most of the MI leaders were 'Naro people', who would certainly not support Ismail Hasan Metareum.

At this point a number of people entered the scene who clamoured that they had no links with the PPP segments, as they were members of the younger generation. One of these was AM Saefuddin, a PPP Member of Parliament and former leader of the HMI, the student movement which in the past had been affiliated with Masjumi. In mid-July he proposed the establishment of a 'non-segmental' group, stating that, as a former pesantren student, he honoured the kiai, only not in the subservient way that kraton officials showed their respect. He envisaged his role more as that of a partner of the kiai and deplored the situation as it had developed according to him, in which kiai were acting in a less than democratic way.

Saefuddin founded the Forum Komunikasi Nahdlatul Ummah Nusantara
Recent Developments in Indonesian Politics

(FKNU) together with H.M. Saleh Khalid (a Member of Parliament, former general chairman of the HMI, and general chairman of the PPP-oriented youth organization Generasi Muda Pembangunan Indonesia, or GMPI, founded in October 1993), Emron Pangkapi (also a Member of Parliament), Hadimulyo (a member of the People’s Congress), and Yusril Ihza Mahendra (a lecturer at the Universitas Indonesia) at the end of that same month. As Emron Pangkapi explained, the new group had been born from the disappointment engendered by the prominence assumed once again by the separate segments in the months leading up to the party conference. Hereby attention had become focused on the question of who would become general chairman and on the PPP segments, while the strategy and concepts of the party as a whole had been relegated to the background. He claimed that their initiative had the sympathy of the younger generation, or those who had not been old enough to cast a vote in 1971. It was these younger people who had saved the PPP after the withdrawal of the NU’s support, he asserted. The Forum would appeal to those who had grown disillusioned at the endless bickering among the traditional PPP leaders, namely young intellectuals, young entrepreneurs, modern santri, and other members of the younger generation.

The creation of yet another group provoked a barrage of criticism. Sri Bintang Pamungkas pointed out that the founders were known as Ismail Hasan Metareum’s ‘tim sukses’, the group which had to prepare the way for his re-election. There were also accusations that the Forum was sponsored by the ICMI to facilitate Metareum’s re-election. This insinuation about their motives drew disclaimers from the forum’s founders as well as from Ismail Hasan Metareum, who stated that, when Saleh Khalid had told him about his plans, he had tried to dissuade him from this course. According to others, among them Mukrom Ass’ad, a member of the PPP board, the Forum’s foundation was just a move to improve the bargaining position of people who were too impatient to await their turn in the bid for seats on the new PPP board. They pointed out that all that had been achieved was the formation of yet another group in the contest for the PPP general chairmanship (that is, a group of people who were not members of the ‘four elements’), and thus the indirect sanctioning of the conduct of the Rembang group. In Sri Bintang Pamungkas’ words, it was a group that tended to be a ‘non-segmental segment’.

The NU leaders were furious, deploring the Forum’s initial presentation of itself under the shorter name Nahdlatul Ummah, or ‘Awakening of the Islamic Community’, and the consequent references to it as ‘NU Baru’, or ‘New NU’. Some, such as Chalid Mawardi, who even wanted to take its founders to court, branded the initiators ‘calo politik’ (political brokers). The Rois Aam, K.H. Ilyas Ruhiat, also denounced the step, which, he said, was liable to confuse the common people, as the abbreviated name tended to create the impression that the Forum was a splinter group of the NU. Saleh Khalid denied that this had been the intention, however, and retorted
that the NU should be proud, as this showed just how popular its name was.

In reaction, a group styling itself Mukminin Indonesia, or Indonesian Believers, was formed, which was also, somewhat confusingly, styled 'MI Baru'. Its members were described by K.H. Yusuf Hasyim – who said he had tried to prevent the formation of this group, as it might look as if its founders were imitating the NU Baru – as intellectuals and leading figures from both the NU and the MI. The MI Baru, apart from being censured as a 'childish' reaction, was the target of the same criticism that its foundation had been intended only to support a particular candidate at the forthcoming PPP national congress.

A few days later the founders of the FKNUN offered their apologies to the NU members for having hurt their feelings, promising that they would refer to their organization in future as Forum Konun. They had used the abbreviation NU Baru only as a 'joke', as an easy reference to the Forum, and had had no intention at all of insulting others. The creation of the two new groups, which received its fair share of attention, also worried the government. State Secretary Moerdiono even went so far as to call it a cause for concern, particularly where the result of all this would only be to aggravate the divisions in the PPP.

By now, people had begun speaking of a Rembang, a Jombang, a Buya (the name by which Ismail Hasan Metareum was sometimes referred to), a Naro, and a Thamrin camp, and so on. As the congress drew nearer, the rumours, counter-rumours, and speculations about the support enjoyed by the candidates, in particular Ismail Hasan Metareum and Matori, increased. Whenever a functionary of a regional branch spoke out in favour of one or the other, others from the same branch would often react by stating that they supported another candidate, or that no choice had yet been made.

To give an example, when the chairman of the provincial branch of East Kalimantan declared his region's support for Matori Abdul Djalil, other members of the provincial board and leaders of the subordinate branches refuted him. Similarly, after an announcement was made that 14 of the 25 kabupaten and kotamadya branches of West Java would reject Ismail Hasan Metareum’s nomination, some were quick to point out that as many as 22 had declared their support for him, not just orally but also in writing. Of other branches, for instance that of Central Java, it was said, at the end of July, that their NU members were tending to adopt a stance of 'Asal Bukan Buya' (ABB), 'anybody but Buya', and their MI members one of 'Asal Bukan Matori' (ABM).

The national congress

Ismail Hasan Metareum had made it clear as early as July that no observers or interested outsiders would be allowed to attend the PPP national congress. He was afraid that this might give rise to a rowdy atmosphere,
with people loudly voicing their views for or against. If there was a large audience, then the spectators would be shouting precisely at moments when decisions had to be taken by the congress. It would be difficult to find out in advance which local branches would be sending ‘good observers’ and which not. This, in turn, would make it very difficult to ensure that the congress would pass off without a hitch. If only official delegates from the branches attended, all would be quiet.

Ismail Hasan Metareum also hinted that demonstrations were planned. He disclosed on 7th August that information had reached him that students had been urged in a speech given somewhere outside Java to come to Jakarta at the time of the national congress. Metareum condemned this and said he feared that this would result in chaos, as at the PDI congress. This had at all costs to be avoided. Although he mentioned no names, Sri Bintang Pamungkas subsequently stated that he felt he must have been the person meant, but that the accusation was absolutely unfounded. He had admittedly visited one of the Lesser Sunda Islands, but had not given any speeches or attended any seminars. He had gone there solely to congratulate friends on their graduation from university. It was not his fault if women from Islamic study groups, students, and other young people wanted to be present at the national congress.

This congress, when it was held, was surrounded by tight security – tighter, some suggested, than in the case of the general session of the People’s Congress – to prevent non-delegates and protesters gaining access to the Asrama premises. The Jakarta military command deployed 2,000 of its men as guards.

The implications of the decision not to allow anyone other than delegates to enter the premises of the Asrama Haji of Pondok Gede became clear at the opening of the congress, when members who had announced their candidacy for the general chairmanship but had not been delegated by any branch were refused admission. One of these was Sri Bintang Pamungkas, who – most unusually for Indonesia – had started a campaign. Supporters of his – his ‘tim sukses’ – who were active in various cities had printed calling cards carrying his picture and the text ‘He shoulders the future of the Party, the Islamic community, and the nation’, while there were also matchboxes with his name, jackets with the text ‘Sri Bintang for the Bintang’ (i.e., the star as the symbol of the PPP), and T-shirts with his portrait. He could count on little support from the delegates, but claimed that, ‘if there were no interference’, he would have the support of sixty per cent of the branches, especially from outside the national congress, for instance from students. On the first day of the congress, sympathizers of Sri Bintang Pamungkas, styling themselves ‘Pro-Democracy Forum of Students and Youth’ and carrying posters and pictures of him proclaiming him ‘the leader of the future’, were turned away. The next few days there were protests against this course of events and in support Sri Bintang Pamungkas outside the Asrama Haji again. Naro, seeing how well guarded
the conference venue was, did not even attempt to get in.

There was also a decision that neither Sri Bintang Pamungkas nor any of the others who were denied admission could be elected 'formatur' of the new party board, as these functionaries could only be chosen from among the official delegates – a decision that also put an end to rumours that Yusuf Hasyim might enter the race for the general chairmanship. The upshot of all this was that there remained only four or five serious candidates, with Matori Abdul Djalil and Ismail Hasan Metareum as the two main contenders. The contest between them was even linked by some to the question of the 'succession', or who would become Indonesia's next President in 1998. While Ismail Hasan Metareum was supposed to be in favour of yet another term for Soeharto, Matori Abdul Djalil was believed to be in favour of Try Sutrisno as the next President.9

Just before the opening of the congress, on August 27th, K.H. Cholil Bisri, K.H. Dimyati Rois, and K.H. Alawy Muhammad, who had been delegated by the Rembang group for the purpose of making a definite choice, announced that Matori Abdul Djalil was their candidate. This was a decision that did not go undisputed in the NU, not in the last place because Matori Abdul Djalil looked to the Naro camp for additional support in defeating Ismail Hasan Metareum. There were still some NU leaders who disapproved of the activities of the Rembang group, while the group itself, to avoid conflict, had waited till the last moment to announce its choice. There had been a report only a few days previously that no decision on the NU candidate had been reached at a meeting between the ulama and NU Members of Parliament. Many of the local branches – a figure as high as 170 was even mentioned in this connection – were believed by some not to be prepared to go along with the ultimate choice. More importantly, however, Karmani and Soeleiman Fadeli, the chairmen of the PPP provincial branches of Central and East Java respectively, stated that they did not agree with this choice, with Karmani claiming that twenty provincial branches shared his view. This meant at the same time that Karmani and Hamzah Haz could not yet be completely counted out.

Within the MI, the strongest candidate for the general chairmanship was Ismail Hasan Metareum, of whom it was reported even before the congress that he had the government's 'blessing'. He was not home and dry, however, but had to reckon with opposition from the 'group of five' – also referred to as 'the group of eight minus Metareum, Yusuf Syakir, and Ny Aisyah Aminy' – who favoured Cholil Badawi, and from the Naro 'camp',

9 The existence of any such link between Matori Abdul Djalil and Try Sutrisno was denied after the congress by K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, who dismissed the idea as a mere suggestion by their opponents. K.H. Yusuf Hasyim, on the other hand, pointed out that without Matori Abdul Djalil as PPP general chairman, the Rembang group might fear that this party might not support Try Sutrisno's candidature (Forum Keadilan 29-9-1994).
which was in favour of Matori Abdul Djalil (aside from the supporters of Sri Bintang Pamungkas). Ironically, one of the things that were held against him was the fact that he looked for support to the kiai, thereby disregarding the old bonds of ‘close friendship’.

The question of who would become general chairman was to be decided by a team of seven formatur to be elected by the national congress. Their election, in turn, depended to a large extent on how the representatives of the local branches – those at the kabupaten and the kotamadya level, who formed the majority of the delegates – would vote. It was a system that in itself worked against any domination of the congress by NU strongholds, as the number of NU branches that were represented was considerably smaller than the total number of branches. It moreover indirectly favoured the chances of the candidate preferred by the government, so it was argued, as the delegates of local branches would think twice before compromising their relations with the local bureaucracy and military by committing a faux pas with their voting behaviour.

The election of formatur by the congress on the evening of August 31st did not pass without incidents. When the chairwoman of the Asahan branch had collected her ballot paper, on which she intended filling in Hasan Ismail Metareum’s name, the form was snatched from her by the secretary of that branch, who filled it in instead. The chairwoman then managed to get hold of it again, not without tearing it a little, and handed it over to the chairman of the meeting. He, for his part, tore up the whole form and handed the chairwoman a new one to fill in, eventually accepting her choice, amid shouts from the delegates and protests from the secretary.

Hamzah Haz was also angry, claiming that Ismail Hasan Metareum had promised him and Soeleiman Fadeli in the presence of ‘a high official’ that their names would be included in the ‘paket’ of formatur which he would recommend that the participants should elect. When this turned out not to be the case – because, as one of Ismail Hasan Metareum’s men explained, the two had not mustered enough support – and Ismail Hasan Metareum’s list contained only the names of MI members, Hamzah Haz went to see him, urging him to explain his conduct to the high official concerned. Ismail Hasan Metareum defended himself by saying that he had already tried to do so but had been unable to reach the said official on the phone. Hamzah Haz angrily retorted that he had worked for Ismail Hasan Metareum to the extent that it had cost him his position in the NU. Soeleiman Fadeli, also an NU leader, threatened a ‘walk-out’ by the NU delegates.10

The formatur who were elected as such in the end were Ismail Hasan Metareum (MI), Ny Aisyah Aminy (MI), Muchsin Bafadal (MI, chairman of

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10 Representatives of the Rembang group, among them Cholil Bisri and Syansuri Badawi, also went to Ismail Hasan Metareum to protest.
the Nusa Tenggara Barat branch, and a supporter of Ismail Hasan Metareum), Djufri Asmoredjo (MI, chairman of the provincial branch of Jakarta, which had already spoken out in favour of Ismail Hasan Metareum before the congress), Ali Hardi Kialdemak (MI, leader of Ismail Hasan Metareum’s tim sukses, from North Sulawesi), Matori Abdul Djalil (NU), and Syansuri Badawi (NU). Conspicuously absent members, who before the congress had been frequently mentioned as being almost certain to become formatur, were, apart from Hamzah Haz, Karmani, Cholil Badawi (who had even formed a ‘tim operator’ headed by Husni Thamrin to promote his nomination among the participants), the other members of the Kodel who had come out on his side, and Soeleman Fadeli (NU chairman of the important East Java branch). This list gave the lie to predictions that the MI, for instance, would try to have both Ismail Hasan Metareum and Cholil Badawi as formatur, or that the MI and NU would each furnish three formatur, in an attempt to prepare the way for a rapprochement between the various camps – which according to some reports had taken the form of actually concluded agreements. It likewise disregarded claims by the Syarikat Islam and Perti that they should be assigned a formatur as segments of the PPP.

The actual composition of the team indisputably represented a victory for Ismail Hasan Metareum. This became plain when the formatur met at the Shangri-la Hotel to constitute the new board and the two NU representatives walked out by way of protest. According to Ny Aisyah Aminy, who reported on what took place, the other five members had been prepared to give in to most of the demands of the two NU representatives. They could accept that seven seats on the central board, including that of the general secretary, should be claimed by members from the NU, and that the NU moreover should provide the chairman of the advisory council. What they could not accept was that the seven NU board members should be selected by Matori Abdul Djalil and Syansuri Badawi. This, they pointed out, was a deviation from the principle of mutual consultation. Furthermore, Matori Abdul Djalil had refused to disclose the identity of the seven, afraid as he was that his suggestions would be ‘vetoed’ by the MI formatur, as he later explained. When no agreement could be reached, the two NU formatur, after consultation with K.H. Alawy Muhammad, K.H. Cholil Bisri, and K.H. Dimyati Rois, had decided to pull out of the discussions.11 Matori Abdul Djalil told a slightly different version of the story. According to him, he and Syansuri Badawi had been treated as a minority and all their requests had been refused. They had left the meeting

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11 According to Ny Aisyah and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Syansuri Badawi had not walked out of the meeting of formatur, because he had become ill, as Matori Abdul Djalil had informed the other formatur after returning briefly from a consultation with the NU. The Rembang group for its part asserted that Ismail Hasan Metareum had initially promised to accept their candidates.
Recent Developments in Indonesian Politics

because they had suddenly become convinced that it was no use any longer to try to reach a consensus and that they could only lose whatever vote was held.

In the end, Ismail Hasan Metareum again became general chairman. In addition, there were nine chairpersons: Ny. Aisyah Aminy (MI), Hamzah Haz (NU), Alihardi Kiaidemak (MI), Yudo Paripurno (Perti), HM Djufrie Asmoredejo (MI), Zein Badjeber (NU), Syaiful Anwar Husein (SI), Yusuf Syakir (MI), and Zarkasih Nur (NU). Tosari Widjaya, of the NU, became general secretary. Thus none of the favourites of the Rembang group occupied seats on the PPP board. Matori Abdul Djalil was not included on the new board since he had withdrawn from the deliberations, Ismail Hasan Metareum explained. The NU members who did sit on it enjoyed no wide popular support among the NU followers, as their opponents were quick to point out. Tosari Widjaya was close to Ismail Hasan Metareum, K.H. Alawy Muhammad did not hesitate to indicate. The new advisory council (also formed by the formatur) was headed by Maimun Zubaer from the NU, from which two of its six deputy chairmen, Yusuf Hasyim and Syansuri Badawi, also came.

At the end of the congress, Ismail Hasan Metareum indicated his satisfaction with the results. The congress had proceeded in a more democratic way than in 1989, while the new board reflected the 'unity' between the older and younger generations. The Minister of Internal Affairs, Yogie S. Memet, as spokesman of the government, stated that he felt the new board had been elected in a lawful and democratic way, as among other things the formatur had been elected directly by the participants in the congress.

Steps were taken almost immediately to improve the image of the PPP. At the first meeting of the new board on September 5th, its members issued a joint statement pledging that they would promote unity in the party and foster better relations with persons outside the party. And at the meeting of the parliamentary faction of the PPP, Ismail Hasan Metareum instructed its members to be more 'vocal' in championing the interests of the people and to make sure that they did not just speak for the sake of hearing the sound of their own voices but had a genuine command of the subjects they were discussing with the members of cabinet. At the same time he warned that, although he had been praised for the fact that no PPP members had been recalled as Member of Parliament since 1989, this possibility should now no longer be excluded. Such a step might well become necessary if PPP members deviated from the party line.

Reactions

It was not long before people who were disappointed with Ismail Hasan Metareum's re-election raised the possibility of founding a new party or stated themselves to be contemplating leaving the PPP. They included
people like K.H. Cholil Bisri, who had maintained earlier, before the new board was installed, that there would be no defections if the NU failed to secure the general chairmanship.

Another person who was quick to voice his dissatisfaction was Sri Bintang Pamungkas, who announced that he intended establishing a Forum Demokrasi Islam Indonesia (FDII), which he claimed would also be a haven for ICMI members who were not oriented towards Golkar. This FDII was to function as a ‘think tank’ rather than a new political party, though he did not preclude the possibility that it might well develop into one. Disillusioned supporters and leaders of the PPP, according to him, would not necessarily be forced to turn to Golkar or the PDI. The congress had strengthened the impression that the PPP did not really represent the people and often only mirrored the aspirations of those in power. The party, in his words, was seriously ill and would be very difficult to cure soon. Its leaders had sold out the party cheaply to the authorities.

Hamzah Haz also criticized the developments in the PPP, stating that he was worried by the lack of solidarity evidenced at the constitution of the new board. On the penultimate day of the congress he had contemplated retiring from politics, but had been talked out of this by friends.

In East Java the provincial NU branch appointed a special team to investigate developments in the PPP after the kiai had been ‘hit’ at the congress, as they put it. Two of the questions it was to inquire into were whether there was a neo-Masjumi movement forming in the PPP, and whether ulama were only recruited to the PPP to attract votes, with party leaders really paying no attention to their opinions. It was essential to know what view the NU members took of events, so that a common stand might be found and the unity among its members might not be destroyed by politicians.

Matori Abdul Djalil, in an initial reaction, precluded the possibility of NU leaders defecting from the PPP, saying that the new board in principle was legal and that his faction was not contemplating the formation of any rival board. Nevertheless, even if only two of the seven formatur had come from the Rembang group, this group still had a sizeable following, especially in Java and South Kalimantan, which in reality formed the majority among the PPP supporters.

These reassurances did not stop others from soon suggesting the possibility of a breakaway from the PPP. One of the first NU leaders to do so publicly was K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, its general chairman, who did not preclude the likelihood of many disappointed kiai and NU members ‘crossing over’ to the PDI at the next general election. He even ventured the prediction that some members might refuse to cast a vote – an option that had always been frowned upon by the government as a mark of disloyalty and a deviation from the proper line of conduct of a law-abiding citizen. He asserted a little later that the NU as such had not adopted a political stance and that the political choice of NU members was their own
private affair, and not that of the party. Although he for his part did not mind if NU members decided to join the PDI, Golkar or the PPP, he personally was not disappointed at the outcome of the PPP congress, as he had not pinned any interests or hopes on it.

At this point a possible 'defection' to the PDI attracted its fair share of attention. This was after K.H. Alawy Muhammad, one of the influential members of the Rembang group who had initially abided by the results of the PPP congress, declared his preparedness to make such a move, provided his Islamic values were mirrored in the PDI's programme. Recalling the PPP's election results after the NU's return to the Khittah 1926, he warned that the consequences of this move for the PPP could be serious. If the group which the Indonesian press had dubbed the 'charismatic kiai' were to speak out in favour of the PDI in numbers, in fact, the PPP might suffer a heavy loss at the next general elections.

Ismail Hasan Metareum, on being asked to comment, stated that he doubted that NU members would defect to the PDI or, alternatively, refrain from casting a vote. They were too politically mature to stoop to such an action. He furthermore showed himself convinced that the PPP was still the most appropriate party for the _ulama_, and wondered how the PDI would adjust to their religious views. PDI politicians for their part vigorously denied that it would be hard for their party to accommodate the _ulama_. They pointed out that a number of _ulama_, including K.H. Cholid Murod, a chairman and Member of Parliament for the PDI, were active in this party, while a specifically Islamic organization like the Majelis Muslimin Indonesia had close ties with it.

Others, like H. Syaiful Mudjab, a deputy chairman of the NU and a Golkar Member of the People's Congress, urged NU members to join Golkar, an organization which, he maintained, clearly had the interests of Islam at heart, as it showed by its financial contributions to the construction and renovation of mosques and _pesantren_. Another person advising NU members to opt for Golkar was H.M. Dault, from the MI, who had also stood for the general chairmanship but been barred from the congress. He recited the same list of activities undertaken by Golkar to promote the cause of Islam.

An even more drastic measure that was moved was the foundation of a new party – a step that is precluded by law and would not under the present circumstances stand much of a chance of success. Former Minister of Internal Affairs Rudini had already alluded to the possibility of the NU's becoming a player in the political game itself on the eve of the PPP congress, when he had pointed out that the NU might have to face the question of how best to represent the aims of its supporters: through the existing political parties and Golkar or by the other alternative. He had not hinted exclusively at the formation of a new party, but said that there were many ways in which the NU could make its political aspirations clear to the government, among them the contribution of a small sum of money to
combat poverty by, for instance, half its members. The sum thus collected would run to billions of *rupiah*.

The subject was raised again after the PPP congress, on September 9th, when K.H. Yusuf Hasyim, K.H. Alawy Muhammad, and K.H. Syansuri Badawi met at the Tebuireng *pesantren* in Jombang. According to the former, the host of the meeting, this signified a reconciliation between the Rembang and the non-Rembang groups. He then went on to state that the break-down in political communications made the establishment of a new party necessary. The existing parties and Golkar had been unsuccessful in channelling popular aspirations, and their lack of political control had led people to become fed up with them. The 'lower strata' dreamt of a fourth or even a fifth party, he was to explain later. Such new parties, which would be founded at the time of the 1998 session of the People's Congress, the body which decides on fundamental changes to the Indonesian political structure, would represent an appropriate solution to the problem of the failure of the existing parties to represent the people's wishes. What he and his associates had in mind was the formation of one or more new political parties, rather than the NU itself becoming one. The NU should stick to its Khittah policy. The idea of a new party was not new and had not just been proposed by a group of people frustrated with the recent developments in the PPP, he stressed. It had been suggested before, by such categories of people as intellectuals and the staffs of Community Development Institutes (LSM).

The idea was to be discussed again at a second, larger meeting, planned five days later. At this meeting the stance to be adopted by the three *ulama* on the PPP's advisory board would also be debated. Dissatisfaction at the events at the congress had also found expression in the attitude they had adopted. K.H. Syansuri Badawi, who had headed the previous advisory council after the death of Imam Sofwan, had resigned his position only a few days after the end of the congress. A complicating factor was that the members of the advisory council, with the exception of the chairman, had not been asked whether they were prepared to sit on this board, to the annoyance of K.H. Yusuf Hasyim. The latter did not want to be saddled with the reputation of being a 'cheap' person, of whom it was

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12 Later, at the end of September, in an interview with *Forum Keadilan*, K.H. Alawy Muhammad showed himself in favour of the NU’s becoming a separate political party again.

13 It was reported a few days later that K.H. Maimun Zubaer had also resigned. This report was denied almost immediately, while Maimun Zubaer himself stated that he needed more time to decide whether or not to accept the heavy responsibility involved by this. He needed to consult with others and did not want to take a hasty decision at a moment when people were still reacting emotionally. He furthermore wanted to know whether by accepting he would be deviating from the Khittah principles concerning shared positions. Karmani, on the other hand, at that time still asserted that the *ulama* from Central Java, including K.H. Maimun Zubaer, would continue to ‘fight’ for a large PPP.
automatically assumed that he would accept a position on the advisory council come what may.\textsuperscript{14}

On September 14th a number of \textit{kiai}, including K.H. Alawy Muhammad, met at K.H. Yusuf Hasyim's \textit{pesantren} at Tebuireng.\textsuperscript{15} At this meeting, no definite decisions were taken but a Forum Iqamatul Haq (Forum of the Upholders of Truth) was constituted, with the aim of discussing political, social, and economic problems. The FIH was also intended to draw up guidelines for NU members in the PPP, PDI and Golkar, K.H. Yusuf Hasyim stated. As an example of the problems it should study he mentioned the plight of labourers, who were still treated too cavalierly by the existing organizations, referring to the labour unrest in Medan as well as to the recent bus drivers' strike in Jakarta. On other occasions he mentioned problems like the skewed economic development, environmental pollution, and the various strikes and demonstrations about which the political parties kept quiet.

At the end of September the advisory council held its first meeting, chaired by K.H. Maimun Zubaer. All the members were present except K.H. Syansuri Badawi, who was ill. K.H. Yusuf Hasyim had not yet made up his mind about whether to accept a seat on the board and stated that his decision was dependent on the views of the other \textit{ulama}. He later announced his withdrawal from politics, claiming that he did not have any specific plans for developing the FIH. The NU would suffice as a moral force.

The suggestion about forming a new party found no favour with those who wanted to abide by the Khittah 1926, among them K.H. Ilyas Ruhiat, the Rois Aam of the NU. He was one of those who considered the chances of the government's allowing the creation of a new party slight. Others again pointed out that a new party, born of frustration with the proceedings at the PPP congress, was no solution to the problems. Some, such as K.H. Hasyim Muzadi, chairman of the NU board of East Java, felt that those who contemplated forming a new party would do better to devote their energies to putting their own house in order, rather than acting like politicians wanting to 'hop' from one party to another.

Government officials like the commander of the armed forces, General

\textsuperscript{14} Another rumour circulating was that Maimum Zubaer had initially refused the chairmanship of the advisory council, with the argument that K.H. Yusuf Hasyim was a better choice, but that a representative of Hamzah Haz had insisted that he accept it, as the government would not be favourably disposed towards the appointment of K.H. Yusuf Hasyim.

\textsuperscript{15} This again gave rise to controversy. K.H. Cholil Bisri, from the Rembang group, stated a week later that the names of \textit{kiai} mentioned in connection with the Tebuireng meeting had been used fallaciously. He had checked with these \textit{kiai} personally and they had all told him they had never been contacted about this by K.H. Yusuf Hasyim. He suggested this might represent an attempt to blacken the Congress Steering Committee.
Feisal Tanjung, the Minister of Defence and Security, Edi Sudrajat, and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Yogie S. Memet, left no doubt that they rejected the idea as being unconstitutional. If there were genuine complaints about the functioning of the PPP, PDI and Golkar, the solution was to improve their quality and not to establish a new party, Yogie S. Memet pointed out. Lieutenant-General (Retired) Harsudiono Hartas also opposed the idea, especially if it was likely to lead only to more disappointment or even new problems, such as mutual misunderstandings, with all their dire consequences for national unity, and suggested that the ulama constitute a ‘moral movement’ dedicated to improvement of the social, economic, and political conditions. The ulama could then join other political and social organizations and use their influence here to correct those acting contrary to the principles of democracy. The suggestion was immediately taken up by K.H. Yusuf Hasyim, who announced that he wanted to discuss it with Harsudiono Hartas. The NU, as a moral movement, should formulate suggestions and criticisms, which could then be put to institutions like Parliament, he posited.

Spokesmen from Golkar, including its general chairman, H. Harmoko, and Chalid Mawardi, an NU chairman, condemned the plan as well. The latter disparaged it as a mere game played by people who were emotionally hyperactive as a result of the PPP congress, implying that he believed it could never be realized. He underlined that the idea of forming a new party deviated from the national consensus, which all NU members were expected to support. The idea was also rejected by Fatimah Achmad, a PDI chairman.

To others, such as Yusuf Syakir, of the PPP, the launching of the idea of forming a new party seemed like a good opportunity to press for political reform within the existing three-party system and for greater democratic freedom. He pointed out that changes to the Act on Political Parties and Golkar were needed to ensure that the PPP and PDI were really independent parties and could set up branches in villages as well as urban districts.

On September 14th, the NU Central Board issued an official statement to the effect that the NU as an organization did not envisage the formation of a new political party. If there were any NU members who did contemplate such a step, they were doing so as private individuals. Deputy Rois Aam K.H. M.A. Sahal Mahfudz asked journalists reporting on the debate not to link the NU with practical politics. K.H. Yusuf Hasyim had been ‘reprimanded’, it was revealed, and had been asked by the party board in a telephone conversation not to use the name of the NU when making political statements, although he had denied the charge about this. K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, who made the NU’s position public, refused to comment on the NU members of the PPP board, as they were mostly ‘new people’. A week later two representatives of the Rembang group, K.H. Cholil Bisri and K.H. Mursalim Ridho, stated that the new PPP board in the eyes of the
steering committee was illegal, as it had only been constituted by five of the seven formatur. They disparaged the NU members on the board, who they said were persons without strong roots among the NU members and supporters who did not enjoy the ‘attention’ of the ulama, either.\textsuperscript{16} The Rembang group had wanted Tosari Widjaya on the new board, but not as secretary-general, they claimed, adding that the NU members were deeply disappointed and, if nothing was done, would all ‘jump the fence’. Nevertheless, the members of the steering committee would not defect from the PPP, they stressed, but would merely participate less actively and, for instance, not take part in the PPP election campaign.

In mid-October, finally, President Soeharto made it plain that an extra party was out of the question. The Indonesian people did not want one, he said, recalling that Indonesia’s experiences with the multi-party system in the past had been very negative, as it made it difficult to take firm political decisions. The present system and the political stability it ensured were crucial to national development. What was needed was the internal consolidation of the PPP, PDI and Golkar to make them more responsive to the wishes of their members and of the Indonesian people.

\textit{The Nahdlatul Ulama congress}

The dispute about the political role of the Nahdlatul Ulama and of its leading members also coloured the prelude to the NU’s 29th congress, which took place at Cipasung in West Java from 1st to 5th December 1994. The participants were reminded of the importance of the Khittah 1926 by posters and banners displaying the relevant slogans, while the Rois Aam, K.H. Ilyas Ruhiat, on the first day of the congress emphasized the necessity for the NU to remain a non-political organization.

This stand was also strongly endorsed by the government, with the Minister for Internal Affairs, M. Yogie S. Memet, insisting on the eve of the congress that the NU steer clear of practical politics. This was also one of the major points emphasized by President Soeharto when he opened the congress and praised the decision to return to the Khittah 1926 as a courageous and a correct one. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, since 1984 general chairman of the NU and at that time one of the main advocates of a return to the Khittah 1926, even went so far as to say that this was one of the reasons why he was seeking re-election, so as to forestall a situation in which a politician would become leader of the NU. He warned that this could destroy what the NU had accomplished since 1984. If the new chairman turned out to come from a particular political grouping, all the NU members would be obliged to accept his choice.

\textsuperscript{16} A similar accusation had been levelled against the NU members who were prepared to sit on the PPP board by K.H. Hasim Muzadi, an NU chairman, on the eve of the congress. Most charismatic ulama, according to him, stuck to the Khittah 1926 and concentrated their energies on the pondok pesantren world.
The contest for the leadership of the NU executive board took place with unprecedented vigour, with much more public debate and conflict than is customary in the NU with respect to the candidacy for the general chairmanship. As a result there was a deep rift between the supporters of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid and those of his rivals, among whom the Jambi-born businessman H. Abu Hasan MA played a particularly prominent role.

Two points that were raised in the debate were K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid's criticism of the government and his sometimes controversial actions, such as his visit to Israel. Some feared that his critical remarks about the domestic political situation might reflect on the NU itself, while others doubted that the government would agree to his re-election in view of this. That the government would in fact react this way was denied by various officials, among them Secretary of State Moerdiono, Minister of Defence General (Retired) Edi Sudrajat, and Minister of Religion Tarmizi Tahir, who maintained that the government would not interfere and try to prevent K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid's re-election. Even so, rumours to the contrary were rife. Abdurrahman Wahid revealed a few days before the congress that reports had been received from various regions that local authorities had urged delegates to support a particular candidate, while Moerdiono around the same time saw himself obliged to deny reports that he had ordered K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid not to stand for a new term. There were also allegations that Abu Hasan had handed out money to win votes. There were even rumours that some of the participants in the congress felt so much pressurized by outside forces that they had burst into tears.

Some of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid's opponents, in their criticism of him, in which they alluded to his critical remarks about government policy, described him as too much of an intellectual for the rank and file of the NU. Or, as Slamet Effendi Yusuf, general chairman of the NU youth organization Ansor and a Golkar Member of Parliament, put it, the emphasis on abstract concepts of the past ten years needed to be replaced by a more pragmatic policy. Although such concepts were important in showing the NU's commitment to fundamental problems like the process of democratization, what the grassroots supporters needed more was concrete steps in the social and economic fields. The same applied to education and religious propaganda. It was this difference in approach, not the distinction between politicians and non-politicians, that was the main divisive point in the NU, he asserted. This view was endorsed by Chalid Mawardi, a member of the Supreme Advisory Council and initially one of the candidates for the general chairmanship, who said that the general chairman should be a practical person capable of tackling concrete problems, and not somebody highly intellectual with a tendency towards the abstract. A re-orientation was what was needed, rather than a focus on major issues like democratization, the 'succession' and human rights, and more attention should be given to the needs of the members of the Islamic community.
Abstract debates were for the delectation of intellectuals, of whom there were only very few in the NU. In the view of others, ideas like those presented by K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid were exactly what was needed to break down the rigidity of thought that still characterized many of the ulama.

Chalid Mawardi and Slamet Effendi Yusuf both underlined the importance of the Khittah 1926. In this they agreed with many NU leaders, who put themselves forward as advocates of this policy. Nevertheless, the attention centred on another point, namely that of the differences in regional background. Most of the opposition to K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid’s re-election came from branches outside Java, and, as he himself openly suggested, one of the factors at play at the congress was the antipathy to the Javanese felt by people from other regions. As at the PPP congress, the developments gave birth to a new acronym: ABG (= Asal Bukan Gus Dur, as K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid is affectionately referred to).

His opponents also tried to prevent his re-election by bringing the question of whether it is permissible for a general chairman to hold office for more than two terms up for debate. All their efforts were in vain, however. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid and Abu Hasan emerged from the first round of voting as the two principal candidates for the general chairmanship. The other candidates, including Chalid Mawardi, did not receive the statutory minimum number of votes. In the second round, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid won by 174 votes to Abu Hasan 142.17

After the congress, matters heated up once more when in mid-December five formatur — K.H. Ilyas Ruhiat and K.H. A Sahal Mahfudz, re-elected as Rois Aam and Deputy Rois Aam respectively; K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid; K.H. Tengku Abdul Aziz, from Aceh; and H. Hasjim Muzadi, from East Java — met to constitute the various NU boards: the Mustasyar (Board of Advisors), the Tanfidziyah and the Dewan Syuriah. Supporters of Abu Hasan pressed for his inclusion in the Tanfidziyah, as he himself had done in a letter to K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid. In their arguments for their case they pointed to the many votes he had received and to the need for proper representation of the non-Javanese regions.

K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid had made it clear from the outset that he would not comply with any such request, and, in what was virtually a replay of the course of events in the PPP, a new board was eventually announced with which not all the formatur were equally happy. K.H. Tengku Abdul Aziz, for example, who was in favour of a seat on the board for Abu Hasan, withheld his approval of the final result.18 He disclosed that

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17 In the first round, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid had won 157 votes and Abu Hasan 136.
18 Chalid Mawardi was excluded from the new board as well, while Fahmi Syaifuddin, one of the chairmen, who had also entered the race for the general chairmanship, immediately resigned on account of the external pressure that had been exerted at the
at the time the *formatur* had discussed the composition of the Tanfidziyah, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid had lodged an accusation that Abu Hasan had received a commission worth US$ 18 million for a development project in the port of Tanjung Priok, on which work had not yet started. Abu Hasan, on hearing this, immediately demanded proof and threatened that he would take the matter to court if K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid could not produce evidence.\(^\text{19}\) The latter, in turn, denied the charge of slander, as he had divulged the information about the commission at a closed meeting, the proceedings of which were supposed to be kept secret. He then went on to say that Abu Hasan had not been included on the board because this board should form a unity. The members of the new board were mostly younger people, he explained. He admitted a few days later that the idea of giving Abu Hasan a seat on the board had indeed been given consideration, but the position for which he had been considered was only a minor one, while Abu Hasan had demanded to be made chairman of the executive board, which was unacceptable.

For some of his supporters K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid’s victory provided an occasion for organizing Syukuran, or Thanksgivings. One of these, also intended to celebrate his election as President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, took place at the Casablanca Restaurant and Discotheque in Jakarta. It was attended by, among others, members of the Petition of 50 Group as well as other groups that were critical of the government, such as the Forum Demokrasi and the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation. T. Mulya Lubis, from the latter organization, on this occasion expressed a conviction that there were many lawyers prepared to defend K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid in court to enable him to continue his struggle for greater democracy in Indonesia. The venue of the party provoked criticism, however, as did the dancing at it. One guest, K.H. Munasir Ali, a member of the Board of Advisors, had reportedly left on seeing the ‘capers’. A less exuberant Syukuran was held at the house of a businessman the next day; here one of the speakers, the well-known Islamic propagandist K.H. Zainuddin MZ, asked K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid to accept Abu Hasan as a member of the board. In Surabaya about a hundred *ulama* assembled to express their gratitude for the election of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid.

After the announcement of the composition of the new boards, twenty-eight supporters of Abu Hasan, claiming to speak on behalf of 21 congress either to prevent or to ensure K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid’s re-election, among other reasons. Yet another member of the board, Sholeh Bustami, resigned not much later.

\(^{19}\) He did in fact do so in January 1995, when he placed the matter before the police for investigation. K.H. Yusuf Hasyim had tried in vain to dissuade him from this course, in the hope of avoiding a situation in which the general chairman of the NU would be summoned before a court of law and the Rois Aam and other *ulama* would be subpoenaed as witnesses.
provincial and 121 lower-level branches, asked for an extraordinary congress. If their request was refused, they threatened to form rival boards. Though on December 19th Abu Hasan still denied allegations that he fostered plans in this direction, qualifying the whole thing as a 'scheme by journalists', on December 27th the formation of a rival board, the Koordinasi Pengurus Pusat Nahdlatul Ulama (KPPNU), was announced. Abu Hasan was general chairman of the Tanfidziyah of this, and K.H. Syukron Makmun was Rois Aam of the Dewan Syuriah. Terms like 'rival board' were deliberately avoided by its initiators, as the KPPNU was no such thing, according to Abu Hasan, since the Indonesian system does not recognize the institution of opposition groups. Apart from implementing the programme agreed upon at Cipasung, the board was to prepare an extraordinary congress and to seek a general reconciliation. Its supporters took great pains to point out that the KPPNU had been formed to realize the aspirations reflected by 'the 142 pure votes of the supporters of Abu Hasan', as it was phrased. This formulation was prompted by the 36 votes in excess of the total of 280 votes that should have been cast in the ballot at the NU congress, they claimed.

According to both Abu Hasan and Abdul Wahab Nasution, one of his closest associates and chairman of the NU Jambi branch, most of the members of the KPPNU had been contacted and had agreed to sit on it beforehand. They included K.H. Yusuf Hasyim, who had been listed as deputy Rois Aam but had appeared to be startled on hearing the news of it and had subsequently denied that he had ever been contacted about this at all. Others, too, denied they had been contacted or had agreed to sit on Abu Hasan's board. The composition of this board accordingly was adjusted within two days.

K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid was dismissive about the formation of the KPPNU, predicting that Abu Hasan's venture would automatically end in failure. Doubling that Abu Hasan's supporters really constituted the voice of the NU in their respective regions, he asserted that the local NU leaders were convinced that the decisions of the NU national congress and of the formatur were legal and irrevocable. The members of the NU knew who were the real champions of their cause and who were the fakes acting according to their own whims. And when on December 28th the new NU boards met for the first time, the question of the KPPNU was not on the agenda: it was ignored. The secretary-general, H. Ahmad Bagdja, nevertheless disclosed that eleven people had reportedly refused to sit on Abu Hasan's board and that most likely sanctions would be imposed on Abu Hasan. In addition he pointed out that there was nothing wrong with

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20 Heading the list of Mustasyar advisors was K.H. Idham Chalid, a grand old man and former general chairman of the NU, who was indeed to declare his support for Abu Hasan.
the 36 extra votes: 25 had come from the provincial NU branches, 11 from lower-level branches whose representatives had only arrived after the opening of the congress.

To put an end to the problems in the NU, various prayer meetings were held. At least one of these, organized in Jakarta by Ansor, had a clear political connotation, as it gave K.H. Chalid Mawardi an opportunity of repeating his sharp criticisms of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid. Others, such as K.H. Yusuf Hasyim, who had been appointed to the board as advisor by the formatur, tried to reconcile the two camps. The latter resigned his position in January, announcing that he was going on a tour of the regions in an attempt to find a solution, as he felt the NU was in grave danger. His suggestion that K.H. Idham Chalid should be included on the official NU board was rejected by K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, who would not countenance any addition to a board that had already been constituted by the formatur.

Government officials showed themselves reluctant to interfere, though at least one ulama, K.H. Munasir Ali, had asked the government to help to find a solution. They felt that the creation of the KPPNU was an internal NU affair. Finally, on January 20th, Minister of Internal Affairs M. Yogie S. Memet declared at an informal meeting with NU leaders that the NU national congress had been a success and that its decisions were legally binding. He added that there still was a lot of work to be done, however.

The aftermath

The conflicts which surfaced at the PPP and NU congresses regularly re-emerged thereafter. Sri Bintang Pamungkas had to pay dearly for his actions. At the end of February 1995 he was withdrawn as a Member of Parliament by the PPP for what was described by some members of that party as his political sins. According to Ismail Metareum the decision had nothing to do with Sri Bintang Pamungkas’s outspokenness in Parliament. The last straw had been his alleged questioning of the constitutional role of the Pancasila in a speech in Bandung. In this speech, which had also drawn a reprimand from the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, addressed to the board of the PPP, he had wondered among other things whether the Pancasila as the foundation of the state helped to put teachers’ salaries up. He had also stated that the Pancasila surely was the same as Islam, but that Islam was more than the Pancasila.

Sri Bintang Pamungkas had been admonished for his behaviour before, Ismail Hasan Metareum explained, and on one such occasion had confessed that he was fed up with being a Member of Parliament. Sri Bintang Pamungkas for his part denied that he had ever called the Pancasila into question and pointed out that he had only been cautioned by his party twice in a period of three years. His statements in Bandung
had been taken out of context. His protests were in vain, and worse was to come. In April a police investigation was initiated against him in connection with his role in the anti-Indonesia demonstrations in Germany at the time of President Soeharto’s visit there. He was questioned about, among other things, his remarks at a meeting in Germany, where he had presented a paper on the future challenges to the Indonesian economy, and was subsequently forbidden to leave the country. In November he was taken to court on a charge of defamation of the President and Vice-President. Pro- and anti-Sri Bintang Pamungkas demonstrations took place outside the court.

As regards the Nahdlatul Ulama, there were rumours in June 1995 that its youth organization, Ansor, wanted to become independent of it. The general chairman of Ansor, Slamet Effendi Yusuf, at the Ansor congress in mid-September denied these rumours. Delegates were even so struck by K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid’s absence at the opening of this congress, for which some blamed Slamet Yusuf. Furthermore, the election of a new general chairman was viewed as a contest between the respective supporters of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid and Slamet Effendi Yusuf. Similar rumours circulated about the Jamiyyah Ahiith-Tariqah Al-Muktabarah An-Nahdliyah (JATMN), an organization of tarekat (mystical orders) within the NU. At its congress, in August 1995, K.H. Idham Chalid stated in his opening speech that everyone, also non-NU members, could join this organization, and that members of tarekat did not necessarily have to join the NU. This statement, coupled with the fact that members of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid’s NU board had not been invited, gave rise to some confusion and provoked speculation.

Already in December 1994, when President Soeharto attended the opening of the NU congress, it had been noted that K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid had not delivered his scheduled speech before the President’s address to the congress. This was because the ‘Palace’ had requested that the President’s speech not be preceded by one by the general chairman for reasons of protocol, however. Instead, the chairman of the preparatory committee should report on the activities of this committee, as has become the usual procedure in Indonesia’s political culture. People did not fail to note either that the new NU board had not yet been received by President Soeharto to report on the national congress and its results, as is customary, even months afterwards. The blame for this was put on the general chairman, whose position had not improved since the publication of Adam Schwartz’s A nation in waiting in 1994. Some ulama even suggested that

21 Another factor prompting Sri Bintang Pamungkas’s withdrawal was his clash in Parliament the previous week with the Minister of Finance, Marie Muhammad, over the latter’s remark that journalists should report ‘in a proportional way’, which Sri Bintang Pamungkas had taken as a threat to journalists, though according to Ismail Hasan Metareum this played no role in the affair at all.
a special meeting with President Soeharto be arranged to apologize for K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid's critical remarks as cited in this book.

All this strengthened the case of those NU members who felt that K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid should no longer head the organization. A meeting to investigate the possibility of his dismissal was held at Jombang in early September 1995. On the initiative of K.H. Yusuf Hasyim and K.H. Shohib Bisri (another uncle of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid) about twenty ulama from all over Java met here to discuss the situation. To underline the gravity of this situation they visited the graves of a number of venerated past NU leaders, including K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of the NU and grandfather of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid. According to the ulama present at Jombang, the NU was experiencing a serious crisis. Besides the President's failure so far to receive the new board, a number of other indicators were pointed out, such as the current conflict between K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid and Abu Hassan, the malfunctioning of some regional branches of the NU, and the speculations about the disturbance of the relations between the Nahdlatul Ulama and the government. In addition, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid's good relations with Megawati were criticized, as these had given rise to rumours that he was going to shepherd the NU's following into the fold of the PDI. He was furthermore accused of undermining the role of the Dewan Syuriah. The only solution was to ask him to resign. If he refused, an extraordinary congress should be convened.

The next day K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid was conspicuously absent from the reception of about sixty kiai and ulama by President Soeharto at the Istana Merdeka, at which K.H. Yusuf Hasjim and K.H. Alawy Muhammad were present. He felt that the reception had been clearly meant to show that every member of the PPP was welcome at the President's palace except himself, the more so as groups of ulama from Aceh and West Java also visited the Istana Merdeka around the same time, as he later said. Or, in other words, it had been intended to 'bonsai' him by clearly showing that he had lost access to the political top – though this was of course denied by those involved. This term was also used by K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid with reference to attempts from certain quarters to prevent the NU from growing big and strong.