

Article

Dynamics of the Islamic Political Movement The Influence of Pesantren's Islamic Community in East Java in the 2024 Elections

**Pramuja Yudha Pratama¹, Muhammad Badri Habibi²,
Ratih Kusuma Ningtias³**

¹Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia;
email : pramujayudhaa7@student.ub.ac.id (*corresponding author*)

²Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Istanbul, Turkey;
email : habibi.muhammad@std.izu.edu.tr

³Institut Agama Islam Tarbiyatut Tholabah, Paciran, Lamongan,
Indonesia; email : ratih.kusuma89@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article seeks to examine the dynamics of the Islamic political movement in East Java, with a specific emphasis on the influence wielded by the Islamic community originating from pesantren in the context of the 2024 General Election (Pemilu). Employing a qualitative approach and drawing upon data from relevant literature and current media sources related to the election year, this research scrutinizes the active role of pesantren communities in shaping and influencing the political opinions of the Islamic community in East Java. The analysis conducted encompasses significant factors such as fatwas issued by religious scholars, political education within pesantren, and the influence of religious figures who play a pivotal role in shaping the political views and preferences of Islamic voters. Concurrently, this article also delves into how the pesantren community interacts, both through collaboration and competition, with other political groups to sway the outcomes of the 2024 General Election. The findings of this article suggest that the loyalty of Santri voters and pesantren, with their unwavering allegiance, surpasses that of Abangan and nationalist groups. Therefore, the role and influence of the Islamic community from pesantren in East Java occupy a significant and influential position in the dynamics of politics during the 2024 General Election.

Keyword : Islamic politics, pesantren society, East Java, 2024 election

Introduction

Indonesia, as a democratic country, conducts elections as a transitional space for leadership that provides an opportunity for the public to manifest their political rights to vote and be elected, as stipulated in Article 43 Paragraph 1 and 2 of Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights (HAM). Through general elections, the community can actively participate as election participants, embodying the right to be elected, and individuals can express their aspirations by exercising their voting rights in general elections as a manifestation of the right to vote. This constitutes a fundamental right that envelops every citizen.

The population of Indonesia in 2023, based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), reached 278.8 million people. This marked an increase of 1.1 percent compared to the year 2022, with a total of 275.7 million people (Rizaty, 2023). The significant population in Indonesia is predominantly Muslim, constituting the majority entity with 240.62 million people in 2023, equivalent to 86.7 percent of the national population (Annur, 2023). This condition serves as a strong factor in the influential role and position of Islam as the most widely practised religion in Indonesia, impacting various social and political aspects within Indonesian society (Ni'mah & Rifa'i, 2022).

The dynamics of political contestation in Indonesia continue to unfold, creating tension in various provinces and regions across the country. Java Island often becomes the key to victory and a contested area for various political parties to secure high vote counts (Samosir & Novitasari, 2022). This is not without reason, considering that five out of six provinces with the highest number of voters are located on Java Island. The three provinces with the highest Permanent Voter List (DPT) are West Java with 35,714,901 voters, East Java with 31,402,838 voters, and Central Java with 28,289,413 voters. With these numbers, it explicitly explains that the provinces with the highest number of voters are held by West Java, East Java, and Central Java, respectively (Pinterpolitik, 2023).

In the past two general elections, East Java has often played a decisive role in determining national victories. In the 2019 election, the valid votes in East Java reached 24.6 million people, with Jokowi garnering 16.2 million votes, while Prabowo only received 8.4 million votes. A similar scenario occurred in the 2014 election, with Jokowi securing 11.6 million votes and Prabowo obtaining 10.2 million votes. The consistent victory for Jokowi in East Java in both elections paralleled his national success, ultimately declaring him the overall winner

(Mediaindonesia, 2023).

The political dynamics in East Java often serve as a battleground for political parties and election participants to conquer various regions in the province. This is due to the dynamic nature of politics in East Java compared to West Java and Central Java, which have more solid voter bases. According to Muh Shujahri, the Executive Director of Suropati Syndicate, East Java is always a province that is quite dynamic and difficult to predict (Sujoni, 2023). This is influenced by the composition of the East Java region, which has diverse ideological characteristics (Hakim, 2023). There are three main ideological clusters: Mataraman, Arek, and Tapal Kuda. Mataraman covers the area from Tulungagung to Banyuwangi with a voter base of nationalists and abangan (Nakamura, 2012). Then, the Tapal Kuda region spans from Probolinggo to Madura with a voter base of traditional NU (santri) strength, while Arek represents the urban base around Surabaya to Malang with a rational voter base (Dwi, 2023). The fragmentation of voter ideologies in East Java poses a challenge for political parties to win over these diverse groups of voters.

The 2024 elections once again position East Java as a game changer in national politics. With vice presidential candidates from two pairs attempting to bring the identity of East Java into the spotlight, Muhaimin Iskandar is closely associated with the santri and NU identity, as is Mahfud MD, who also has Madurese roots and a family background affiliated with NU. However, even though only two pairs directly utilize the identities of East Java and NU, all three pairs competing in the 2024 elections often make visits to pesantrens in East Java to seek blessings and approval from kyais in order to secure votes and support from the santri, kyais, and the public who tend to rely on the preferences chosen by their kyai (Arifin, Ma'ali, & Kholish, 2023). This occurs because mere representation of identity is not sufficient to garner votes from the santri and NU communities in the 2024 elections, considering that this representation is divided between the two pairs. Therefore, paying respects to kyais and pesantrens has become a part of the strategy employed by each pair in the 2024 elections.

The distribution of santri (Islamic boarding school students) in Indonesia, based on data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), reveals that East Java is the province with the highest number of santri, reaching 564,299 individuals, followed by West Java with 455,715 individuals (Rizaty, 2023). Moreover, in the province of East Java, there are 6745 active pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools) operating alongside the local communities (Luthfi, 2023). This becomes a unique

bargaining power for the Muslim pesantren community, including both santri and kiai (religious leaders), to exert influence over the dynamics of politics in the 2024 elections. The influence of kiai from pesantrens on political dynamics is based on the patterns of the relationship between kiai and santri, which can be categorized into two patterns (Rozuli, Yasin, Kholish, & Dalle, 2022). First, the relationship based on an authoritarian-paternalistic pattern, resembling a patron-client relationship between a leader and a subordinate. Second, the relationship with a laissez-faire pattern, not based on clear organizational relations but rather on the blessing (*restu*) given by the kiai. Through the kiai's blessing, any action taken by the santri is considered a certain and well-performed task. Total obedience and submission by the santri to carry out various actions based on the kiai's blessing are seen as a way to attract blessings. Thus, the relationship between kiai and santri is close and absolute. Obtaining the blessing and support of the kiai is equivalent to gaining the support of the entire santri community (Hajar, RB, & el-Basyier, 2009).

Therefore, considering the existing status quo, the 2024 elections once again position East Java as a battleground or a game changer in the contestation arena. Each political party and candidate pair is employing various strategies to secure high vote counts in East Java, either by endorsing candidates capable of representing East Java, pesantrens, and NU, or by engaging in visits to pesantrens by all candidates to seek the blessings of kiai and gain support from the santri community. This underscores the significant influence of the pesantren Islamic community in East Java on the political dynamics present in the 2024 elections.

Method

This research adopts a qualitative approach as its primary methodological foundation (Sugiono, 2019), aiming to gain a profound understanding of the dynamics of the Islamic political movement in East Java. The data collection process involves information from popular survey institutions, such as Litbang Kompas, regarding the landscape of the 2024 elections by leaders of pesantrens, religious figures, and members of the Islamic community as actors in Islamic politics in East Java (Moleong, 2018). This approach provides an opportunity to obtain direct insights and specific nuances related to the influence of pesantrens in the context of local politics. Additionally, document analysis is a crucial component of this research. Documents such as religious scholars' fatwas, political writings in pesantrens, and interactions through social media are carefully analyzed to investigate and analyze evolving political views within the

pesantren community. By exploring these sources, the research can detail and depict the accumulated political thoughts within the pesantren environment. Further context understanding is gained by examining recent literature and current media related to the 2024 General Election. This approach allows the researcher to comprehensively investigate the political dynamics during that period, ensuring that the research results reflect the actual and relevant political conditions.

Results and Discussion

Typology of East Javanese Society in the Political Vortex

The East Java province, with a substantial geographic area of 47,963 km², is divided into two main parts: mainland East Java and the Madura Islands. The mainland East Java covers 88.70 percent of the total area, equivalent to 42,541 km², while the Madura Islands constitute 11.30 percent, amounting to 5,422 km². The extensive geographic expanse makes East Java the province with the highest number of regencies and cities in Indonesia, comprising 29 regencies and 9 cities administratively (Setyaningrum, 2022).

The significant geographic size aligns with the large population in East Java, totaling 41.1 million people, positioning it as the second most populous province in Indonesia after West Java (Airlangga, 2022). In elections, the highest number of Permanent Voter List (DPT) is found in three provinces on Java Island. The numbers are as follows: West Java with 35,714,901 voters, followed by East Java with 31,402,838 voters, and Central Java with 28,289,413 voters (Pinterpolitik, 2023). Based on this data, East Java once again plays a strategically crucial role in determining the direction and dynamics of national political events. Additionally, the vast geographic expanse and dense population contribute to the complexity of the characteristics and typology of the diverse communities in East Java.

The majority of the population in East Java belongs to the Javanese ethnic group, adheres to Islam, and exhibits a tendency towards ethnic heterogeneity. Clifford Geertz's perspective in the classic study "The Religion of Java" outlines the typology of political currents in East Java. According to his view, East Java is divided into four regions (Clifford, 1960). *First*, the Mataraman region, the former territory of vorstenlande (the Mataram Kingdom's rule) covering the eastern side of Ngawi, Kediri, Nganjuk, Madiun, Magetan, Trenggalek, Pacitan, Ponorogo, Tulungagung, Blitar, and Tuban. The Mataraman

region, historically a *vorstenlande*, culturally aligns more with “Central Java,” characterized by cultural traits and political currents strongly influenced by nationalism and the notable *abangan* culture. *Second*, the Arek region, an area with urban culture consisting of the Malang Raya region and the Surabaya metropolitan area. The Arek region’s populace tends to be rational, lacking dominant political parties or political currents that strongly control this area.

Thirdly, the Tapal Kuda region is characterized by a community closely connected to *pesantrens*, religiousness, a population with a basis in *santri*, and a strong patronage culture. With such characteristics, the Tapal Kuda region is closely aligned with the *pesantren* culture, and the dominant mass organization is NU. As a result, the people in the Tapal Kuda region highly respect and value religious figures (*kiai*) who are revered and honored by the community (Rozaki, 2021). This region spans from Probolinggo to Banyuwangi. Due to the strong influence of *pesantren* culture in shaping its community, the adage “*pejah-gesang nderek para kiai*” (living and dying following the *kiai*) becomes a guiding principle for the people in various aspects, including their political attitudes.

Fourthly, the Madura region shares similar characteristics with the Tapal Kuda region. The Madura region consists of four regencies: Bangkalan, Sampang, Pamekasan, and Sumenep. The characteristics of the community in the Madura region are inseparable from the influence of influential *kiai* figures and serve as a strong base for the *santri* community (Sihono & Fitriyah, 2020). In the Madura and Tapal Kuda regions, the role of *kiai* extends beyond matters related to religion and the divine. *Kiai* also play a role in worldly affairs, particularly in political matters. Additionally, the Madura region’s community characteristics exhibit a strong sense of submission and obedience to four main figures in life, namely *Buppa* (father), *Babbu* (mother), *Guru* (teacher), and *Rato* (government leader). In this context, obedience is heavily influenced by the *pesantren* culture that highly esteems *kiai* (A’la & Zamzami, 2023). Based on the typology of characteristics, culture, and political currents in East Java, it presents a unique challenge for political parties and candidate pairs to garner public sympathy and votes by endorsing candidates perceived as representative of the voter typology in East Java or by attempting to align with one of the voter typologies, even if it is not directly representative.

The Role and Influence of Pesantren in the 2024 Election Event

The role and influence of pesantrens strongly shape the socio-political life of the community in East Java (Fiqih, 2022). Examining the typology of political currents in East Java, which describes the characteristics of communities closely connected to pesantren culture in the Tapal Kuda and Madura regions, is crucial. Both regions exhibit characteristics of communities deeply rooted in religion, closely tied to pesantrens, and serving as strongholds for the santri community, positioning kiai as role models in religious, social, and even political matters. This is quantitatively reinforced by the distribution of santri in Indonesia, positioning East Java as the province with the highest number of santri, reaching 564,299 students (Rizaty, 2022). Thus, the role and influence of pesantrens in the political dynamics of East Java have significant implications, and the political dynamics of East Java will add tension to the national electoral contest, as seen in the track record of the two previous election contests.

The dynamics and political culture evolving in East Java are challenging to separate from the two political trends, represented by green and red (Qosim, 2021). Green is associated with religious culture close to pesantrens and Nahdlatul Ulama, while red is associated with nationalism and abangan. The political configuration that unfolds cannot be detached from the socio-cultural factors in the East Javanese society. Success in political contests depends on the extent to which the loyalty of voters from each political trend can maintain their preferences for candidates capable of representing the characteristics of their respective political trends.

In the evolving political dynamics of East Java, as seen in the East Java gubernatorial election in 2018, at least it can provide a coherent illustration of the contest between two coalition parties with distinct political characteristics growing within the East Javanese society. The 2018 East Java gubernatorial election featured the pairing of Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Emil Dardak against Saifullah Yusuf and Puti Guntur Soekarno. Both pairs of gubernatorial candidates shared affiliations with the same organization under the auspices of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), specifically as former officials of the Ansor Youth Movement and Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama, both of which had a substantial mass base in East Java. The two gubernatorial candidates, originating from the same religious organization but affiliated with different endorsing parties, naturally had overlapping compositions of voter loyalty and support, attempting to bridge the gap between the two political trends: the santri

and abangan groups. This effort was carried out by both pairs, Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Emil Dardak, as well as Saifullah Yusuf and Puti Guntur Soekarno (Mahali, Sobari, & Tawwakal, 2019).

Based on a survey conducted and released by Litbang Kompas in February 2018, it was revealed that support from the Tapal Kuda and Arek regions leaned significantly towards Saifullah Yusuf and Puti Guntur Soekarno, while the Mataraman, Mataraman Pesisir, Madura, and Osing (Banyuwangi) regions showed substantial support for Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Emil Dardak (Kami, 2018).

The results of the survey indicate that the loyalty of santri voters in the Tapal Kuda and Madura regions is quite strong, aligning with preferences and characteristics that are synonymous with santri voters. This alignment is based on their proximity to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) affiliations and the influence of kiai (religious leaders). Consequently, the choices of the people in the Tapal Kuda and Madura regions revolve around supporting either Saifullah Yusuf or Khofifah Indar Parawansa, both of whom have organizational backgrounds under the auspices of NU.

This situation contrasts with the Mataraman region, which predominantly features characteristics of abangan and nationalist voters. In reality, the survey results reveal that the preferences of the Mataraman residents do not align with the representation of nationalism or candidates with a direct lineage to Soekarno. Surprisingly, the Mataraman region is dominated by the Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Emil Dardak pair, not by candidates endorsed by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) or candidates with a lineage to Soekarno, such as Puti Guntur Soekarno, who could represent these traits directly (Sunaryo & Jatningsih, 2021). This anomaly phenomenon serves as a comparison of voter loyalty between the two political trends that have developed strongly in East Java, namely, the santri and abangan. Based on this survey, it can be concluded that the loyalty of santri voters tends to be strong, consistent with the existing political trends and preferences synonymous with santri, while the loyalty of abangan and nationalist voters tends to be more fluid and less robust.

The coalition conditions in the 2024 General Election, especially in the presidential election contest, have a composition that is somewhat similar to the gubernatorial election in 2018. In both cases, there are two pairs of candidates endorsing vice-presidential candidates who are identical and closely affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), kiai (religious leaders), and santri (students).

The pair Anies Baswedan, along with Muhaimin Iskandar, and the pair Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD both have vice-presidential candidates with similar backgrounds close to NU and pesantren. Muhaimin Iskandar, the grandson of KH Bisri Syamsuri, one of the founders of NU and the Chairman of the National Awakening Party (PKB), was born within the NU framework (Aizid, 2023). This is further supported by the statement of KH Hasib Wahab Hasbullah, the son of one of the founders of NU, KH Wahab Hasbullah, who asserts that Muhaimin Iskandar, affectionately known as Cak Imin, can represent 70 percent of the Nahdliyin vote in East Java (Agus Rahmat, 2023). Similarly, Mahfud MD, who has a Nahdliyin family background and has received religious education in NU pesantren, also has Madurese blood, hailing from an area strongly associated with religious nuances, pesantren, and NU (Tokan, 2023).

The potential split of the santri votes in the 2024 General Election among candidates closely associated with pesantren, kiai, and NU becomes more pronounced with the presence of candidates sharing similar backgrounds and conflicts within NU and PKB. Tensions between PKB and NU ahead of the 2024 election intensify with various statements made by the Chairman of PBNU, who consistently asserts that there are no presidential and vice-presidential candidates representing NU, as this matter falls outside the domain of NU as a religious and social organization. Additionally, clear statements are made emphasizing that PKB does not represent NU. These tensions are further fueled by various statements from Yaquut Cholil, the Minister of Religious Affairs and Chairman of GP Ansor, who often criticizes the Anies and Muhaimin camps (BBC News, 2023). The potential for various factors to split the santri votes is highly likely in the 2024 General Election due to the strong and influential role of santri, pesantren, and kiai in East Java in determining victory and the national political dynamics

The strength of the loyalty of santri and pesantren voters in various contests gives the santri and pesantren a strong bargaining position to determine the outcome and dynamics of the 2024 election. The strong loyalty among santri voters is a result of the pattern of total submission in the relationship between kiai and santri. What is commanded by the kiai becomes an obligation that must be fulfilled by a santri. In Greg Fealy's view, within the pesantren environment and communities close to pesantren culture, the authority of kiai is absolute, and submission to the kiai is the primary rule in pesantren culture (Fealy, 2012). Therefore, when attempting to vote based on personal preferences, it seems that

the santri does not show respect for the kiai and tends to make wrong decisions because they do not rely on the kiai’s choice. The strength of the culture and paradigm in the pesantren area in the relationship between kiai and santri makes the loyalty of santri to every choice of the kiai stronger compared to abangan and nationalist groups.

In an effort to secure votes, the presidential and vice-presidential candidate pairs in the 2024 election will employ various political strategies capable of garnering the sympathy of the diverse characteristics of voters, especially in East Java with its political inclinations. Political strategies are implemented to gain and maintain power, as well as to execute political matters and decisions in line with the desired outcome, namely, achieving victory (Pandiangan, 2017). According to Peter Schrorder’s perspective, political strategy refers to the techniques or approaches employed by political actors to achieve political objectives. Therefore, the understanding of political strategy involves various efforts to overcome boundaries that may lead to the probability of defeat, whether it is the loss of previously acquired and maintained power or the pursuit of new power (Pito, Efriza, & Fasyah, 2006). To achieve victory in the political arena, Peter Schorder categorizes political strategies into two parts: offensive strategies (attack) and defensive strategies (defend) (Schroder, 2003).

Table1 Political Strategy according to Peter Schroder

	Strategy Type	Strategy Characteristic	
Offensive Strategy (attack)	Expansion market strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Displaying clear differences from political opponents. 2. Showcasing the benefits that the community will gain by supporting them. 3. Striving to be an enhancer of the programs proposed by political opponents. 4. Offering advantages not possessed by political opponents. 5. Campaigning and narrating change. 	
	Strategy to penetrate the market		
Defensive Strategy (defense)	Defensive strategy market		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintaining and strengthening voter solidarity to ensure they stay aligned and are not easily swayed by political opponents. 2. Reinforcing the understanding and narrative that binds voters to the programs promised in the past and successfully realized, 3. Striving to minimize visible differences with political opponents.
	The strategy of closing or giving up the market		

Offensive strategy is a political strategy aimed at increasing vote acquisition by employing a model strategy to introduce and offer various differences from the previously winning party in a specific region to capture its voters. There are two types of offensive strategies within this approach. *First* is the market expansion strategy, which is an offensive strategy type aimed at forming a reserve base in an effort to expand to new voter groups beyond the party's or related actor's base region. *Second* is the market penetration strategy, which is an offensive strategy type aimed at exploring the potential of the presented candidate with the goal of strengthening public confidence. In Peter Schroder's perspective, offensive strategies share several identifiable characteristics. *Firstly*, they seek to showcase the benefits that voters will gain by choosing them. *Secondly*, they highlight clear differences from political opponents in front of the voters, aiming to be the antithesis of the shortcomings of political opponents. *Thirdly*, they strive to be a problem-solving and refining party compared to the programs presented by political opponents. *Fourthly*, they aim to offer advantages that their party possesses and their opponents do not. *Fifthly*, they narrate and emphasize change.

Defensive strategy, on the other hand, is a political strategy aimed at maintaining power, voter base, and the majority of previously obtained votes. In other aspects, defensive strategy can also be employed to release and surrender the market under certain conditions, such as when there is a second round in the election. In this scenario, the party that does not enter the second round will transfer its voter base to one of the agreed-upon parties. According to Peter Schroder, defensive strategy shares several identifiable characteristics. *Firstly*, it strengthens the binding narrative to the voter base through various track records performed by the candidate and directly felt by the public. *Secondly*, it strives to preserve and maintain voters by reinforcing solidarity among them to prevent them from easily being swayed by political opponents. *Thirdly*, it seeks to minimize visible differences with political opponents. Therefore, information about differences with political opponents may be biased, shaping voters' perception that the ideas presented by the political opponent are the same as the incumbent, with the distinction being that the incumbent has a clear and experienced track record, while the political opponent only offers ideas.

In this context, to compete for and win votes in East Java, each pair of presidential and vice-presidential candidates must use both offensive and defensive strategies to maintain their voter base from their respective endorsing parties and capture votes that are not the base of

their endorsing party, taking into account the political stream patterns in East Java. Considering the strong loyalty of voters, especially those from the santri and pesantren communities scattered in the Tapal Kuda and Madura regions, and the potential splitting of votes among the santri and pesantren communities in East Java in the 2024 election due to two pairs of candidates endorsing vice-presidents close to pesantren and santri, each pair, including those without direct representation from the pesantren and santri community, will employ an offensive strategy to expand their vote acquisition by capitalizing on the potential splitting of votes among pesantren and santri based on their respective kiai preferences. Additionally, they will use a defensive strategy to maintain their respective voter bases by securing one by one the pesantren and regions that have been their voting bases before.

With the bargaining power and influential position of the santri, kiai, and pesantren that significantly shape the national political dynamics originating from East Java, this position should be leveraged by each pair of candidates to accommodate the needs and interests related to the welfare of the community (Assiddiq, 2020). The promises offered by each presidential and vice-presidential pair, who come to visit and seek the favor of pesantren to address the needs and interests of the pesantren community.

The pair of Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar offer several political promises. First, they will prioritize the welfare of Quranic teachers, Islamic boarding school teachers, and teachers at every level. Second, they will advocate for improved accessibility to facilities in many pesantrens (Sujarwoko, 2023). *Third*, they will fight for equality between private and public education in terms of rights and quality. *Fourth*, they will strive for affordable education (Singgih Wiryono, 2023). On the other hand, the pair of Prabowo and Gibran offer several political promises. First, allocate a perpetual fund for pesantrens from the state budget. Second, advocate for the Hajj travel cost (OHN) increase not to burden prospective pilgrims. Third, prepare a human resources development system for pesantren students to enhance their quality to meet the challenges of 5.0. Fourth, provide a business start-up credit program for santri and young people to create job opportunities. Fifth, optimize the implementation of the pesantren law (Sandro, 2023). Meanwhile, the pair of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD offers several political promises. First, fight for a decent honorarium for educators in pesantrens. Second, promise incentives for religious teachers and pesantrens. Third, optimize the implementation of the pesantren law. Fourth, optimize the perpetual

fund for pesantrens. Fifth, fight for adequate facilities for pesantrens in Indonesia, as has been done in Central Java (Khaerunnisa, 2023).

With all these offers and political promises, voters with a santri, pesantren, and kiai basis must be able to proportionally evaluate them for the benefit of the community and the nation. Thus, the choice endorsed and given by the kiai, which will indirectly influence many mass bases, should not be solely for the interests of a few parties. Instead, it should consider the welfare of the community and the nation as a manifestation of *rahmatan lil alamin* (Rahman, 2015).

Conclusion

The upcoming 2024 election continues to draw public attention as the D-day approaches. Various pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates persist in employing diverse political strategies to gain the sympathy and votes of the public, aiming to win the 2024 election contest. The political dynamics of the 2024 election also reposition East Java as a political battleground, contributing tension to the national political landscape. With its extensive geographical area and substantial population, East Java exhibits social, cultural, and political complexities. This article rigorously outlines the influence of the Islamic pesantren community in East Java on the 2024 election. The political dynamics in East Java are inseparable from the history and culture ingrained in the lives of its people. Clifford Geertz's typology of political currents in East Java divides the region into four parts: Mataraman, Arek, Tapal Kuda, and Madura. Each region possesses political characteristics inherent to the people of East Java. Mataraman is characterized by nationalist and abangan communities, Arek by an urban population tending towards rational voters, Tapal Kuda, and Madura by religious communities closely affiliated with pesantren culture and influenced by the choices of kiai (religious leaders). This article explores the loyalty of santri and pesantren voters, who exhibit stronger loyalty compared to abangan and nationalist communities. Thus, the role and influence of the Islamic pesantren community in East Java hold significant importance in shaping the dynamic political landscape of the 2024 election.

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