



Apolitical Salafi: Between Religious and Citizenship Identity in Indonesia

Irwansyah and Rholand Muary
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara
irwansyah@uinsu.ac.id

Article Information

Received: March 25, 2024

Revised 1: May 06, 2023

Accepted: May 18, 2024

Keywords

Apolitical; Citizenship; Identity; Indonesia; Movement; Muslim; Religious; Salafi

ABSTRACT

The phase of Islamic resurgence in Indonesia since the 1980s and 1990s is characterized by the emergence of new dynamics within the Islamic movement, which have reshaped the religious landscape. One of these is Salafism, which was introduced through the Islamic movement originating from the Middle East. This group promotes the purification of Islamic teachings amid the various challenges faced in advancing the development of the movement. Therefore, this study focused on Apolitical Salafi group (political quietism), which has grown significantly in Indonesia. This qualitative study involved data collection through observation and in-depth interviews with key Salafi figures, followed by thorough data analysis. The results showed that Apolitical Salafi movement provided a new space for religious da'wah (preaching), specifically among the upper-middle-class and millennial generation in society. Conversely, this movement also avoided association with general elections, political parties, democratic practices, and resisted rulers because these activities are considered secular. In conclusion, Apolitical Salafi movement created a paradoxical ideological space for religion. This means that religious identity of Salafi Muslims should conform to its teachings, and as Indonesian citizens, they need to avoid interference in political affairs (political isolationism).

Kata Kunci

Tidak berpolitik, Kewarganegaraan, Identitas, Indonesia, Gerakan Muslim, Salafi

Abstrak

Fase kebangkitan Islam di Indonesia sejak tahun 1980-an dan 1990-an ditandai dengan munculnya dinamika baru dalam gerakan Islam, yang telah membentuk lanskap keagamaan. Salah satunya adalah Salafisme, yang diperkenalkan melalui gerakan Islam yang berasal dari Timur Tengah. Kelompok ini mempromosikan penyucian ajaran Islam di tengah berbagai tantangan yang dihadapi dalam memajukan perkembangan gerakan tersebut. Oleh karena itu, studi ini difokuskan pada kelompok Salafi Apolitik (kebisuan politik), yang telah berkembang pesat di Indonesia. Studi kualitatif ini melibatkan pengumpulan data melalui observasi dan wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh-tokoh Salafi kunci, yang kemudian diikuti oleh analisis data yang teliti. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa gerakan Salafi Apolitik memberikan ruang baru bagi dakwah keagamaan, khususnya di kalangan kelas menengah atas dan generasi milenial dalam masyarakat. Sebaliknya, gerakan ini juga menghindari asosiasi dengan pemilihan umum, partai politik, praktik demokratis, dan menolak penguasa karena kegiatan-kegiatan ini dianggap sekuler. Sebagai kesimpulan, gerakan Salafi Apolitik menciptakan ruang ideologis paradoks bagi agama. Ini berarti identitas keagamaan umat Islam Salafi harus sesuai dengan ajarannya, dan sebagai warga negara Indonesia, mereka perlu menghindari campur tangan dalam urusan politik (isolasionisme politik)

Introduction

Salafism gained prominence in Indonesia during the mid-1980s, and its primary objective is to restore Islam to its original form as practiced by the first three generations, namely the time of the Prophet companions, (*Tabi'in* and *Tabi'ut Tabi'in*). Salafism incepted in response to Western

colonialism in the Islamic world and the perception that modernism was incompatible with the early Islamic practices of the first three generations (Salaf al-Salih). The growth of Salafism in Indonesia and globally is intricately connected to the booming oil industry in Saudi Arabia. The significant influence of ideologies

such as Nasserism in Egypt and the Islamic Revolution in Iran motivated Saudi Arabia to actively engage in shaping an alternative Islamic political landscape. Profits generated from the Saudi Arabian oil business were funneled into various Islamic nations to promote Salafi teachings¹. A significant portion of these funds was allocated to different Islamic countries, including Indonesia, for scholarship and education programs. Within Indonesia, organizations like the Indonesian Council on Islamic Mission (DDII) and the Islamic and Arabic College of Indonesia (LIPIA) played significant roles in disseminating Salafi ideas through education².

DDII, under the leadership of former Indonesian Prime Minister Muhammad Natsir, is not an institution directly associated with Salafism. However, DDII is crucial in facilitating scholarships from Saudi Arabia for Islamic activists in Indonesia. Subsequently, it collaborated with LIPIA to offer Arabic language education to Islamic activists planning to pursue studies in Saudi Arabia³. Due to its connections with various campuses, DDII sent its graduates to engage in *da'wah* in campus mosques⁴. One

prominent Salafi figure in Indonesia is Abu Nida, an alumnus of DDII's *da'irah* transmigration program. Abu Nida received a scholarship to study at the Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. After graduating, Abu Nida participated in the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. However, in 1986, Abu Nida returned to Indonesia and settled in Yogyakarta, and through DDII, he was sent to deliver sermons in campus mosques at Gadjah Mada University (UGM) and other campuses⁵. Abu Nida established Salafi pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools) in Indonesia⁶, which led to the spread of Salafi lectures in several campus mosques and attracted many student followers.

Men adhering to Salafism typically have long beards and wear robes (*jalabiyya*) paired with loose-fitting trousers (*isbal*). Meanwhile, women who follow Salafism commonly opt for veils and dark-colored or black clothing. These choices in dress symbolize their allegiance to the first three generations of Islam, collectively known as *Salaf Al Salih*. Salafi hold the belief that the implementation of Sharia law necessitates a process of Islamization, where Muslims return to

¹ Jajang Jahroni, "Saudi Arabia Charity and the Institutionalization of Indonesian Salafism," *Al-Jami'ah* 58, no. 1 (2020): 35–62, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2020.581.35-62>.

² Denny Febriansyah and Dawoud Sudqi El-Alami, "Moderate Islam Vis-a-Vis Salafism in Indonesia: An Ideological Competition," *Walisono: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 29, no. 1 (2021): 55–78, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.29.1.7212>.

³ Dady Hidayat, "The Salafi Da'wah Movement in Indonesia in the Reformation Era," *Society: Journal of Sociology* 17, no. 2 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.7454/mjs.v17i2.3738>.

⁴ Noorhaidi Hasan, "Reformasi, Religious Diversity, and Islamic Radicalism after Suharto," *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2008): 23–51, <https://doi.org/10.14203/jissh.v1i1.2>.

⁵ Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Activism and the Promotion of a Modern Muslim Identity: Evolving Mediums of Da'wa amongst Yogyakarta University Students," *South East Asia Research* 26, no. 1 (2018): 3–20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967828X17752414>.

⁶ A. Kovacs, "Saudi Arabia Exporting Salafi Education and Radicalizing Indonesia's Muslim, GIGA Focus. Leibniz-Institut Fur Globale Und Regionale Studien," 2014, 7.

the purest form of Islam, rooted in the Quran and the Sunnah while eliminating any local cultural influences. Despite having rigid and puritanical teachings, Salafism is not immune to fragmentation. These differences have led to the fragmentation of Salafi movement, with various factions appearing, each believing they represent the purest form of Salafism. The radical movement of Al Qaeda is one form of Salafi jihadism known for its figurehead, Osama Bin Laden. Initially, Al Qaeda was born to combat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, which made it gather support from various Muslim countries around the world ⁷.

Salafism evolved as a response to the *Mu'tazilah* group during the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mun in the Abbasid Dynasty. At that time, Ahmad bin Hanbal, a prominent scholar, evolved as a key figure who advocated the supremacy of hadith as the primary source of Islamic law. Ahmad firmly rejected the ideas of the *Mu'tazilah* group, which emphasized rationality in interpreting the Islamic religion. Ahmad bin Hanbal, along with Dawud al-Zahiri, were known for their textual interpretation method and rejection of qiyas. They only accepted ijma' (consensus) from the generation of the Prophet's companions. These scholars became known as the People of Hadith, who opposed the beliefs of *Ash'arism* and *Maturidism*, which deviated from true Islam.

The People of the Hadith group eventually gave rise to *Atharism*, an ideology that strongly emphasized the Quran and Hadith as the exclusive authorities in Islam. Ibn Hanbal's rejection of the *Mu'tazilah* views led to his punishment by Caliph al-Ma'mun. At that time, Caliph al-Ma'mun was under the influence of *Mu'tazilah* theologians and implemented the al-Mihna policy, which comprised punishing government officials who did not adhere to the views of *Mu'tazilah*. Ibn Hanbal did not advocate rebellion against the Caliph, which led to the emergence of the principle of absolute obedience to the ruler within this context. Salafism continued to develop in subsequent years, specifically during the time of prominent scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah, who also followed the Hanbali school of thought. Taymiyyah lived during the challenging period of the Mongol invasion, which resulted in a decline in Islamic values. In response to this situation, he opposed all ideas incompatible with orthodox Sunni beliefs. This stance made him critical of philosophers, intellectuals, Sufism, and Shia ⁸⁹.

Salafism and Wahhabism share common historical roots, but they have developed distinct characteristics, specifically when comparing Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia to Egypt. Salafism in Egypt evolved in response to Western colonialism in the Middle East. It was associated with prominent Islamic figures like Muhammad Abduh

⁷ Ahmet T. Kuru, *Islam, Authoritarianism and Underdevelopment* (Gramedia Popular Library, 2021).

⁸ Jeffrey Haynes, *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, 2021.

⁹ Jajang Jahroni, "The Political Economy of Knowledge: Salafism in Post Soeharto Urban Indonesia," 2015.

and Rashid Rida, who identified as Salafi. Its reformists in Egypt did not advocate for a return to the past through opposition to Western modernization ideas. Instead, Salafi reformists encouraged Islamic civilization to emulate Western knowledge and progress while strengthening Islamic values. In other words, these reformists aimed for a progressive Islamic civilization without compromising their commitment to Islamic principles. The influence of these reformists played a significant role in the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. In Indonesia, the Islamic organization Muhammadiyah was founded under the influence of the ideas propagated by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida¹⁰¹¹.

In Indonesia, Laskar Jihad (Jihad soldier), led by Jafar Umar Thalib, is considered part of Salafi jihadist movement. This group was not only participated in the conflict in Afghanistan but also deployed its forces in the conflict in Poso. Jafar Umar Thalib, an alumnus of DDII who was sent to study in Yemen, initially associated with Apolitical Salafi movement following the Madkhali school of thought. However, as time went on, Jafar chose the path of jihad. This decision led to differences of opinion with other Salafi Madkhali figures who remained non-

political and opted to avoid engaging in violent forms of jihad¹².

Another form of Salafism is Salafi which engages in politics. Prominent Islamic reformist figures such as Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, and Sayyid Qutb identified themselves as Salafi. Some of these figures were instrumental in influencing the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwanul Muslimin*). In Saudi Arabia, Salafi scholars like Salman Al Oudah, Safar Al Hawali, and Ali Al Omari have been actively participated in politics by openly criticizing the Saudi government through their writings and sermons. They have voiced concerns about the authoritarianism of the Kingdom, events like the Gulf War, and the Saudi blockade of Qatar. Consequently, these scholars have been imprisoned without due process¹³. Movement of Islamic reformist figures who wanted refuge in Saudi Arabia during the Nasser era in Egypt raised concern for the Saudi government. They were worried that this reformist movement might disrupt the Saudi authority with its criticisms. Currently, in Egypt, the political Salafi movement is known through the Al Nour Party. When President Muhammad Mursi was

¹⁰ David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*, 2006.

¹¹ Hasan, "Reformasi, Religious Diversity, and Islamic Radicalism after Suharto."

¹² Mashail Haydar Ali, "Salafis ' Perspective and Discourse He Traditionalist Salafis ' Perspective and Discourse n

Militant on Jih Militant ā d Nalist Salafis ' Perspective and Discourse h ā d Perspective," *Humanities* 8 (2019): 1–16.

¹³ Mansoor Jassem Alshamsi, *Islam and Political Reform in Saudi Arabia: The Quest for Political Change and Reform*, 2012.

removed from power, this party competed with the Muslim Brotherhood for political influence ¹⁴.

In Indonesia, political Salafism is known through the organization *Wahdah Islamiyah*, led by Muhammad Zaitun Rasmin. During the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2017, *Wahdah Islamiyah* openly supported Anies Baswedan for the position of Jakarta Governor ¹⁵. The second group is Salafi jihadists, comprising two organizations ¹⁶. The first is the revolutionary Salafi jihadists, who engage in jihad to oppose leaders in Muslim countries they believe have violated Islamic values. Rebel figures like Juhayman, who once seized the Masjidil Haram in Saudi Arabia, and Laskar Jihad led by Jafar Umar Thalib fall into this category. The second group of Salafi jihadists is the global jihadists. These individuals and organizations use violence and terrorism as a means to combat political elites they perceive as oppressing the Muslim community. Global jihadists operate across borders and comprises citizens of different countries who share similar ideologies. Examples of this movement include Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

The focus of this study is on the third group of Salafi, which is Apolitical Salafi (political quietism) group known for prominent ulema such

as Abd al-Aziz bin Baz, Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Muhammad bin Salih al-Uthaimin, and Rabi ibn Hadi al-Madkhali ¹⁷. The primary objective of Apolitical Salafi group is to avoid political participation, which includes refraining from participating in elections, political party affiliations, not resisting rulers, and abstaining from democratic practices. In Indonesia, non-political Salafi movement is affiliated with the network of Abu Nida and Ustad Zulqarnaen.

The rejection of democracy by Salafi is often rooted in the belief that democracy is a product of secular Western culture. Salafi believe that Islam comprises all aspects of human life and, from this perspective, Salafi view democracy as a system that has separated politics and religion, making it incompatible with Islamic teachings ¹⁸. This perspective, which opposes democracy and embraces non-political Salafism while emphasizing the division of life into Islamic and non-Islamic aspects, can be further analyzed from the perspective of citizenship. In Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim country that does not implement Sharia law, the role of religion in the nation is a subject of significant interest. Despite its majority-Muslim population, Indonesia is marked by cultural diversity and various identity.

¹⁴ V. R Hadiz, *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*. Jakarta: LP3ES and University of Indonesia, 2019.

¹⁵ Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia," *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 2 (2018): 208–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2018.1445488>.

¹⁶ Joas Wagemakers, "Salafism: Generalisation, Conceptualisation and Categorisation," *Contextualising Salafism and Salafi Jihadism*, 2020, 22–37.

¹⁷ Jan Klik, "Hijrah of Our Time: Islamic Concept of Religious Emigration in Contemporary Salafism," *Acta FF* 14, no. 1 (2022): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.24132/actaff.2022.14.1.1>.

¹⁸ Din Wahid, "The Challenge of Democracy In Indonesia: The Case of Salafi Movement" 1, no. Mmi (2014): 51–64.

In this complex context, it becomes crucial to understand how Salafi followers position themselves between their religious obedience as Muslims and their roles as citizens in a country that practices a democratic system.

Method

This study used the qualitative methodology, with data collected through a literature review and in-depth interviews with key Salafi figures. These figures include Ustad, who regularly delivers lectures in mosques and educational institutions, as well as observations of various Salafi Muslim forums. The observations are conducted both directly and through official outreach on social media. The objective of this study is to analyze the evolving religious understanding of Salafism and why it has gained a foothold in society. It also seeks to understand how this religious identity interprets Salafism as citizens living in Indonesia.

The research begins with a preparatory phase that will last for two months. In the first month, the research team will design a detailed research proposal that includes objectives, methods and data collection plans. Research instruments such as interview guides, observation sheets, and focus group discussion (FGD) guides will be developed. Next, the team will arrange research permits from relevant institutions to ensure all formal procedures are fulfilled. In the second month, the focus will shift to recruiting research participants. The research team will identify and contact relevant Salafi figures, ulama

and community members. A pilot test of the research instrument will also be conducted to ensure validity and reliability, allowing for necessary adjustments before data collection begins.

The data collection stage will last for four months. In the third and fourth months, the team will conduct in-depth interviews with Salafi figures, ulama and community members. This interview aims to explore their views on religious identity, apolitical attitudes, and their roles as citizens. Participatory observations will also be carried out at various Salafi community activities, such as recitations and regular meetings, to gain a direct understanding of religious practices and social interactions.

In the fifth and sixth months, the team will carry out focus group discussions (FGD) with members of the Salafi community from various backgrounds. This FGD aims to discuss issues related to religious identity and citizenship more broadly. In addition, the collection and analysis of related documents, such as books, articles and reports, will be carried out to support the findings from primary data.

The data analysis stage will last for two months. In the seventh month, the team will transcribe interviews and FGDs, as well as process observation data. Next, in the eighth month, the data that has been collected will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The process of triangulating data from various sources will be carried out to ensure the validity of the research

findings. The research report writing stage will last for three months. In the ninth and tenth months, the team will prepare a draft research report based on the results of the data analysis. This report will include the study's key findings as well as an in-depth analysis. In the eleventh month, the report will go through a review and revision process to ensure quality and clarity. In addition, member checking will be conducted with participants to validate the findings.

The final stage of the research is the presentation of the results, which will be carried out in the twelfth month. The research team will prepare a presentation of the research results in the form of a seminar or workshop. Research findings will be presented to academics, practitioners and other related parties. In addition, the final research report will be submitted to the relevant institution as part of the dissemination of the research results.

In the research "Apolitical Salafis: Between Religious Identity and Citizenship in Indonesia," we have planned to involve a total of 40 informants who come from various levels of the apolitical Salafi community in Indonesia. The purpose of this distribution is to ensure a diversity of perspectives and adequate representation in our research.

Of the total of 40 informants, we have divided the number based on gender as follows: 25 men and 15 women. The reason behind determining this number is to reflect part of the structure of the Salafi community, which tends to be dominated by men in leadership roles and public activities. However, we also want to ensure

that the voices of women in these communities remain represented in our research.

In detail, we will involve:

1. 10 male Salafi figures and clerics and 5 female figures or clerics were selected based on their role in the community and their influence in spreading Salafi teachings. They are expected to provide insight into the internal dynamics of the community and the theological views that influence apolitical attitudes.
2. 10 male community members and 5 female community members were randomly selected from various Salafi community activities, such as recitations and regular meetings. They are expected to provide perspectives on daily experiences and personal views regarding religious identity and citizenship.
3. 5 male social observers and academics and 5 female observers or academics were selected based on their expertise and previous research on the Salafi movement in Indonesia. They are expected to provide a broader analysis of the social and political implications of the apolitical Salafi movement.
4. With the number and distribution of informants that we plan, we hope to provide a comprehensive and in-depth picture of religious identity and citizenship among the apolitical Salafi community in Indonesia. Through their participation, we hope to explore the various points of view that exist within this community and represent the diversity of perspectives that exist.

Results and Discussion

***Loyalty (Al wala' wa al bara')* as Salafi Identity**

Salafism, as one of the Sunni sects, is not consistent in terms of ideology and ideas. Despite

the overarching claim of being a strict and puritanical sect, variations in interpretation exist within Salafism, leading to the emergence of different groups, including Salafi jihadis, reformists, apolitical (traditional), *Madkhali*, etc. Despite differences of opinion, Salafism, in general, adheres to the following doctrines¹⁹. First, Salafism strictly adheres to the Quran and Hadith while rejecting innovation (*bid'ah*). It openly opposes Sunni groups like Sufism and Ash'ariyya, as well as non-Sunni groups like Shia, Khawarij, and Mu'tazilah. Second, it places a strong emphasis on monotheism or the oneness of God (*tawhid*), thereby rejecting religious practices that blend religion with culture, such as Sufism. Third, it exhibits a deep commitment to the Sunnah, with Salafi scholars and followers identifying themselves as Al Athari, in reference to the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Salafi often adopt traditional Arab attire, including maintaining a beard, wearing pants above the ankles (*isbal*), and donning a robe, while their women typically wear dark-colored clothing and a burqa. These clothing choices serve as markers of Salafi identity²⁰.

Another crucial aspect of the ideology of Salafism is *al-wala' wa al-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal). This doctrine governs the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, including Muslims who are considered non-believers. Salafism maintains that Muslims who do not adhere to religious commandments, similar to non-Muslims, should be avoided or opposed²¹.^{22,23}. This ideology provides Salafi with clear guidance on whom they should associate themselves and from whom they should distance themselves²⁴.

The following are the results of the interview with Ustadz Ahmad:

"This is one of our studies that focuses on understanding religion purely without being influenced by world politics. As Muslims, our main obligation is to study and practice true religious teachings without mixing them with political matters, which are often fraught with purely world interests. We believe that only by returning to the pure principles of

¹⁹ Mohammad Abu Rumman, "I Am A Salafi 'A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of Salafis,'" *The Lancet* 277, no. 7170 (2014): 228, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(61\)91398-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(61)91398-8).

²⁰ Adis Duderija, "Neo-Traditional Salafis in the West: Agents of (Self)-Exclusion. In Muslim Citizens in the West. Spaces and Agents of Inclusion and Exclusion. Edited by Samina Yasmeen and Nina Marković. Farnham: Ashgate, Pp.," 2014, 125–42.

²¹ Rizqa Ahmadi, "Ideological Transformations and Fragmentative Ambiguities of Global Salafism," no. April (2018): 100–113.

²² Uriya Shavit, "Can Muslims Befriend Non-Muslims? Debating Al-Wala' Wa-Al-Bara' (Loyalty and Disavowal). - Theory and Practice, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations," 2014, 67–88.

²³ Shpend Kursani, "Salafi Pluralism in National Contexts: The Secular State, Nation and Militant Islamism in Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies" 18 (2018): 301–17.

²⁴ Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Mira Menzfeld, and Yasmina Hedider, "Interpretations of Al-Wala' Wa-l-Bara' in Everyday Lives of Salafis in Germany," *Religions* 10, no. 2 (2019): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10020124>.

Islam can we form a better society in accordance with the teachings of Allah and His Messenger."

In this quote, Ustad Ahmad emphasizes the importance of a pure understanding of religion and distancing himself from political interference, which is often misused for certain interests. His views reflect the apolitical stance held by many members of the Salafi community, which prioritizes the sanctity of religious teachings above all else.

A derivative of Salafi this principle, known as *hajr wa al-tahdhir*, and the process of distancing from religious practices known as *ahlul bid'ah*, introduced innovations into religious matters and blended these teachings with local culture²⁵. Salafi purists still harbor a strong aversion towards the West even though they claim to be apolitical and not in opposition to the government or rulers. Salafi focus on purifying Islam from all external influences can make this movement appear isolated. Consequently, it is not surprising that they reject interfaith dialogue and often physically distance themselves from non-Muslim groups²⁶. This aversion towards the West has subsequently contributed to the anti-democratic stance of Salafism. The democratic system is seen as a

human-made ideology contradicting their belief that human life should be governed by Islamic law.

Consequently, Salafi reject the implementation of democracy and typically abstain from participating in general elections. They view elections, which grant each person one vote, as a human-made system constructing a competitive framework based on popularity and standards established by humans rather than religion. Instead, Salafi prefer a method they consider Islamic, known as *ahl al-hall wa al-aqd'*. This method entrusts specific individuals with knowledge in politics, defense, economics, and social matters to select a leader. In this system, not everyone has the right to vote for a leader in society, and only *Ahl al-hall wa al-aqd'* is authorized to remove untrustworthy leaders. This doctrine is closely related to Salafism's teachings, which reject resistance to leaders and rebellion²⁷.

Salafi Madkhali scholars, like Salafi ulema in general, made a distinction between an Islamic state (*daulah Islamiyah*) and a secular state (*daulah kafirah*). According to these scholars, a country can be considered an Islamic state (*daulah Islamiyah*), when the majority of its population is Muslim, and symbols of Islam, such as the call to prayer, congregational prayers, and Friday prayers, are allowed in public spaces. In this context, this scholar regards Indonesia as an

²⁵ Saparudin Saparudin, "Salafism, State Recognition and Local Tension: New Trends in Islamic Education in Lombok," *Ulumuna* 21, no. 1 (2017): 81–107, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v21i1.1188>.

²⁶ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (July 2006): 207–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100500497004>.

²⁷ Wahid, "The Challenge of Democracy In Indonesia: The Case of Salafi Movement."

Islamic state²⁸. Additionally, a derivative of the concept of *al-wala' wa al-bara'* is *al-ghuraba*, where Salafi followers exhibit enthusiasm for this doctrine.

This doctrine initially stems from the understanding that jihad in the name of Islam must be carried out to achieve victory. Furthermore, in *raf' al-iltibās*, Juhayman outlines three stages to reach *minhāj al-naṣr* (the path of victory). These include, first, conveying the truth while avoiding and opposing polytheists and their followers. Second, proclaiming the truth, which may lead to expulsion and persecution, necessitating migration to a safer place. Third, engaging in warfare against the disbelievers, enabling the establishment of an Islamic state. Those willing to participate in warfare may be few in number, but there is no concern about their quantity and readiness in battle because Allah will undoubtedly grant them victory. These individuals are referred to as *al-ghuraba*²⁹.

The doctrines mentioned above show that upholding the values of Islam requires Salafi followers to be ready to become *al-ghuraba*. In Jakarta, there is a community called Al Ghuraba, which is based on the Manhaj Salafi and was formed by former rock musicians. Its followers are young people who previously enjoyed a hedonistic

lifestyle but claim to have undergone *hijrah*. In their terminology, *hijrah* is a transformation from a state of spiritual loss (*jahiliyya*) to receiving guidance (*hidayah*) from Allah. Salafism provides several positive benefits for them, including easing anxiety, fostering social solidarity, and fulfilling their cognitive needs through explanations offered by Salafi preachers³⁰. They have abandoned music, turned to the teachings of Islam and changed their way of dressing with men wearing pants above the ankles and women wearing niqab. At the time of this study, this community had 116,000 followers on Instagram and 64,000 subscribers on their YouTube channel.

The aspiration to emulate the lifestyle of the *Salaf al-Salih* generation within a modern context is undeniably challenging. It comprises a continuous negotiation between religious values and other societal norms, which often overlap and conflict. David, one of the informants in this study as a congregation member trying to follow Manhaj Salafi faithfully, still finds it difficult to avoid the advancements of the times that surround his life. In terms of appearance, even though David has grown beard and wears traditional clothing, he still wears Western-style T-shirts, jeans, and sneakers. This is specifically true given his professional job in a company in the center of Jakarta. The work

²⁸ A Sunarwoto, *Negotiating Salafi Islam and the State: The Madkhaliyya in Indonesia* (Die Welt Des Islams, 2020).

²⁹ Cole M. Bunzel, "Manifest Enmity: The Origins, Development, and Persistence of Classical Wahhabism," 2018.

³⁰ Andri Rosadi, "Deprived Muslims and Salafism: An Ethnographic Study of the Salafi Movement in Pekanbaru, Indonesia †," *Religions* 13, no. 10 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13100911>.

culture and social environment are entirely different from the values taught by Manhaj Salafi.

The ability of David to work while upholding his religious beliefs shows a significant strategy for adapting to the coexistence of diverse life values. A similar adaptation can be observed in the life of Safruddin, a lecturer who resides in a predominantly secular environment. Within the campus setting, there is no strict separation of space between men and women. In David's role as an educator, he must interact with both female students and non-Muslim students, even though Manhaj Salafi enforces strict limits on interactions between non-mahram (unrelated) men and women. This dilemma confronts Safruddin, who serves as a civil servant and lecturer at a public university in Medan, North Sumatra. He grapples with questions regarding his response to the taxes collected by the state. Manhaj Salafi rejects taxes and advocates replacing them with zakat, an Islamic form of almsgiving. However, as a civil servant, Safruddin acknowledges the obligation to pay taxes and understands that his monthly salary is funded through tax revenues. From the perspective of David, when someone is not used as a tax official, this practice does not contradict the tenets of Manhaj Salafi.

The attitude of preserving religious values as well as other social identity values in life is not easy. Salafi imagination to return to the seventh century in the time of Salaf al Salih should be

confronted with the present conditions of modernity. Religious identity needs to coexist with identity as professionals, academics, social classes, etc. Rather than viewing these facets as contradictory, it is important to recognize how a multitude of values and experiences shapes human identity. In reality, it is impossible for someone to have a singular identity³¹, as thought on identity provides insight into the dynamic nature of identity.

The experiences of individuals like David and Safruddin present efforts by Salafi to negotiate and adapt to their lives. Born in the context of modernity, they are striving to reintegrate Islamic values from the seventh century without trying to modern civilization. These negotiations and adaptations have given rise to diverse interpretations within Salafism. The typologies of Salafism outlined by Wagemaker and Wickrowich illustrate that differences among Salafi cannot be avoided. However, this situation explains the objectives of Salafism, which shows significant internal diversity, while claiming to uphold rigid and puritan teachings.

Regular Muslim Forum as Salafi Da'wah Media

Apolitical Salafi focuses on the purification of religion (*tasfiyya*) and education (*tarbiyah*). In Indonesia, institutions like LIPIA, which offer education in the Arabic language, are

³¹ Amasrtya Sen, *Violence and Identity*. Jakarta: Marjin Kirin, 2016.

closely associated with Salafi teachings. Additionally, the Islamic Education Foundation at Turats is Salafi organization that conducts *da'wah* activities among students in Yogyakarta. They organize preaching programs at Pogung Raya Mosque and Pogung Dalangan Mosque, both located near Gadjah Mada University (UGM). These programs comprises daily *da'wah* activities referred to as "*kajian*" (Muslim forums), a term that might be relatively new compared to other Islamic religious traditions that typically use the term "*pengajian*." Among Salafi, these regular study sessions are held daily in mosques, musallas, or homes connected to Salafi network.

musallas, or homes organized by regions. This process is carried out to make it easier for the congregation to access regular Muslim forums. It is easy to find the forums' schedule by typing "*infokajian*" on Instagram. Several Instagram accounts dedicated to sharing the forum information will appear, such as @infokajianmedan, @infokajianjogjakarta, @infokajiansunnahsby, @jogja.mengaji, @jakartamengaji, and various other accounts. Through these social media channels, digital flyers containing details like the schedule, location, theme, and the name of the Ustad leading the forum are disseminated. Salafi congregations are known for their proficiency in information technology, which makes them actively engaged in managing social media.

The publication of forum schedules is not limited to specific locations like mosques,

Table 1. Instagram Accounts of Salafi Da'wah Media

NO	Account's name	Category	Followers
1	Jakarta Mengaji	Assembly	373,000
2	Masjid Nurul Iman	Mosque	189,000
3	Masjid Pogung Dalangan	Mosque	54,100
4	Masjid Pogung Raya	Mosque	15,500
5	Ypiaorid	Foundation	21,100
6	The Stranger Al Ghurobah	Community	116,000
7	Khalidbasalamahofficial	Ustad	3.1 million
8	Syafiq Riza Basalamah	Ustad	2 million
9	Muhammad Nuzul Dzikri	Ustad	1.4 million
10	Raehanul Bahraen	Ustad	629,000
11	Ridwan Hamidi	Ustad	11,100
12	Jogja.mengaji	Community	39,800
13	Jogjakajian	Community	54,300
14	Radio rodja	Media	151,000
15	Rodja TV	Media	579,000
16	Infokajianmedan	Community	9,714
17	Medanmengaji	Community	36,000
18	Firanda_andirja_official	Ustad	873,000

Source: Processed by Researcher, 2023

The adaptability of Salafi congregants to presence of various social media accounts with information technology is shown through the substantial followers. Salafi forums have gained

considerable popularity among students specializing in exact sciences, with the Faculties of Engineering, and Science and Technology showing heightened interest in these forums. This association between Salafism and the academic context is a significant factor in the development of Salafism in Indonesia, underscoring the high level of adaptability to information technology in the community. The mastery of information technology also shows that Salafi followers come from the urban middle class. For example, *The Strangers Al Ghurobah* community consists of former punk band members who decided to undergo hijrah and leave behind their musical pursuits. The members then formed Salafi forum

community and consistently delved into the teachings of Islam.

Nurul Iman Block M Square Mosque, situated in the heart of South Jakarta, stands as a prominent Salafi-oriented mosque. Each day, this mosque hosts lectures by Salafi Ustads, which are broadcast live on YouTube channels, providing a platform for the dissemination of Salafi teachings. Salafi Ustad, like Ridwan Hamidi, regularly delivers lectures at the UGM Mosque on religious issues and technology. Furthermore, Ustad Khalid Basalamah and Syafiq Riza Basalamah have collaborated with celebrity YouTubers to discuss Islamic issues ³².

Table 2. Categories of Salafi Da'wah Media YouTube Accounts

No	Account's name	Category	Subscriber
1	Masjid Nurul Iman Block M Square	Mosque	13,100
2	Jakarta Mengaji	Community	231,000
3	The Strangers Al Ghuroba	Community	65,000
4	Khalid Basalamah Official	Ustad	2,670,000
5	Safiq Riza Basalamah Official	Ustad	1,370,000
6	Muhammad Nuzul Dzikri	Ustad	661,000
7	Firanda Andirja	Ustad	684,000

Source: Processed by Researcher, 2023

The substantial number of followers on Instagram and YouTube shows that Salafi da'wah media is well-received by the public, specifically young urban residents ³³. Furthermore, it creatively incorporates popular language to engage the interest of millennials ³⁴. This is in accordance

with the study by ³⁵, which examined activism and the promotion of modern Islamic identity through da'wah activities among university students in Yogyakarta.

³² Syamsul Rijal and Ade Masturi, "Hijrah to Manhaj Salaf: Expressions and Negotiations of Urban Youth's Piety," *Al-Izzah: Journal of Research Results* 17, no. 1 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.31332/ai.v0i0.3569>.

³³ Nafik Muthohirin, Muhammad Kamaludin, and Fahrudin Mukhlis, "Madrasah Salafi: Ideologi, Transformasi, dan Implikasinya bagi Multikulturalisme di Indonesia," *Fikrah* 10, no. 1 (2022): 81, <https://doi.org/10.21043/fikrah.v10i1.14380>.

³⁴ Wahyudi Akmalayah, "The Rise of Cool Ustadz: Preaching, Subcultures, and the Pemuda Hijrah Movement, Dalam Norshahril Saat Dan Ahmad Najib Burhani (Eds.), *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*, Singapore: ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute," 2018, 239–57.

³⁵ Chaplin, "Salafi Activism and the Promotion of a Modern Muslim Identity: Evolving Mediums of Da'wa amongst Yogyakarta University Students."

An analysis of Salafism shows that, despite being a rigid and puritanical movement, it is not immune to adaptation in response to the prevailing social conditions. In this context, Salafi activists are engaged in a process of rearticulating their doctrine. This implies that, while they endeavor to purify Islamic teachings, they also show a capacity to evolve in accordance with the currents of modernity. Another study conducted by Chaplin on Salafism, focusing on Al Hasanah Mosque in Yogyakarta, examined the social interactions among young Salafi who attend religious study sessions at the mosque, situated near the UGM campus. This exploration into the social dynamics among young Salafi ³⁶ sheds light on how they navigate the challenge of upholding Islamic values in a contemporary society that they often view as un-Islamic. Salafism includes the concept of *hisbah*, which involves promoting what is right and preventing what is wrong. This is where Salafi's followers face challenges in upholding the values they believe in within their daily lives.

The study conducted by ³⁷ also discovered a sense of ambivalence among young female followers of Salafism in determining their identity. The teachings of Salafism encourage women to wear niqab, restrict their presence in public spaces, forbid the use of cosmetics, watch television, and listen to music, as well as discourage them from

mingling with men. Adhering to these standards of values can be quite challenging, particularly for young individuals. Many of the informants in this study were young women who had previously enjoyed activities like dressing up, playing music, watching television, and socializing with the opposite gender. However, after embracing Salafism and adopting the niqab, they found it necessary to adjust their behavior to accordance with Salafi teachings.

Applying values that contradict their previous lifestyles poses a significant challenge to these youngsters. In this dilemma, compromise is often the only option they can choose as they may still watch television, listen to music, and maintain friendships with men while reducing the duration. Salafism is known for its strict separation of interactions between women and men, and handshaking is prohibited regardless of age ³⁸. Therefore, in regular study sessions, participants are usually grouped as women (*akhwat*) or men (*ikhwan*).

Salafi perspective on gender roles, which tends to emphasize domesticity for women, has implications for the scheduling of Muslim forums. Typically, routine forums for women are conducted in the morning, afternoon, or evening, reflecting the assumption that female congregants are primarily homemakers or do not have

³⁶ Chaplin.

³⁷ Yuyun Sunesti, Noorhaidi Hasan, and Muhammad Najib Azca, "Young Salafi-Niqabi and Hijrah: Agency and Identity Negotiation" 8, no. 2 (2018): 173–97.

³⁸ Susanne Olsson, "‘True, Masculine Men Are Not Like Women!’: Salafism between Extremism and Democracy," *Religions* 11, no. 3 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11030118>.

employment outside the home. In contrast, forums for men are typically scheduled in the evening, after working hours. Salafi advocate for women to occupy the domestic sphere primarily, and those women who work outside the home are often viewed as disobedient³⁹⁴⁰. The home is considered the best place for women⁴¹.

Rejecting Democracy, Respecting Leaders

Discussions about the state and religion have been ongoing in Indonesia since the post-independence era. Over this period, tensions have arisen between nationalist, communist, and Islamic groups, both prior to and following independence. Scholars and study results have proposed various theories and provided insights into the competition between these ideologies within Indonesia. It is interesting to examine the discourse of Islamism in Indonesia, considering that this country is predominantly Muslim but not an Islamic state. The discourse of Islamic radicalism has also gained strength following various cases of violence, intolerance, and terrorism associated with Islam.

A preliminary study on the context of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia from the political economy perspective has been conducted⁴². Hadiz observed that the political marginalization of

Islam, starting from the colonial era, Guided Democracy, and culminating in the New Order, has led to Islamic radicalism. According to Hadiz, Islamic radicalism is a form of resistance to the political marginalization of Islam due to the oligarchy established during the New Order regime. The merger of Masyumi into Parmusi (which was later dissolved), the establishment of the government-made Islamic party (PPP), the Tanjung Priok incident, the ban on wearing the hijab in schools, and the repression of Islamic politics were strategies of the New Order to prevent Islamic politics from mobilizing as a rival power.

The modernist Islamic political movement, with its discourse of establishing an Islamic state, operated discreetly alongside religious preaching. The modernist Islamic figure, Muhammad Natsir later established DDII to provide a path for Islamic activists who wanted to study in Arab countries. Through DDII, graduates of Islamic education from Arab nations were provided opportunities to preach in campus mosques. DDII is not Salafi institution, but it successfully collaborated with Saudi Arabia in offering educational scholarships.

³⁹ Alicia Izharuddin, "Poor, Polygamous, But Deeply Pious: Muslim Masculinities in Post-New Order Film *Islami*," *Singapore: Springer*, 2016.

⁴⁰ and Aning Ayu Kusumawati Ubaidillah, Ubaidillah, Ening Herniti, "Imaging of Islamic Women in Commercial Advertisements (Semiotic Analysis)," *Yogyakarta: Al-Jamiah Research Centre*, 2018.

⁴¹ and Ahmad Madkur Khotijah, Khotijah, "Khotijah, Khotijah, and Ahmad Madkur. 2018. Domestication of Salafi Women: Social Construction of Salafi Women in Metro Lampung City. Padang City: Imam Bonjol State Islamic University Padang," 2018.

⁴² V. R. Hadiz, "Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia. Toward a Sociological Understanding. (Coen Husain Pontoh Dan Fitri Mohan, Terjemahan) Indoprogres," (Coen Husa, 2016.

This is where the beginning of the development of Salafism in Indonesia can be traced ⁴³.

The mujahideen, in collaboration with the United States, fought the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan. Afterward, Jafar Umar Thalib returned to Yogyakarta and continued preaching along with Ustad Luqman Baabduh. Jafar later took a violent path after establishing Laskar Jihad and sent forces to the conflict in Poso. Jafar's stance received opposition from some friends who believed that the path of violent jihad was not in line with the teachings of Salafism ⁴⁴. Salafist genealogy is also found in Jamaah Islamiyah, led by Abu Bakar Baasyir. This organization has been associated with several terrorist incidents in Indonesia, including the Bali bombings that drew global attention. Jamaah Islamiyah has also been proven to have affiliations with Salafi jihadist movement, Al Qaeda. Salafist genealogy in terrorist groups and the puritan and rigid nature of Salafism have raised suspicions about this ideology among the public. According to ⁴⁵, the emergence of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia is closely related to the repression by the New Order regime against Islamic groups, both politically and economically.

According to ⁴⁶, Islamic politics in Indonesia has failed to build the strength to legalize a constitution based on Sharia. This failure is mainly because Islamic politics has long been marginalized from economic access controlled by the New Order oligarchy. The expensive costs associated with electoral democracy in Indonesia have further hindered the ability of Islamic politics to secure electoral victories. Despite the growing prominence of Islamic discourse in the public sphere, the political clout of Islam within the power structure of the state remains marginalized.

Since the inception of Islamic ideology, such as Salafism, in a transnational realm that transcends national identity, the competition between citizenship has continued to grow. According to ⁴⁷, Islamic identity cannot be seen in isolation because identity of an individual is constructed through overlapping layers. Conflicts between different identity priorities and demands can be significant for both competing and non-competing categories. It is not necessary to discard one identity in favor of another but to assess the relative importance of each identity and make decisions accordingly. Therefore, reasoning and investigation play a crucial role in assessing the

⁴³ Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Salafi Movement in Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics and Local Development," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 1 (2007): 83–94.

⁴⁴ Noorhaidi Hasan, "Faith and Politics: The Rise of the Laskar Jihad in the Era of Transition in Indonesia" 73, no. April 2002 (2002).

⁴⁵ Hadiz, *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*. Jakarta: LP3ES and University of Indonesia.

⁴⁶ Hadiz.

⁴⁷ Sen, *Violence and Identity*. Jakarta: Marjin Kirin.

specificity of identity and considering the relative strength of each identity claim.

Salafism in the context of democracy can be explained through the study conducted by Din Wahid in several Salafi boarding schools⁴⁸. Similar to many Islamic groups, Salafi views Islam as a comprehensive doctrine that should be upheld in all aspects of human life, including law, economy, and politics. Therefore, Salafism rejects democracy, which is seen as a human-made ideology, and supports theocracy, comprising Islamic religious teachings and politics.

Wahid perspective is in accordance with the actions of Salafi followers who rejected traditional elections in favor of the concept of "*ahl al-hall wa al-aqd*" (those who untie and bind). In the context of this concept, "*ahl al-hall wa al-aqd*" refers to individuals with expertise in various fields, including religion, defense, politics, economy, social, and culture. These knowledgeable individuals are capable of selecting leaders for the community. Salafism does not recognize the one-person-one-vote principle typical of democracy; instead, it places the authority to choose leaders in the hands of these specific individuals, "*ahl al-hall wa al-aqd*."

Several key points found in the study relate to Salafism and the state. Firstly, Salafi Madkhali, like the broader Salafi movement, upholds the concept of "*ūlū l-amr*" or leadership. In their view,

a *ūlū l-amr* should be a Muslim, regardless of their adherence to Islamic law. Secondly, according to local Madkhali scholars, they consider Indonesia to be an Islamic state due to its Muslim majority and the presence of Islamic symbols in public spaces. Consequently, they reject engaging in violent jihad or rebelling against the state's leadership. Thirdly, Salafi Madkhali, in line with general Salafi principles, rejects democracy as an un-Islamic system. They believe that building a government based on human-made standards and popularity, rather than Islamic principles, contradicts their religious commandments. Fourthly, Salafi Madkhali, rejects certain parts of the national education curriculum despite not being politically active and tending to be obedient to the state leadership. For example, subjects that teach various aspects of Indonesian local culture, such as grave pilgrimages, mythology, and philosophy, are considered contradictory to Islam and are not taught in Salafi Madkhali educational institutions. This study shows how followers of Salafi Madkhali face dilemmas in upholding religious values within the context of being citizens of a nation.

The study conducted by⁴⁹ focused on Salafi followers as Dutch citizens and how their identity is shaped in the context of contemporary society. The study examined how Salafi followers perceive and act within the ambiguous relationship between Muslim versus "kafir" (non-believers),

⁴⁸ Wahid, "The Challenge of Democracy In Indonesia: The Case of Salafi Movement."

⁴⁹ M De Koning, *How Should I Live as a 'true' Muslim? Regimes of Living among Dutch Muslims in the Salafi Movement. Etnofoor*, 2013.

loyalty to Dutch society versus loyalty to the global Muslim community, and Muslim versus Dutch. The results showed several important aspects, such as Salafi followers, who are also Dutch citizens, face various challenges. Some of these challenges are conflict between puritan Islamic doctrine and the Dutch society, which is perceived as "kafir". The democratic system is responded to differently by Salafi scholars. Some argue that democracy is incompatible with Islamic teachings, and hence, participation in elections is not allowed. Meanwhile, others suggest that in an effort to manifest Islamic values, Muslims should participate in elections.

The challenges faced by Salafi followers in the Netherlands extend beyond the political realm and affect their daily interactions. One of the key issues they encounter is the perception of having *takfiri* beliefs, which comprises labeling other groups as non-believers, and adhering to a strict interpretation of *al wala wal bara'* – loyalty and *disavowal*. In response to these challenges, Salafi followers, as Dutch citizens, find themselves navigating interactions with the predominantly non-Muslim Dutch population. Once again, there is a diversity of views among Salafi scholars on this matter. Some argue that Muslims should avoid interaction with non-Muslims and should show enmity towards them. Conversely, other Salafi scholars suggest that while it is important to limit their interactions with non-Muslims, it does not require the show of hostility. In such situations,

Salafi often use the term "*ghurobah*" (the stranger), which refers to the life of a Muslim who feels isolated as a means to maintain Islamic values in what they perceive as an un-Islamic environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Apolitical Salafi congregants skillfully integrated their ideology with the concept of *Al-wala' wa al-bara'* in their religious lives. In their efforts to implement Islam comprehensively, they referred to the practices of the past generations (*Salaf al-Salih*). Despite this reference to the past, Salafi negotiated with contemporary developments, including technological advancements, which they leveraged to disseminate their Salafi ideology. They achieved this process by packaging ideological preaching effectively with themes related to daily life while referencing Salafi scholars and texts. Furthermore, a place among the public, particularly in the tech-savvy younger generation, was found through social media. A clear ideological shift, changes in lifestyle practices, and appearance contributed to the formation of Salafi identity. Strong prohibitions against the government characterized their relationship with Muslim-majority states to preserve their dignity. Conversely, they rejected interference in political affairs because the political system of Indonesia tended toward secularism. Religious and citizenship identity of Salafi created a paradox, and this dynamic

occurred in other Islamic groups. Although the democratic political system in Indonesia provided an environment for Salafi groups to grow, the call for active participation by the government as citizens in a democratic society was typically met with rejection by Salafi.

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