

## The Dynamics of The Aula Magazine in Surabaya in 1978-2014: From Organizational News to Politics

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### Abstract

This study is conducted to find out the process of the emergence of Aula magazine in 1978, to recognize the development of Aula magazine from 1978 to 2014, and to investigate the tendency of Aula magazine's themes during the New Order and Reformation periods. This research is structured using the historical method, comprising heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The spatial and temporal scope is the development of Aula magazine in terms of theme tendencies from 1978 to 2014. The results as follows: Aula magazine is a monthly press media of East Java PWNU which was published on December 19th, 1978, based on the Decree of East Java PWNU. Moreover, Aula magazine from 1978 to 2014 experienced development. When it was first published, it was still a bulletin called Risalah NU and was not yet able to be published regularly, then it developed into a monthly magazine with a regular publication called Aula. It also experienced the development of theme trends during the New Order and Reformation periods. Government policies and NU organizations influenced the content of Aula magazine. During the New Order period, the content was limited to NU organizational news due to the repressive policies of the New Order government. In addition, since 1984, during the 27th NU congress in Situbondo, which resulted in a decision to return to the 1926 Khittah and not be tied to any political party, the content of Aula magazine during the New Order period was mostly dominated by organizational news. During the reformation period, The Aula magazine became more open due to government policies that were no longer repressive towards the press. In addition, the decision of Nahdlatul Ulama to establish the PKB party and the inauguration of Gus Dur, a central figure of NU, as President of the Republic of Indonesia, made the content of Aula magazine during the reformation period filled with political issues.

**Keywords:** Dynamics, Press, Nahdlatul Ulama, Politics.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan pertama, untuk mengetahui proses kemunculan majalah Aula pada tahun 1978. Kedua, mengetahui perkembangan majalah Aula dari tahun 1978 sampai 2014. Ketiga, mengetahui kecenderungan tema-tema majalah Aula pada masa Orde Baru maupun Reformasi. Penelitian ini ditulis menggunakan metode sejarah, yang terdiri dari heuristik, kritik, interpretasi dan historiografi. Adapun ruang lingkup spasial dan temporalnya adalah perkembangan majalah Aula dalam aspek kecenderungan tema dari tahun 1978-2014. Hasil penelitian ini antara lain: Majalah Aula adalah media pers bulanan PWNNU Jawa Timur yang terbit pada tanggal 19 Desember 1978 berdasarkan Surat Keputusan PWNNU Jawa Timur. Majalah Aula dari tahun 1978 hingga tahun 2014 mengalami perkembangan seperti, ketika pertama kali terbit majalah Aula masih berupa buletin bernama Risalah NU dan belum dapat terbit secara teratur, kemudian berkembang menjadi majalah bulanan yang dapat terbit teratur bernama Aula. Majalah Aula juga mengalami perkembangan kecenderungan tema pada masa Orde Baru dan Reformasi. Kebijakan pemerintah dan organisasi NU mempengaruhi isi konten majalah Aula. Pada masa Orde Baru, konten majalah Aula terbatas berita organisasi NU karena kebijakan pemerintah Orde Baru yang represif. Selain itu, sejak tahun 1984, pada saat muktamar NU ke-27 di Situbondo, yang menghasilkan keputusan tepatnya NU kembali pada Khittah 1926 dan tidak terikat dengan partai politik manapun membuat konten majalah Aula pada masa Orde Baru banyak dihiasi berita organisasi. Pada masa reformasi, majalah Aula dapat lebih terbuka karena kebijakan pemerintah yang tidak lagi represif terhadap pers, selain itu, keputusan Nahdlatul Ulama yang mendirikan partai PKB dan dilantiknya Gus Dur yang merupakan seorang tokoh sentral NU menjadi Presiden RI, membuat konten majalah Aula pada masa reformasi dipenuhi dengan isu politik.

**Kata kunci:** Dinamika, Pers, Nahdlatul Ulama, Politik.

## INTRODUCTION

In modern-day society, mass media plays an increasingly important role. It is an effective means of generating and disseminating news and information to the public. Simultaneously, it can also be a tool for promoting certain ideas or values, thus contributing to social change in society. It is the main component of the press, serving as a bridge of information between the government and the public. The press also serves as a social control in society. The press is always rooted in the press system it adheres to, while the press system is always influenced by the political system in which the press is situated.<sup>1</sup>

The press system in Indonesia has experienced changes in line with the times and the movement of the nation's political activities. Currently, the history of the press in Indonesia has passed through four phases of development. It began with the struggle period, the independence period, the New Order period, and the Reformation era. During the national

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<sup>1</sup> Cangara, Hafied, 2002. *Pengantar Ilmu Komunikasi*, Jakarta: PT. Rajawali Pers. Hlm. 67.

movement, the press was a tool to fight against colonialism. Following the independence phase, the press was used as a tool for political struggle. In the New Order phase, the press was a communication tool for development. As well as in the current Reformation era, the press is in the context of freedom and commercialization.<sup>2</sup>

Political developments in Indonesia contributed to changes in the press sector in the nation. It began during the New Order period when the Indonesian press embraced the authoritarian press system, in which the press only became the government's mouthpiece. During this period, the first law on the press was Law Number 11/1966 on the basic provisions of the press. A further development was later regulated in Law No. 21 of 1982 concerning amendments to Law No. 1966 on the basic provisions of the press as amended by Law No. 4 of 1967. In addition, the existence of a Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers - Press Publishing Business License - (SIUPP) reflected the government's attempt to control press freedom, an adoption of authoritarian press theory.<sup>3</sup>

The fall of the New Order was a fresh breeze for the press in Indonesia, with many reforms in the press sector. The Habibie, Gus Dur and Megawati eras was the beginning of the growth of press freedom in Indonesia. Nowadays, freedom of the press is upheld, resulting in the emergence of many new publications in various forms and more diverse reporting. The enactment of Law No. 40/1999 on the press replaced the provisions of the previous law. Naturally, these provisions imply that the press in Indonesia embraces social responsibility, i.e., press freedom is responsible to society or the public interest.

Apart from serving as a bridge of information from the public to the government or vice versa, the press also functions as entertainment, education, proselytization, cultural transformation, and social control in society. People can supervise the government through all activities carried out by the president and other state officials.<sup>4</sup>

In early 1975, PWNU East Java in Surabaya, led by H. Muhammad Sholeh Makmum, also published a magazine currently called Aula. The Aula magazine was a press release published in two periods, namely, during the New Order and Reformation periods. First published officially, Aula magazine was based on the decree of PWNU East Java No.

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<sup>2</sup> Inge Hutagulung, *Dinamika Pers di Indonesia*, Jurnal Interaksi, Edisi Nomor 2 Vol. 2, Universitas Diponegoro, 2013, 55.

<sup>3</sup> Ibnu Hamad, *Kontruksi Realitas Politik dalam Media Massa*, Jakarta: Granit, 2004, 63.

<sup>4</sup> Nurudin, 2008, *Sistem Komunikasi Indonesia*. Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada. Hlm, 34.

183/PW/Kpts/XII/78. Numerous changes contributed to the ups and downs of the development of Aula magazine from the first time published until now.

The dynamics of a magazine's publishing journey were not easy. A wide range of obstacles and even the development of the times have turned into a digital era which is a challenge for print media. Despite the various challenges that exist, Aula magazine managed to survive until now and still exists within the community. Meanwhile, this research focuses on the development aspect of the tendency of the themes of Aula magazine during the New Order and Reformation.

Based on the foregoing background, the problems of this research are the process of the emergence of Aula magazine, the development of Aula magazine from 1978 to 2014, and why the themes of Aula magazine during the New Order period mostly discussed organizational news of Nahdlatul Ulama while during the Reformation period mostly discussed political issues.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this research, the method used was a historical research method with several stages, namely heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. During the heuristic stage, sources related to the research title were collected. The sources were obtained from various places such as the library of UIN Salatiga, the Monumen Pers Nasional (National Press Monument) in Surakarta, the library of Aula magazine, and the editorial office of Aula magazine. After carrying out the heuristic stage, sources relevant to research related to the dynamics of Aula magazine were found, both written and oral sources. The primary sources obtained include: 1. Bulletin of Risalah Nahdlatul Ulama in 1975, 2. Bulletin of Nahdlatul Ulama East Java Region edition in 1978, 3. Magazine Aula edition from 1980 to 2014, 4. Oral history interview Abdul Wahid Asa (Deputy Chairman of the Dakwah Section of the East Java PWNU in 1978 and General Editor of Aula Magazine in 2005-2013), 5. Oral history interview Chairul Anam (General Editor of Aula Magazine in 1991-2005), 6. Oral history interview Syaifulloh (Editor-in-Chief of Aula Magazine in 2014 until now).

The second stage is the criticism or verification stage. This stage serves as a process of looking for the authenticity and credibility of the sources obtained. This stage of criticism is divided into 2 parts, namely external criticism, and internal criticism.

The third stage is interpretation. This refers to the process of interpreting or analyzing historical information, namely the integration of several facts obtained previously. This aims to synthesize previously acquired knowledge and various historical sources. Related theories are then compared, and the facts are brought together in a process of interpretation into a unity.

The final stage in this research is historiography. Historical research, such as research reports, is an expression used for the process of reporting or the findings of historical research. A ready-made writing framework becomes the benchmark, while the pattern of adaptation depends on the author, regardless of whether it is based on patterns that develop chronologically or periodically or based on unique themes according to historical events. Equally, the representative model of historical facts can be approached in a narrative descriptive manner.

## DISCUSSION

### *The Aula Magazine as Monthly Press Media of PWNNU East Java*

The Aula magazine was originally known as the Risalah NU bulletin which was first published in 1975 at the suggestion of H. Muhammad Sholeh Mukmin, who was then Chairman of the East Java PWNNU. After realizing the need for information and da'wah media from Nahdlatul Ulama administrators, he planned a monthly bulletin to be distributed to all NU administrators in the East Java region. Due to the functions and benefits offered by print media and the needs of the Nahdlatul Ulama mass organization at that time, such as information exchange with Jam'iyah Nahdlatul Ulama and da'wah socialization, it was subsequently decided to publish the NU Risalah bulletin published by the East Java PWNNU.<sup>5</sup>

The first issue of Risalah NU was published in January 1975 in a stencil form of only 2 pages and was published conditionally only when needed. The objectives of Risalah NU newsletter are explained on the first page of the publication of Risalah NU newsletter that reads:

*“Agar tetap mengetahui perkembangan di masa mendatang, para mubaligh serta warga NU dan aktivis pada umumnya di Jawa Timur harus terus mengikuti terbitnya buletin yang terbit Januari 1975, misalnya untuk*

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<sup>5</sup> An interview with Abdul Wahd Asa on 2 Januari 2022.

*menjangkau perkembangan dan menginformasikan di lingkungan internal, organisasi. Dan sebagai pengkhotbah sangat penting memberikan informasi yang terus diperbarui sebagai bahan informasi”<sup>6</sup>* (So as to remain aware of future developments, preachers as well as NU citizens and activists in general in East Java should continue following the publication of the bulletin published in January 1975, for example, to reach out to developments and inform the internal environment of the organization. And as preachers, it is very important to provide updated information as information material.)

The Risalah NU bulletin, which was planned to be published once a month, could not run smoothly. In 1976, the Risalah NU bulletin was only able to survive for about a year and a half until May 1976 with only 17 issues. This was due to the poor management of the publication which prevented the bulletin from being published regularly and then discontinued.<sup>7</sup>

The newsletter Risalah Nahdlatul Ulama then suffered a vacuum for approximately 2 years. In 1978, the Dakwah Institute of East Java PWNU led by KH. Anas Thohir made one of the work programs to revive the previously published bulletin, namely Risalah NU. With the great cooperation between the publishing department, the da'wah department, and the encouragement of the East Java PWNU board, the general bulletin of the East Java PWNU was able to comeback, but for the East Java region under the name Buletin Nahdlatul Ulama East Java Region or BUWILNU for short. The bulletin was restarted from the beginning, for example preparing staff with a reliable writing or journalistic background to prepare several topics for the bulletin. Back then, the distribution of BUWILNU was still limited as it was distributed free of charge to NU administrators and branches throughout East Java. Later, BUWILNU may be issued periodically, although the cost of publishing remains funded by infaq and the shortfall covered by the East Java PWNU. The first year of the publication was in full stencil form. Multiple special meetings put this plan together. The organization was disorganized and refined. The regional leadership bought an IBM electronic typewriter and a mini offset printing machine. This machine purchase absorbed the budget of other regional leaders. The Aula magazine was committed to improving the second-year edition. However,

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<sup>6</sup> The first edition of Risalah NU Bulletin.

<sup>7</sup> The January 1981 issue of Aula Magazine.

the introduction of the new machine was an adjustment. Modern tools also need managers who can serve them. No matter how good the tool is, it depends on the people who serve it. The work system should no longer be amateur. This demand is hard to fulfill. Technical printing personnel need to be given skills and the editor needs strict discipline.<sup>8</sup>

From time to time, the development of BUWILNU is quite significant and characterized by the increasing number of readers of the newsletter and the widening interest. This led to BUWILNU gradually moving to a professional level. It began with the transformation from a bulletin to a magazine. The management also renamed the East Java Region Nahdlatul Ulama Bulletin or BUWILNU as Aula. This was explained on page 3 of the second edition of BUWILNU in 1980 in a letter from the NU leadership of the East Java Region which reads:

*“Tentunya pihak penyelenggara selalu berupaya meningkatkan kualitas buletin ini dan memberikan pengenalan yang lebih mudah dan jangkauan yang lebih luas, sejak tahun kedua Buletin NU Wilayah Jawa Timur diberi nama Aula yang secara harfiah berarti ‘lebih utama’.”*<sup>9</sup> (Indeed, the organizers are always trying to improve the quality of this bulletin and provide an easy recognition and a wider reach, since the second year the East Java Region NU Bulletin was named Aula which literally means 'more important'.)

The idea of naming Aula itself was Abdul Wahid Asa's, to help readers recognize and remember it. It means a meeting place for public events, typically with no entertainment. It is not just a place where ideas can meet, but also a place for exhibitions. Aula means “more important” in Arabic. It strives to provide its readers with what is necessary for their interests. Aula also stands for Akbar Ulama li Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah. Therefore, the Aula magazine aims to be a means of communication and exchange of positive ideas and to be more important as it prioritizes the needs of its readers for the activities and depth of knowledge of the scholars of Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah.<sup>10</sup>

In the later years, the magazine went through a long process starting from the Bulletin of Risalah NU, changed to the Bulletin of Nahdlatul Ulama of East Java Region in January

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<sup>8</sup> The January 1981 issue of Aula Magazine.

<sup>9</sup> BUWILNU Second edition 1980.

<sup>10</sup> An interview with Abdul Wahid Asa on January 2, 2022.

1978, and finally on December 19, 1978, with the decision of the Regional Leadership of East Java (PWNU) with Decree 183/PW/Kpts/XII/78 Aula officially became the press media of Nahdlatul Ulama. The Aula magazine was originally based at Jalan Raya Darmo No. 96 Surabaya, but in 2007 to the present the Aula office moved to the new PWNU office in East Java at Jalan Masjid Al-Akbar Timur No. 9 Gayungsari Surabaya.

The Aula magazine's purpose is to further develop and expand previous discussions on religion, politics, society, and culture. Thus, the board of Aula magazine expects that the topics discussed should not only be known by Nahdlatul Ulama members but also by the public. The Aula magazine is one of the media used by Nahdlatul Ulama to preach the vision and mission of spreading the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.<sup>11</sup>

Aula magazine has the slogan "Bacaan Kiai, Santri and Pemerhati". At the beginning of its establishment, the magazine had a vision and mission, among others: first, to display the potential and treasures of pesantren; second, to campaign for attitudes of tawassuth, tasamuh, Itidal, and Tawazun; third, to build a community of readers based on Islamic values. Meanwhile, the mission are: first, strengthening the bonds of ukhuwah Islamiyah, wathaniyah and basyariyah; second, positioning as an Islamic environment that leads to religion; third, becoming a positive tradition as a foundation for building a better future; and fourth using the flexibility of positive new traditions to strengthen the foundation of national Islam.

The magazine's publication truly cannot be separated from the role of Kiai such as KH. Anas Thohir, KH. Hasyim Muzadi and Abdul Wahid Asa. KH. Anas Thohir was an active member of the East Java PWNU. In 1975-1977 or during the leadership of KH. Abdullah Shidiq, he was the head of the planning or da'wah research department. For the following period he served as chairman of the Da'wah Department and initiated the publication of Aula magazine. His contributions to the development of Aula magazine were numerous. In 1980 he introduced a subscription and advertising system to support the publication of Aula magazine. Prior to this, Aula Magazine was distributed free of charge only to NU administrators and offices in East Java, and to enable Aula Magazine to be published regularly, a subscription and advertising system was introduced. This system proposed by KH. Anas Thohir was effective. The magazine succeeded in getting its first advertisement

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<sup>11</sup> An interview with Abdul Wahid Asa on January 2, 2022.



from PT Gudang garam posted on the back page of Aula magazine. This advertising fee was used to cover publishing costs for one year.<sup>12</sup>

In 1987 - after KH. Anas Thohir died - this magazine's management automatically shifted to KH. Hasyim Muzadi based on KH. Anas Thohir's order. KH. Hasyim Muzadi was a charismatic figure and had served as chairman of the PBNU for two periods. Under his guidance, the magazine, Aula, did not develop much. In 1990 he decided to resign due to his busy schedule and other factors.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Finding Safety: Organizational News Dominates***

The regime changes also affected various regulations from the previous regime. So did the regulation of the press. In 1966, the New Order government issued a law that regulated the permissibility of publishing newspapers or magazines upon obtaining a license from the Department of Information. This made the relationship between the New Order government and the press very tense. During the New Order era, the press experienced tremendous suppression. The mass media was prohibited from reporting and criticizing the New Order government. Strict supervision was carried out on the people behind the published mass media. Many printed mass media finally had to be willing to be banned as their content was not in accordance with what the New Order government wanted. The period of the New Order was a difficult time for the press growing in the regions, due to inadequate printing facilities that resulted in the demise of a few newspapers.<sup>14</sup>

Aula Magazine is one of the magazines that emerged amid a stressful political atmosphere, during the New Order era led by President Soeharto. All developing media fell at the military backed Soeharto regime's feet. There were no newspapers that publicly criticized the government. Every newspaper must have a publishing license, but not all newspapers get one easily.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lia Hadis Sholikha, *Sejarah dan Perkembangan Majalah Aula Tahun 1978-2020*, Skripsi: UIN Surabaya, 2020, 20

<sup>13</sup> An interview with Abdul Wahid Asa on January 2, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> D.N Susilastuti, *Kebebasan Pers Pasca Orde Baru*, *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Politik*, Vol. 4 No. 2 Tahun 2000, Yogyakarta: Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Gajah Mada, 228.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 82.

There was also pressure from the government during the New Order, including the Islamic press. Therefore, the government requires every press to have a publishing license, but not all newspapers can easily obtain one. Some newspapers were banned due to their illegality (not having a license to publish) such as: Jurnal Ekuin (1983), Sinar Harapan (1986) and Prioritas (1987).

The government required every published press to have a SIUPP (official) and STT (special). Both SIUPP (official) and STT (special) were obtained by publishers through a license from the Ministry of Information, which at the time was held by Harmoko, who was also a member of the ruling party (Golkar). In line with the regulations issued by the government, the management of Aula magazine initially did not apply for SIUPP and STT licenses. This was also the reason why in the early days, Aula magazine was only distributed to NU internal administrators as it had not yet obtained its own license, so it was still illegal. However, ten years later, in 1987, Aula magazine applied for SIUPP and successfully obtained a publishing license with license number 1190/SK/Ditjen PPG/STT/1987.

At that time, Aula magazine was led by three people, namely KH. Anas Thohir as the person in charge as well as the managing director, KH. Hasyim Muzadi as the layout and setting section and distributor and Abdul Wahid Asa as the Chief Editor. The initial funds for the publication of Aula Magazine came from infaq and funds from PWNU East Java. After experiencing a vacuum for approximately two years, Aula magazine returned with its first issue at the 27th NU Congress in Situbondo, East Java, with a circulation of 5000 copies and a favorable welcome from the public, especially Nahdlatul Ulama members.<sup>16</sup>

Back then, Aula magazine was published manually due to not having complete printing equipment. It was written with simple tools. The paper used at that time was stencil paper. The manager of Aula magazine took two to three nights to print five thousand copies. All the work in the process of publishing Majalah Aula was done by three people, both writing and printing.

In New Order times, the content of Aula magazine mostly contained internal news of Nahdlatul Ulama board. This was, first, due to the repressive attitude of the New Order government, which was all pressing, making Aula magazine very careful in displaying magazine content, especially those that criticized the government. Facing the New Order

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<sup>16</sup> An interview with Abdul Wahid Asa on January 2, 2022.

government's suppression of the press, Aula magazine decided to choose directive journalism that prioritized news coming from the authorities. It must also self-censor the news it collects. Factual and interesting news materials that are expected to offend the government and cause a potential impact on socio-political life would not appear in Aula magazine. In this way, Aula magazine could avoid the possibility of being banned by revoking the publishing license or SIUPP, which was the basis of press policy. Aula magazine's adherence to New Order government policy prevented it from being banned and was granted a publishing license so that it could survive. From the very beginning during the New Order, Aula magazine focused on its mission of spreading Islamic knowledge and da'wah in accordance with the vision and mission of Aula magazine.

The second reason is because NU has been on the political stage with various experiences and history that lasted until the New Order. In this era, NU remained a party through the merger of Islamic parties, namely Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP). NU remains reluctant to let go of its involvement in the political arena, knowing that it still plays a role in the political sphere. When seen from the themes of Aula magazine between 1978 and 1983, it discussed a lot of political matters, especially the PPP party. Unlike in the middle of the New Order period starting in 1984 after NU felt that its position was no longer relevant to political parties, finally at the 27th congress in the city of Situbondo NU decided to return to the 1926 khittah.<sup>17</sup>

In the July 1985 issue of Aula magazine with the theme " Dapatkah NU tidak ber-PPP?"<sup>17</sup> explained that Khittah 1926 was the term used by NU in 1926 when making the decision to return to the original formation of NU as a socio-religious organization. The consequence of Khittah 1926 was the affirmation that NU was no longer tied to the PPP. NU gave its members the freedom to strengthen that legitimacy. To strengthen that legitimacy, at the time of the National Conference, there was a regulation prohibiting concurrent positions of NU administrators with administrators of any political organization. Looking back, the topics of Aula magazine published from 1984 to the eve of the reformation period were news related to the NU organization, such as holding a congress, who the new Rais Aam candidate was, how the National Conference was conducted, and NU's anniversary. Simultaneously, the political issues of the government were not discussed much. By looking

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<sup>17</sup> Aula Magazine editions from 1978 to 1984.

for data on the themes of Aula magazine from December 1978 to May 1998, the topics of Aula magazine during the New Order period can be classified as follows:

No.	Theme	Number of Editions
1.	NU Organization	76 Editions
2.	Religion	28 Editions
3.	Politics	20 Editions
4.	Social	11 Editions
5.	Education	10 Editions
6.	Nationality	9 Editions
7.	Mahzhab	7 Editions
8.	Traditions	1 Edition

**Table 1.** Theme Classification of Aula Magazine December 1978- May 1998<sup>18</sup>

The existence of Aula magazine cannot be separated from NU. All things related to NU, Aula magazine always actively made it as news material. This was also the reason why news about the NU organization was the most frequently discussed during the New Order era. There were at least 76 editions that discussed it. One of them was in issue No. 1 Year viii in January 1986, Aula magazine took the theme "Mass organizations must adjust their parent". The issue discussed was about the implementation of the 9th Congress of the Gerakan Pemuda Ansor in Bandar Lampung which had ended. The congress went well and resulted in a product as expected, namely, a product that can support the decision of the 27th NU congress in Situbondo a year ago. The task of GP Ansor as an autonomous body under NU is to carry out NU's general program in the field of youth.<sup>19</sup>

### ***The Freer the More Open Political News***

During the Reformation period, the editorial board of Aula magazine was different from the New Order era, with only Abdul Wahid Asa remaining on the editorial team. During the reformation period, Aula magazine was published with the latest domestic and foreign political issues. It seemed as if Aula Magazine was a medium that could educate the public

<sup>18</sup> Source processed from the Arsip Editorial Office of Aula Magazine, Surabaya.

<sup>19</sup> Aula Magazine January 1986 edition.

by providing good values. This was certainly different from the New Order era, where editors and publishers would be jailed and banned if the magazine's content discussed political issues. Thus, the content of Aula magazine eventually focused on the internal news of the NU organization.

At the time of Reformasi, the content of Aula magazine was filled with international news such as conflicts in the Middle East. The content was also more diverse and political themes dominated during the reformation period. News such as the collapse of the New Order regime, the inauguration of BJ Habibie as president of the Republic of Indonesia, NU establishing the PKB party and the inauguration of Gus Dur as president until Gus Dur stepped down were widely discussed at this time. The Reformation period was a period of freedom of expression when Aula magazine had a free opportunity to present magazines with local content, especially, contemporary Muslim cases at that time. Such as the religious conflict in Ambon, ninja terror, conflict between the police and Bondowoso residents, thus the variety of local news in the news of Aula magazine is more numerous.<sup>20</sup>

The difference between Aula magazine during the New Order period and Aula magazine during the Reformation period lies in the presentation of its content. Aula magazine tries to reveal the news as it was during the reformation period. The content inside Aula magazine has been adapted to the current context. Meanwhile, the main task of Aula magazine remains the same both during the New Order and Reformation periods, i.e., to convey Islamic preaching as a whole, so that the readers of Aula Magazine have a good and correct understanding, a complete understanding of Islam. It has a clear segment of readers, namely Nahdlatul ulama members, especially NU board members, kiai and santri from all over Indonesia. Gradually, as Aula magazine develops, the readership of Aula magazine is also increasing. The proof is that the circulation revenue of Aula magazine always increases every year.<sup>21</sup>

At the beginning of the reformation period, KH Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur, who at that time served as Chairman of PBNU and a central figure in NU, founded a new party, Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa or PKB, which became an internal debate within NU because it violated the 1926 khittah. PKB was established to save the votes of NU cadres who are widely spread throughout Indonesia. Democracy provides the widest possible freedom to the

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<sup>20</sup> An interview with Abdul Wahid Asa on January 18, 2023.

<sup>21</sup> An interview with Abdul Wahid Asa on January 18, 2023.

people to choose their political decisions. Therefore, Gus Dur established PKB to prevent NU cadres from being divided by different political choices. However, Aula magazine is not part of the National Awakening Party or any other Islamic party. The magazine aims to be a medium for Islamic propagation, while the PKB party is an Islamic party. Thus Aula magazine is for all groups and all parties.<sup>22</sup>

The emergence of political parties during the reformation period affected the content of Aula magazine. Because of the historical similarities between the leaders of Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa and Nahdlatul Ulama, Aula magazine tends to discuss national political issues. For example, in the August 2000 issue of Aula magazine, it was explained that Gus Dur's Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, or PKB, unexpectedly gained significant votes in the 1999 election, coming fourth and one of the first six. 48 candidates participated in the election. Considering its relatively short birth, PKB is at the top of the list.<sup>23</sup>

In a special report in the March 1999 edition of Aula magazine with the theme "PKB Menjawab", Gus Dur, as party leader, answered questions from NU youth close to Gus Dur who felt uncomfortable with NU's new political formation, the PKB. The emergence of the PKB in the list of political parties during the reformation period raises big questions. One result was the effect of the emergence of the PKB on NU's declaration of a return to the 1926 khittah. In that regard, Gus Dur commented that NU activists and supporters should be guided in their political decisions. The declaration of NU's return to Khittah 1926 in the New Order era was a change of strategy in the face of a political situation that favored NU.<sup>24</sup>

Aula magazine appears as NU press media that strengthens ukhuwah Islamiyah among Muslims through the content it presents. Therefore, Aula magazine always appears with the news of Islamic parties, especially the Nahdlatul Ulama party with invitations to unite the vision, mission, and movement to fight secular parties, that is the role of Aula magazine in the election.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Aula Magazine 1998 edition.

<sup>23</sup> Aula Magazine 2000 edition.

<sup>24</sup> Aula Magazine 1999 edition.

<sup>25</sup> An interview with Abdul Wahid Asa on January 18, 2023.

No.	Theme	Number of Editions
1.	Politics	58 Editions
2.	NU Organization	30 Editions
3.	New Sects, Radicalism dan Terrorism	19 Editions
4.	Social	17 Editions
5.	Religion	14 Editions
6.	Nationality	6 Editions
7.	Tradition	5 Editions
8.	Education	4 Editions

**Table 2.** Theme Classification of Aula Magazine Juni 1998- Desember 2014<sup>26</sup>

During the reformation period, the theme of Aula magazine about Nahdlatul Ulama organization was filled with various news such as the preparation of the Lirboyo boarding school to welcome the NU muktamar, the election of rais aam, then the IPNU-IPPNU meeting, khittah NU and others. For example, in the September 2002 edition of Aula magazine No. 9 Year XXIV with the theme " Yang layak dipilih ", which contains news that soon the East Java Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Board was going to hold a five-year hajjat. The event was no other than the East Java Regional Conference of Nahdlatul Ulama which will be held in mid-October 2002. This conference was considered a rationally important part of NU, as well as an essential pillar for organizing East Java NU, especially as Jam'iyah Diniyah Ijtimaiyah. The theme raised in the conference was " Memantapkan Khidmat NU Sebagai Jam'iyah Berbasis Penguatan Umat Menuju Tatanan Indonesia Sejahtera Berkeadilan (Strengthening NU's Khidmat as Jam'iyah Based on Strengthening the Ummah Towards a Prosperous Indonesian Order with Justice)". Based on this theme, the purpose of the conference was intended, among others: first, to strengthen the consolidation of the organization; second, to evaluate and assess the accountability report of the East Java NU board in order to improve the performance of future management; third, formulate and launch good jam'iyah work programs in accordance with the expectations of development demands; fifth, formulate points of thought / tausiyah concerning the dynamics of East Java

<sup>26</sup> Source processed from the Arsip Editorial Office of Aula Magazine, Surabaya, 2023.

community life that need to be examined and analyzed in depth; and Sixth, forming an accommodating NU management by prioritizing akhlakul karimah and professionalism.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the difference between Aula magazine during the New Order and after the Reformation era was in the form and design changes. After the Reformation era, the layout of Aula magazine was developed into a professional magazine with professional covers, titles as well as layouts. The production of Aula magazine was done using computers and the internet. The topics discussed became more diverse, especially regarding current Islamic issues. It also discussed the phenomenon of liberal Islam, which seeks to strengthen the faith of the Ummah, and the problems of the Ummah abroad, despite the time and atmosphere in Indonesia.

After the Reformation, the management system improved. Chairul Anam, the general manager at that time, said that the management of Majalah Aula adopted a corporate system to ensure that it continued to meet the needs of readers who were eager for information on the Islamic world. Similar to other companies, the company had several investors who owned shares in the company. He also emphasized that the shareholders in the company influence Aula magazine - but not too much in the publication - because the subject matter of Aula magazine along with the vision and mission of Aula magazine is the responsibility of the publisher. Back then, the Aula magazine was also able to provide income for the PWNU in East Java.

In 2005, Chairul Anam left Aula Magazine. This was because he was in charge of other sections, including Semesta magazine, Tabloid Warta and Duta Masyarakat, which is now Harian Duta. In addition, Abdul Wahid Asa continued to manage Majalah Aula and replaced Chairul Anam as editor-in-chief.<sup>28</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Based on the description regarding the Dynamics of Aula Magazine in Surabaya in 1978-2014, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, Aula Magazine is a monthly press media of East Java PWNU which was published on December 19, 1978, based on the Decree of East Java PWNU. The emergence of Aula magazine is inseparable from the role of kiai such as KH. Anas Thohir, KH. Hasyim Muzadi, H. Sholeh Makmum and Abdul Wahid Asa.

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<sup>27</sup> Aula Magazine September 2002 Edition.

<sup>28</sup> An interview with Chairul Anam on 2 Juli 2022.



Second, Aula Magazine from 1978 to 2014 experienced some developments. When it was first published, Aula magazine was still a bulletin called Risalah NU and could not be published regularly. Later, it developed into a monthly magazine that could be published regularly called Aula. The magazine also experienced the evolution of its themes during the New Order and Reformation periods.

And the latter, government policies and NU organizations affected the content of Aula magazine. In the New Order period, the content of Aula magazine was limited to NU organizational news due to the repressive policies of the New Order government. In addition, starting in 1984, during the 27th NU Congress in Situbondo, which resulted in NU's decision to return to the 1926 Khittah and not be tied to any political party, the content of the magazine, the Aula during the new order era was mostly dominated by organizational news. During the reformation period, Aula magazine could be more open because government policies were no longer repressive, the decision of Nahdlatul Ulama to establish the PKB party and the inauguration of Gus Dur, a central figure of NU, to become President of the Republic of Indonesia, loading the content of Aula magazine during the reformation period was filled with political issues.

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