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Salafism And Religious Moderation: Reinterpreting Salafi Citizenship

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Abstract

This study examines how and why Salafi groups, recognized for their puritanical and conservative ideologies, come to accept the concept of religious moderation. The objective of this research is to identify the factors that motivate Salafi groups to embrace religious moderation and to explore its impact on their religious identity and models of citizenship. Employing a qualitative-interpretative approach, this study utilizes data gathered from secondary sources, including books, articles, research reports, and social media. The contribution of this study lies in providing a deeper understanding of how conservative religious groups can evolve and embrace more moderate discourse. This is particularly important in the current national context, as it fosters harmony and promotes religious tolerance. The findings indicate that Salafi groups accept religious moderation for various reasons, including social and political pressures, a desire for broader societal acceptance, and an evolving interpretation of their faith. However, this process is often challenging and frequently involves internal conflicts and struggles with identity. Salafi groups affirm their position as citizens by accommodating state policies, including the national religious moderation program. Their adaptation to the secular state system is crucial for their survival and influence within society.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana dan mengapa kelompok Salafi, yang dikenal dengan ideologi puritan dan konservatifnya, menerima konsep moderasi beragama. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memotivasi kelompok Salafi untuk menerima moderasi agama dan untuk mengeksplorasi dampaknya terhadap identitas agama dan model kewarganegaraan mereka. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-interpretatif, penelitian ini

menggunakan data yang dikumpulkan dari sumber-sumber sekunder, termasuk buku, artikel, laporan penelitian, dan media sosial. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada pemberian pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang bagaimana kelompok-kelompok agama konservatif dapat berevolusi dan merangkul wacana yang lebih moderat. Hal ini sangat penting dalam konteks nasional saat ini, karena hal ini dapat memupuk keharmonisan dan mempromosikan toleransi beragama. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kelompok Salafi menerima moderasi agama karena berbagai alasan, termasuk tekanan sosial dan politik, keinginan untuk diterima oleh masyarakat yang lebih luas, dan interpretasi yang berkembang atas keyakinan mereka. Namun, proses ini sering kali penuh tantangan dan sering kali melibatkan konflik internal dan pergulatan identitas. Kelompok-kelompok Salafi menegaskan posisi mereka sebagai warga negara dengan mengakomodasi kebijakan-kebijakan negara, termasuk program moderasi agama nasional. Adaptasi mereka terhadap sistem negara sekuler sangat penting untuk kelangsungan hidup dan pengaruh mereka di dalam Masyarakat.

Introduction

The promotion of religious moderation arises from several complex challenges that could potentially threaten the integrity of the nation. These challenges can be summarized in three key points: 1) the rise of extreme religious practices that undermine human dignity, 2) the spread of religious fervor that contradicts the spirit of nationalism and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and 3) the assertion of absolute truth and the imposition of specific religious interpretations, along with the influence of economic and political interests that may lead to conflict.¹ The concept of religious moderation, championed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, is governed by several key regulations: Presidential Regulation No. 83 of 2015, which pertains to the Ministry of Religious Affairs; Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020, which outlines the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN); and Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 18 of 2020, which details the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

These legal frameworks provide the foundation for the Ministry to implement various programs aimed at promoting religious moderation, including socialization efforts, training for

¹ Ministry of Religious Moderation Working Group Team, *Roadmap for Strengthening Religious Moderation 2020-2024* (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2020).

trainers, workshops, and the establishment of centers for religious moderation within higher religious education institutions (as per Secretary General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Decree No. 15 of 2023). After approximately five years, the initiative continues to face challenges from Islamic conservatism,² The mainstreaming of religious moderation has significantly impacted the religious climate in Indonesia. This initiative has successfully fostered an inclusive and tolerant awareness amidst the country's diversity. Extremism, which poses a major threat to the state, can be mitigated through the government's cultural policies that promote religious moderation programs. Interestingly, Islamic fundamentalist groups, which often oppose the spirit of nationalism and the constitution, have surprisingly accommodated and supported the agenda of religious moderation.

The Islamist fundamentalist group examined in this study focuses on the Salafi network. Although this group does not openly reject or deny the governmental system and the foundations of the state, it significantly contributes to amplifying religious intolerance and exclusivism. Additionally, the Salafi group consistently rejects the democratic system, yet it remains highly obedient to the state and its leaders. From the perspective of religious moderation, the Salafis are positioned on the far right (neofundamentalism), which specifically draws attention to the mainstreaming of religious moderation. However, over time, this group has demonstrated an accommodating attitude toward the concept of religious moderation, rather than the opposite. This is evidenced by their participation in orientation and socialization activities on religious moderation organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as well as their support for various deradicalization agendas.³

The study of Salafism in Indonesia has generated significant interest among academics. Research conducted by Nurdiana Abhiyoga indicates that there are at least 68 manuscripts discussing Salafism in Indonesia from 2005 to 2021.⁴ Among the existing studies, very few examine the Salafist movement in the context of religious moderation. Generally, these two themes are perceived as contrasting and conflicting. However, some previous research indicates a shift within

² Hasse Jubba et al., "The Contestation between Conservative and Moderate Muslims in Promoting Islamic Moderatism in Indonesia," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2116162>.

³ Arisy Abror Dzukroni and Muhammad Tareh Aziz, "Quo Vadis Modern Salafism: Re-Questioning Salafi's Moderation Value on Social Media," *Islamika Inside: Jurnal Keislaman Dan Humaniora* 9, no. 2 (2023): 180–204, <https://doi.org/10.35719/islamikainside.v9i2.241>.

⁴ Nurdiana Abhiyoga, Gonda Yumitro, and Shannaz Mutiara Deniar, "Bibliometric Analysis of Studies on Lexical Simplification," *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)* 5, no. 1 (2022): 1379–90, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27409-1_1.

the Salafi group towards a more moderate position. For instance, Chaplin's research on the Wahdah Islamiyah group.⁵ Inayah Rohmaniyah's study on Salafi Wahhabi educational institutions indicates a significant shift.⁶ Despite their differing focuses, both Chaplin and Rohmaniyah conclude that the Salafi group embodies values of tolerance and principles of non-violence in both their views and actions. Similar findings are also presented by Roni Tabroni,⁷ Muhammad Farooq Abdullah,⁸ Adeni & Silviatul Hasanah,⁹ and La Sugi.¹⁰ For instance, Roni Tabroni asserts that contemporary Salafis have made several adaptive efforts by incorporating state concepts and policies, including the notion of religious moderation as a national program. Generally, existing research tends to outline the shift in Salafi attitudes within the socio-political context but has not thoroughly examined how this adaptive attitude influences their efforts to redefine their civic stance. The acceptance of state programs and policies by Salafis should be analyzed from multiple perspectives, as they tend to reinterpret and position every national discourse within their ideological framework.¹¹

This research specifically aims to examine the background of the Salafi group's accommodative attitude and support for the agenda of religious moderation. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for interpreting the role of fundamentalist groups within the context of Indonesian nationality and nationhood. While the concept of religious moderation aligns substantively with other religious discourses, such as Islam Nusantara (Nahdlatul Ulama) and Progressive Islam (Muhammadiyah), there are varying responses and levels of acceptance among these groups. Furthermore, this research focuses on indications of shifts in religious attitudes and the Salafi group's efforts to redefine their perspective on citizenship within a secular government system. Salafism significantly influences the Muslim community's understanding of citizenship, as

⁵ 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>.

⁶ Inayah Rohmaniyah and Mark Woodward, "Wahhabism, Identity, and Secular Ritual: Graduation at an Indonesian High School," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 50, no. 1 (2012): 119–45, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2012.501.119-145>.

⁷ Roni Tabroni and Idham Idham, "From Radical Labels to Moderate Islam: The Transformation of the Salafism Movement in Jakarta," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 13, no. 2 (2023): 279–306, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v13i2.279-306>.

⁸ Hafiz Muhammad Farooq Abdullah, Lukmanul Hakim, and M. Syahidan, "Traditionalist Salafi's Involvement in the Religious Moderation Da'wah," *Islamic Communication Journal* 7, no. 2 (2022): 243–56, <https://doi.org/10.21580/icj.2022.7.2.12664>.

⁹ Adeni and Silviatul Hasanah, "Considering the Moderate Da'wah Path of the Purist Salafism: Rodja TV Community Case," *International Conference On Religion, Spirituality And Humanity* Vol. 6, no. 2 (2019): 163–80, <https://pps.iainsalatiga.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Considering-the-Moderate-Dawah-Path-of-the-Purist-Salafism-Rodja-TV-Community-Case.pdf>.

¹⁰ La Sugi, Muhajir Abd Rahman, and Mohd Haidhar Kamarzaman, "A Behavior of Religious Moderation Among Salafi in Ambon," *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion* Volume 08, no. 02 (2023): 212–30.

¹¹ Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia."

it encourages Muslims to be responsible citizens who obey state laws while upholding the purity of Islamic teachings. The synthesis of religious identity and national identity fosters a cohesive understanding of citizenship within the Salafi community.¹² Analyzing this provides insights into the transformation of fundamentalist Islam as it continues to be reconciled with national identity.

To address the aforementioned questions, this research employs a descriptive-interpretative approach. This methodology aims to explore contemporary Salafism's perspectives and tendencies in engaging with other religious discourses, particularly the concept of religious moderation, as well as the situational factors that compel this group to remain adaptive and accommodating to change. Furthermore, this approach emphasizes essential and fundamental areas rather than specific and exclusive ones,¹³ The study aims to avoid negative tendencies associated with labels such as conservative, exclusive, radical, and extremist that are often applied to the Salafi group.

It relies on data from books, journal articles, expert opinions, and relevant documentation. The focus of the research is on the apolitical Salafi group, also known as Salafi purists or Salafi da'wah.¹⁴ This choice is based on the significant growth of this type of Salafi group, which emphasizes preaching and moral agendas without engaging in politics, distinguishing them from Haraki and Jihadi Salafis. The moral agenda promoted by the Salafis, to some extent, not only escalates the trend of public piety,¹⁵ However, it also compels them to continually articulate a concept of citizenship that aligns with Salafi ideology.

Results and Discussion

Salafism and Religious Moderation

Religious moderation refers to views, attitudes, and behaviors that are balanced, equitable, and tolerant in religious practice.¹⁶ This attitude has long been acknowledged in Islamic tradition,¹⁷ This emphasizes the importance of tolerance, respect for religious differences, and the recognition

¹² Chaplin.

¹³ Clive Erricker, "Phenomenological Approaches," in *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Peter Connolly (New York: Cassel, 1999).

¹⁴ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): 207–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100500497004>.

¹⁵ Ahmad Bunyan Wahib, "Being Pious among Indonesian Salafis," *Al-Jami'ah* 55, no. 1 (2017): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.551.1-26>.

¹⁶ Kementerian Agama, *Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

¹⁷ Iffati Zamimah, "Islamic Moderatism in the Context of Indonesia (Study of M. Quraish Shihab's Moderate Islamic Interpretation)," *E-Jurnal IIQ* 1, no. 1 (2018): 75–90, <https://ejurnal.iiq.ac.id/index.php/alfanar>.

of diversity.^{18 19} The concept of religious moderation was developed by the government to tackle the challenges of disintegration and polarization, as well as to curb the spread of radicalism. This approach aims to cultivate a society that embraces open and inclusive religious attitudes and practices, with a focus on prioritizing the common good.²⁰ The government of the Republic of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has officially promoted the concept of religious moderation since the publication of the 2020-2024 RPJMN. This government initiative has garnered appreciation and enthusiasm from various sectors. Even in its fourth year, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Center for Education and Training continues to organize activities focused on religious moderation for both internal and external audiences.

Religious moderation is focused on the common good by establishing constitutional principles as the foundation of national consensus. Indonesia's diversity requires a collective discourse to integrate all differences, thereby anticipating the potential for conflict and national disintegration.²¹ In this context, the importance of religious moderation becomes evident amid the tension between proponents of neofundamentalism (extreme right) and neomodernism (extreme left).²² This tension, which has characterized Indonesia's political history from pre-independence to the reform era, has sparked intense and prolonged debates.

The emergence of the concept of religious moderation in contemporary Indonesia is inextricably linked to these historical realities. Efforts to mediate between these two extreme poles appear to be ongoing, even though the nature of the debate has shifted away from the ideological confrontations that marked the post-independence era.²³ Compromising ideas continue to be developed in response to the increasingly complex challenges of our times. Over the past four decades, various reconciliation concepts have emerged, bridging the divides between left and right

¹⁸ Muhammad Ilyas Marwal and Muhammad Fadhlirobby Ilyas, "Analysis of Wasatiyyah Thoughts of Muhammad Mahfudh Tarmadzi's on Takfirism in His Is'af Al Mathali'," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 32, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.24014/Jush.v32i2.31899>.

¹⁹ Moh Natsir Mahmud, "Religious Moderation (Epistemological Perspective)," *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* 10, no. 1 (2022): 82–88, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24252/jdi.v10i1.28809>.

²⁰ R.F. Bhanu Viktorahadi, "The Meaning of Religious Moderation According to Franz Magnis-Suseno: A Phenomenological Approach," *Journal of Faith and Spirituality* 2, no. 2 (2022): 177–86, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v2i2.17912>.

²¹ Ministry of Religious Affairs Religious Moderation Working Group Team, *Roadmap for Strengthening Religious Moderation 2020-2024*.

²² Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (London: Verso, 2002).

²³ Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Islam and Pancasila as the State Foundation: A Study of the Debates in the Constituent Assembly* (Bandung: Mizan, 2017).

fundamentalism, religion and state, Islam and Pancasila, among others. Fundamentally, they all share the same objective: to preserve diversity and promote national unity.

Salafism, as a transnational movement, fully embraces fundamentalism and conservatism, often rejecting certain aspects of tradition.²⁴ This rejection arises from the Salafi mission of purification, which aims to preserve the integrity of religion by returning to the model of religious practice exemplified by the generation of Salaf al-Salih. Consequently, the emergence of Salafism in Indonesia has been met with significant resistance and rejection from the outset. This opposition to Salafism stems from its confrontational stance against mainstream religious currents that are deeply entrenched in society. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest socio-religious organization in Indonesia, is particularly unsettled by the presence of the Salafi movement.

From the beginning, NU has grounded its efforts in opposing Salafism and Wahhabism. The presence of Salafism not only undermines existing traditions but also poses a threat to NU's influence in rural areas, which are considered its primary strongholds.²⁵ Therefore, according to Zora Hesová, the tension between the mainstream and the Salafi group is primarily political rather than ideological.²⁶

As a result, the Salafi group is often labeled as intolerant, exclusive, radical, and subjected to other biased stigmas. Despite this perception, the Salafi group continues to expand and establish networks in various cities. According to a 2017 study conducted by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) at UIN Jakarta, which surveyed 25 cities across 13 provinces in Indonesia, there are 112 Salafi ustazes playing a crucial role in disseminating Salafi ideology. They maintain networks at both national and local levels, illustrating the strength and stability of their proselytizing efforts, which have garnered a positive response from the community.

Salafi teachings also proliferate through educational institutions such as madrasas and pesantrens, religious groups like study assemblies and Quranic memorization centers, and the

²⁴ Anthony Bubalo and Greg Fealy, "Between the Global and the Local: Islamism, the Middle East, and Indonesia," *The Brookings Project on U.S. Policy towards the Islamic World*, 2005, 10; Yusef Karimi, David Nussbaum, and Razgar Mohammadi, "Recruitment Process in Salafi-Jihadist Groups in the Middle East (A Qualitative Study)," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, no. 15–16 (2021): NP12745–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260521997931>.

²⁵ Chris Chaplin, *Salafism and the State: Islamic Activism and National Identity in Contemporary Indonesia* (Copenhagen: Nias Press, 2021).

²⁶ Zora Hesová, "Wahhabis and Salafis, Daije and Alimi: Bosnian Neo-Salafis between Contestation and Integration," *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea* 21, no. 4 (2021): 593–614, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2021.1994209>.

media, including books, magazines, radio, and television stations. Additionally, community organizations such as hospitals, health centers, orphanages, and philanthropic institutions contribute to their outreach. The activities of the Salafi group are primarily self-funded; however, they also receive financial support from abroad, particularly from Saudi Arabia.²⁷ This international funding continues to support the sustainability of Salafi organizations to this day.²⁸

The rapid and extensive development of the Salafi movement has compelled its leaders to reassess their narratives and strategies in order to remain relevant and effective in engaging a broader audience in the modern era. Although often associated with intolerance and radicalism, the Salafi group consistently supports government policies and seldom criticizes the government openly, in contrast to other fundamentalist Islamic movements.²⁹ Salafis consistently align themselves with the government and openly endorse deradicalization programs.³⁰ This same attitude is also evident in the concept of religious moderation, which has officially become a national program. For instance, during a religious moderation training event at the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Riau, approximately 30 Salafi-affiliated pesantrens attended and actively participated in the event (Kanwil Kemenag Riau, 2023).

This loyalty to the state can be understood through the doctrine of obedience that is strictly upheld by the Salafi group. As long as the leader does not prohibit the right to worship and does not act unjustly, there is no reason to withhold full obedience to the leader.³¹ Thus, because of this attitude, any state policy will be readily accepted and implemented by the Salafi group, even if it occasionally contradicts their unique characteristics.

The Salafi group's support for the religious moderation program can be understood within the context mentioned above. However, several factors motivate the Salafi group to endorse this program. These factors may be internal, such as the doctrine of obedience to *ulil amri* (legitimate

²⁷ 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>.

²⁸ Policy Brief Series, "Enhancing the Role of Religious Education in Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia," vol. 1 (Banten, 2018).

²⁹ Sugi, Rahman, and Kamarzaman, "A Behavior of Religious Moderation Among Salafi in Ambon."

³⁰ Sunarwoto, "Negotiating Salafi Islam and the State: The Madkhaliyya in Indonesia," *Welt Des Islams* 60, no. 2–3 (2020): 205–34, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-06023P03>.

³¹ Robert G. Rabil, *Salafism in Lebanon: From Apoliticism to Transnational Jihadism* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014).

leaders), or external, including pressures from other groups or pragmatic objectives, as explained below:

1) The Salafi acceptance of the religious moderation program stems from the doctrine of obedience to ulil amri. This principle significantly influences the social actions of the Salafi group. The doctrine of obedience to ulil amri is one of the most important tenets in Islam, emphasizing adherence to legitimate governance.³² In the context of Indonesia, the government has implemented a religious moderation program as part of its policy framework. The Salafi group feels compelled to support this initiative as a demonstration of their obedience to the government. Consequently, the Salafi group's endorsement of the concept of religious moderation is more a reflection of the doctrine of obedience (al-tha'ah ila ulil amri) than a genuine agreement with or endorsement of the concept itself.

2) Pragmatic Political Interests. The Salafi group possesses significant resources and assets that can be leveraged for various purposes, including the dissemination of Salafi ideology. Their activities are not limited to proselytizing; they also encompass the education sector, media networks, and economic enterprises.³³ They are exploring methods to sustain these resources, including participation in government programs. Collaborating with the government is a key aspect of the Salafi group's efforts to alter the public's negative perception of them. This perception has posed a significant barrier to the dissemination of Salafi ideology and even jeopardizes their resources. As a result, the Salafi group perceives the concept of religious moderation as a political strategy aimed at enhancing their image while simultaneously working to preserve their resources.

3) Changing the Intolerant and Exclusive Image. Salafis are frequently depicted as intolerant and exclusive, which significantly affects their proselytizing efforts both within their communities and in the wider society. This perception can impede their interactions with the broader community.³⁴ Therefore, they strive to change public opinion by presenting more humanistic religious narratives. One way the Salafi group demonstrates its support for values of tolerance and non-violence is through a religious moderation program, which makes their proselytizing efforts more acceptable to the broader society.

³² Rabil.

³³ Hasbullah Hasbullah et al., "Acceptance of the Existence of Salafi in the Development of Da'wah in Riau Islamic Malay Society," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2107280>.

³⁴ Andi Faisal Bakti, "Media and Religion: Rodja Tv's Involvement in the Civil Society Discourse for Community Development," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 34, no. 3 (2018): 226–44, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2018-3403-13>.

4) Changes in Religious Views within Salafi Groups. Although difficult to substantiate, it cannot be denied that some Salafi groups have begun to adopt a more moderate stance in recent years.³⁵ This shift can be attributed to various factors, including social and cultural changes, as well as increased interaction between Salafi groups and other religious communities. Consequently, the Salafi group's endorsement of religious moderation reflects the development and evolution of perspectives within the group.

Relations between Salafi and the State

The Salafi movement began to emerge in Indonesia at the end of the twentieth century. This movement has experienced rapid growth and has become one of the most influential Islamic religious movements in the country.³⁶ The relationship between the Salafis and the state is complex and dynamic. Initially, this relationship was characterized by antagonism, largely due to the Salafis' critical perspective on the government and their reputation for diverging from mainstream Islamic teachings. However, over time, this relationship began to evolve.

The Indonesian government started to acknowledge the significance of the Salafi movement in promoting national stability and security, leading to increased support for the Salafis, particularly in the areas of education and social services.³⁷ Stephane Lacroix's analysis of the relationship between Salafis and the state indicates that this relationship is politically motivated, as Salafis are viewed as valuable allies in countering Islamist groups that oppose the regime.³⁸

The development of this movement has been significantly influenced by government support, which has led to greater acceptance of Salafis among the general public and increased their impact on Indonesia's social and political landscape. However, some circles question the relationship between Salafis and the state. One concern is that Salafis could jeopardize religious harmony and tolerance in Indonesia due to their exclusive and intolerant views toward other groups. Additionally, there are worries that Salafism could be exploited or infiltrated by fundamentalist factions to propagate radicalism and extremism.

³⁵ Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia."

³⁶ Andi Aderus et al., "How Salafism Forms Millennials' Religious Understanding: A Case Study from an Indonesian University," *Ulumuna* 27, no. 1 (2023): 291–314, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v27i1.615>.

³⁷ Abdul Malik, "New Variants of Ultra-Conservative Islamic Schools in Indonesia: A Study on Islamic School Endeavor with Islamic Group Movement," *Power and Education* 0, no. 0 (2023): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17577438231163042>.

³⁸ Stéphane Lacroix, "Egypt's Pragmatic Salafis: The Politics of Hizb Al-Nour" (New York, 2016).

This potential threat is underscored by the takfiri doctrine, one of the central tenets of Salafism, which asserts that those who do not adhere to Salafi interpretations are considered infidels (kafir).³⁹ This doctrine is particularly sensitive in a pluralistic community.

The state has addressed these concerns by implementing strategic measures and prioritizing a cultural approach rather than a legal one, similar to the actions taken with Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI).⁴⁰ The government has initiated counter-narratives aimed at moderating intolerant groups, including certain factions of Salafi groups. This strategy is deemed appropriate and pertinent, considering the growing influence of Salafis in society, with some Salafi leaders commanding large and fervent followings. Conversely, repressive measures against these groups would likely exacerbate the state's image concerning Islam and undermine the democratic climate.

In its development, the Salafi movement has consistently maintained a distance from political power while simultaneously demonstrating unwavering loyalty to the state. To emphasize this allegiance, Salafis employ sectarian narratives against other religious groups, such as Shia and Sufi communities. These narratives serve not only to contest religious authority but also to affirm their obedience to the government. Joas Wagemakers' research on the Salafi movement in Jordan supports this observation, noting that Salafis often equate Sufism with Shia Islam and sometimes label both groups as infidels. This strategy is utilized by Salafis to showcase their loyalty to the government. Consequently, all forms of Sufism and Shia beliefs are perceived as problematic, and Salafis position themselves as the solution.⁴¹

Maintaining a distance from power by remaining apolitical has significantly influenced the extensive development of Salafi networks.⁴² Salafis are generally not perceived as a threat to political stability; therefore, repression against this group is almost nonexistent, aside from persecution by certain community groups. The state plays a crucial role in the existence of Salafis. Furthermore, Salafis do not consider their group to be a legally recognized civil organization;

³⁹ Adib Abdulmajid, "Salafi-Influencers on Social Media: Analytical Study of the Discourse on Neo-Salafi Preachers," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 6, no. 2 (2023): 177–98, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v6i2.4489>.

⁴⁰ Jafar Ahmad et al., "Trend and Contestation of Religious Discourse Post 'Perppu Ormas' at Islamic College Jambi," *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 30, no. 1 (2022): 77–102, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v30i1.6130>.

⁴¹ Joas Wagemakers, "Sectarianism in the Service of Salafism: Shiites as a Political Tool for Jordanian Salafis," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 2 (2022): 341–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2020.1805298>.

⁴² Rabil, *Salafism in Lebanon: From Apoliticism to Transnational Jihadism*.

instead, they view themselves as a community dedicated to religious education (ta'lim) and outreach (dakwah).⁴³ Consequently, Salafis are regarded as just one of many religious ideologies. The lack of legal entity status means that Salafi activities are not perceived as capable of mobilizing large groups that could pose a threat to power. As long as Salafis remain non-resistant to the state and concentrate solely on dakwah, their position remains relatively stable.

However, the close relationship between Salafis and the government does not necessarily render them more moderate. They continue to uphold their conservative and exclusive character as an intrinsic aspect of their identity.

Redefining Salafi Citizenship

The mainstreaming of religious moderation has significantly impacted conservative groups, such as the Salafis, compelling them to continuously negotiate their ideology in relation to national identity. As a state-sponsored initiative, this concept aims to transform exclusivist attitudes through moderate and inclusive discourse. The relationship between Salafis and the state has implications for their views on citizenship, which are consistently grounded in religious doctrine.⁴⁴ The Salafi perspective on citizenship seems ambiguous, as it is more closely linked to religious identity and intra-community relations than to the formal aspects of citizenship.⁴⁵ This ambiguity influences how individuals define and exercise their rights and obligations as citizens. This phenomenon can be explained by the Salafi conservative perspective, which equates the ideal citizen with strict adherence to Islamic law. For example, while Salafis acknowledge leaders who are elected democratically, they fundamentally reject the democratic system itself.

The relationship between Salafis and the state encourages them to prioritize being over strictly adhering to religious doctrines. This attitude may appear inconsistent, but it can be understood as an adaptive strategy within a dynamic society. Redefining their understanding of citizenship is essential in the modern world, where Sharia and citizenship must be compatible.⁴⁶ The exclusivist tendencies of Salafis conflict with secular standards and may potentially 'harden' Islamic identity in the public sphere. Furthermore, modern citizenship seeks to eliminate all forms

⁴³ Ovamir Anjum, "Salafis and Democracy: Doctrine and Context," *Muslim World* 106, no. 3 (2016): 448–73, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12158>.

⁴⁴ Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia."

⁴⁵ Emin Poljarevic, "The Ambiguity of Citizenship in Contemporary Salafism," *Koninklijke Brill Nv* 116, no. 2012 (2017): 1–37, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004340985>.

⁴⁶ Muhamad Ali, "The Conceptions of Sharia and Citizenship in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Journal of Asian Social Science Research* 1, no. 1 (2019): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jassr.v1i1.12>.

of group privileges and ensure that all citizens are treated equally under the law.⁴⁷ Despite internal fragmentation and differing opinions, the efforts of Salafis to accommodate state policies can be viewed as an attempt to negotiate modern citizenship.

Interestingly, the differences and competition among Salafi groups regarding their views on citizenship are heavily influenced by religious justifications. They engage in these debates by adhering to rigid textual traditions. This rigidity leads to fragmentation within the Salafi movement, transforming it from a mere struggle for authority into a contest over the definition of good citizenship.⁴⁸ These claims are often linked to political attitudes. According to some, good citizenship is characterized by political passivity and obedience to the government. Consequently, certain Salafi groups that diverge from this perspective are viewed as having strayed from the “manhaj salaf” (methodology of the Salaf).

Total obedience to the government is presented as a fundamental requirement for preserving the purity of Salafism and, by extension, the purity of faith. Henri Lauzière elucidates this point by referencing Nasiruddin al-Albani (d. 1999), a prominent figure in the neo-Ahl al-Hadith movement, who asserted that while some individuals may adhere to Salafi teachings, their engagement in politics disqualifies them from being considered “true Salafis.”⁴⁹

Modern Salafism delineates a distinct separation between politics and religion, leading to an apolitical interpretation of citizenship. This viewpoint encourages Salafis to engage more actively in society, highlighting religious values as the cornerstone of responsible citizenship. One expression of this citizenship is the rejection of protests and insurrection against the government. According to Stéphane Lacroix, this stance is consistent with their distinctive political tradition, which prioritizes stability and loyalty to authority.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, “Citizenship: An Islamic Perspective,” *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 11, no. 2 (2009): 121–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15288170903273060>.

⁴⁸ Sunarwoto, “Negotiating Salafi Islam and the State: The Madkhaliyya in Indonesia.”

⁴⁹ Henri Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century*, *The Making of Salafism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7312/columbia/9780231175500.001.0001>.

⁵⁰ Stéphane Lacroix, “Between Revolution and Apoliticism: Nasir Al-Din Al-Albani and His Impact on the Shaping of Contemporary Salafism,” in *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199333431.003.0003>.

Salafi groups enhance their image by focusing on moral issues and engaging in grassroots religious outreach. While their moral agenda is frequently intertwined with political objectives, their efforts toward moral improvement are regarded as essential for fostering good citizenship.

The Salafi effort to redefine citizenship represents a significant evolution in how they position themselves as citizens within a dynamic society. They are keenly aware of their integrative Islamic orientation.⁵¹ faces challenges in a modern, secular state. Consequently, Salafi groups are frequently misunderstood and stereotyped as extremist and dangerous. Despite Indonesia's secular framework, religion significantly influences policy and public life. In the context of strong currents of Islamism and conservatism, Feldman argues that the state's most crucial task is to uphold the principle of equality for all citizens.⁵² Therefore, rather than being repressive, the state plays a crucial role in guiding Salafi groups to become an integral part of an inclusive and tolerant society.

Overall, this study emphasizes that Salafi groups seek to assert their citizenship by supporting state policies. Their ability to adapt within a secular state framework is crucial to their existence and role in society. However, the adaptability of Salafis within a democratic system should not always be interpreted as an ideological shift. For instance, Robert W. Hefner argues that Salafi groups find it challenging to separate their religious beliefs from the mission of Muslim supremacy.⁵³ Therefore, the support of Salafi groups for religious moderation programs is simply a means of fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens, as they often emphasize a model of.⁵⁴ This model, as previously mentioned, highlights the ambiguity of Salafis, as they continually reinterpret the concept of citizenship based on their exclusive perspectives.

Conclusion

The government implements cultural policies through a religious moderation program aimed at addressing the challenges of national disintegration caused by the rise of radicalism, extremism,

⁵¹ Munawir Sjadzali, *Islam and Constitutionalism: Teachings, History, and Thought* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1993).

⁵² Noah Feldman, "Political Equality and the Islamic State," *Philosophical Topics* 30, no. 2 (2002): 253–72, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5840/philtopics20023021>.

⁵³ Robert W. Hefner, *Islam and Citizenship in Indonesia: Democracy and the Quest for an Inclusive Public Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2024).

⁵⁴ Rogers M. Smith, "Equality and Differentiated Citizenship: A Modern Democratic Dilemma in Tocquevillian Perspective," in *Anxieties of Democracy: Tocquevillian Reflections on India and the United States*, ed. Partha Chatterjee and Ira Katznelson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 85–118, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198077473.003.0004>.

and unconstitutional movements. This program is appreciated and supported by various parties, including Islamist groups such as the Salafis. This study indicates that the support from Salafi groups is more deeply rooted in their loyalty to the state rather than in their acceptance or agreement with the concept of religious moderation. In other words, the Salafis' support for the religious moderation program can be understood as a manifestation of the doctrine of obedience (al-tha'ah ila al-ulil amri).

However, their obedience to the state does not necessarily transform them into moderate or inclusive entities. Instead, they seek to redefine the concept of citizenship based on their religious views. Consequently, although their support is politically pragmatic, it influences their model of citizenship. The Salafis are undergoing an evolutionary process to reconcile their conservative views with the complexities of society, modern trends, and secular standards.

Given the significance of this topic, further academic analysis is necessary to examine the shift of conservative-fundamentalist Islamic groups toward a more moderate stance. An ideological gap persists, making it challenging to mediate between these two extremes of understanding. Key questions that require further exploration include: How should the state respond to conservative-fundamentalist groups without compromising democratic values? Does state intervention aimed at moderating extreme views, based on principles of diversity and unity, have significant positive or negative impacts? Additionally, how does the reinterpretation of citizenship models by fundamentalist groups, which promote totalistic Islamic integralism within a pluralistic society, affect their integration? Addressing these questions is essential not only to refine this study but also to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of Islamic movements and politics in Indonesia.

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