Melisa Diah Maharani
Islamic Thought Review
http://dx.doi.org/10.30983/itr.v3i1.9352

Islamic Thought Review
e-ISSN: 3025-7603

ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

SALAFISM IN INDONESIA: IDEOLOGY, IDENTITY, AND POLITICS

Melisa Diah Maharani[1]

*Corespondence:
Email:
melisadiarani@gmail.com

Authors Affiliation:
[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus, *Indonesia*

Article History:
Submission: April 23, 2025
Revised: May 28, 2025
Accepted: June 10, 2025
Published: June 30, 2025

Keywords: Salafism; Islamic Identity; Post−Islamism; Digital Da'wa; Geopolitics.

Abstract

This article investigates the ideological, identity−based, and geopolitical dynamics of the Salafist movement in Indonesia. Employing qualitative methods through an extensive literature review, the study utilizes Social Identity Theory as its primary analytical framework to examine how Salafi groups construct a distinct collective identity by asserting symbolic and doctrinal boundaries. To complement this framework, the concept of post−Islamism is interpretively applied to capture emerging tendencies within Indonesian Salafism that reveal greater flexibility, pragmatism, and selective engagement with democratic institutions. Findings indicate that while Salafi actors remain committed to doctrinal puritanism, they are simultaneously negotiating their presence in the broader Indonesian Islamic landscape through targeted digital da'wah strategies and community integration efforts. Internal fragmentation and external socio−political pressures contribute to the development of more contextualized and fluid expressions of Salafism. Rather than a monolithic or static movement, Salafism in Indonesia constitutes a complex, evolving identity shaped by interactions among theology, digital media, state−religion relations, and global ideological currents.

Kata Kunci: *Salafisme, Identitas Keislaman; Pos-Islamisme; Dakwah Digital; Geopolitik.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji dinamika ideologis, identitas kolektif, dan geopolitik gerakan Salafi di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui telaah pustaka yang mendalam, dengan menjadikan Teori Identitas Sosial sebagai kerangka analisis utama untuk memahami bagaimana kelompok-kelompok Salafi membentuk identitas kolektif yang khas melalui penegasan batas-batas simbolik dan doktrinal. Untuk melengkapi analisis ini, konsep post-Islamisme digunakan secara interpretatif guna menangkap kecenderungan baru dalam gerakan Salafi Indonesia yang menunjukkan adanya fleksibilitas, pragmatisme, dan keterlibatan selektif dengan institusi-institusi negara dan mekanisme demokrasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun para aktor Salafi tetap teguh pada komitmen terhadap puritanisme doktrinal, mereka juga tengah merundingkan posisi mereka dalam lanskap Islam Indonesia melalui strategi dakwah digital yang terarah dan upaya integrasi sosial di tingkat komunitas. Fragmentasi internal dan tekanan eksternal turut mendorong munculnya ekspresi Salafisme yang lebih kontekstual dan cair. Salafisme di Indonesia bukanlah entitas yang statis dan tunggal, melainkan identitas yang kompleks dan terus berkembang, dibentuk oleh interaksi antara teologi, media digital, relasi agama-negara, dan arus ideologis global.

INTRODUCTION

The turmoil of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 was the beginning of Indonesian society being connected to the global issues of the Islamic world. This was triggered by socio−political events in the Middle East, in the form of religious conflicts that had a major influence on changes in the political landscape based on Islamic ideology in Indonesia. Transnational Islamic movements increasingly have the opportunity to infiltrate countries that guarantee the freedom of their citizens (Kailani & Ikhwan, 2021). Therefore, during the reform era, many other non−mainstream Islamic movements mushroomed in Indonesia, such as Laskar Jihad, Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Hizbut

Islamic Thought Review
Vol. 3 No. 1 Edition June 2025

Tahrir Indonesia, the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) and others. The development of Salafi ideology and other non−mainstream ideologies marked a new tendency for various expressions of Islamic religious beliefs in Indonesia (Abdurrohman dkk., 2024a).

Their socio−religious movement is different from the mainstream framework of the dominant Islamic movement. The difference is due to their Islamic attitudes that are considered to be scripturalist, puritanical, exclusive and conservative. The Salafi movement is one of the representations of a new generation of Islamic groups in Indonesia whose influence is increasingly widespread today (Hamdeh, 2021). The Salafi movement continued to grow until it globalized to other countries. As a puritanical Islamic movement calling for purification, this has confirmed the position of Salafi Islam in the form of conservatism, separating itself from state intervention, and as an exclusive Islamic group that rejects heresy including the concept of state law (Yakin, 2018).

The encounter with the environment of the country it occupies also triggers dynamics and debates within the Salafi movement. These dynamics gave rise to various faces of its movement strategy in realizing the ideals they imagined. In this regard, several researchers have contributed their thoughts by dividing into several factions. Quintan Wiktorowicz classifies the Salafi movement into three factions, namely puritanical Salafi, political Salafi (*ḥaraki*), and *jihadi Salafi* (Wiktorowicz, 2006). The internal disputes lie not only in theological debates, but also in philosophical ones. The phenomenon of involvement in politics has also triggered disputes between Salafis themselves, as happened in Egypt, Nigeria and Tunisia (Hamming, 2013). Sunarwoto also emphasized that the dispute was not caused by theological debates, but by competition among Salafis in contesting religious identity, authority, and claims to 'good' citizenship (Sunarwoto, 2021).

Previous studies on the Salafi movement in Indonesia have been reviewed by many researchers. The presence of Salafis in some areas is described as tending to produce turbulence, such as acts of extremism, radicalism, and rejecting laws other than Islam and what they believe in (Wilonoyudho dkk., 2020). Redjosari also revealed that the image of Salafi groups has been formed negatively with the public's belief that their existence is can threaten the socio−religious values of Muslims and other religions (Redjosari, 2019). Salafism is rooted in exclusive communities that emphasize the purification of faith and avoid local religious practices considered heretical (Chaplin, 2018). Salafi presence does not always experience rejection from the local environment. Over time, Salafis have begun to transform into more open social actors and are beginning to be accepted in several regions in Indonesia (Setyawan & Nugroho, 2021).

In some other areas, Salafi groups were able to establish good relations with other Islamic groups. Setyawan and Nugroho (2021) showed that the presence of Salafi in Purwosari, Metro City is can establish good relations with other religious communities. Salafis do not isolate themselves, even building a common space with other Islamic groups and Christians. These social and religious interactions have a significant impact on the existence of Salafi. Tabroni and Idham's research (2023) on Jakarta Salafi groups also shows that there are dynamics of religious movements by contemporary Salafi groups that adapt to the local environment. The willingness of certain Salafi communities to engage in intergroup cooperation has helped reduce tensions and promote mutual understanding, especially in regions where religious plurality is a daily reality (Setyawan & Nugroho, 2021).

In Indonesia's major cities, an urban Salafi trend has emerged, balancing conservative ideals with urban culture. As a conservative group, the Salafi community has undergone several transformations from its original form. Today, some of them are

embracing modernity and adapting their ideology (Fakhrullah dkk., 2023). This is reinforced by previous studies showing that the Salafi movement has utilized digital space as an effective means of preaching to reach a wider audience. Salafi figures utilize various social media platforms to form loyal and active online communities (Kulsum, 2021; Pramana, 2023). Although the literature on the development of Salafi in Indonesia has grown significantly, most of it still focuses on the genealogical, ideological, and diverse aspects of Salafi tendencies today. Therefore, this study offers a new contribution by analyzing the discourse of Salafi identity in Indonesia. The main objective of this study is to examine how Salafi identity is formed, communicated, and negotiated in the interaction between ideology, the state, and media technology.

This article, methodologically, employs a qualitative literature review. Data were collected from various recent academic literature. By combining Social Identity Theory (SIT) and post−Islamism theory, this study attempts to analyze Salafism as a social identity construct undergoing continuous transformation. Social Identity Theory, as formulated by Tajfel and Turner, is used to explain how group identity is formed through processes of categorization, identification, and social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This approach also opens up analytical space for the internal dynamics of Salafi groups and their role in influencing mainstream Islamic religious discourse. Meanwhile, the post−Islamism framework developed by Asef Bayat is crucial for understanding the shifting attitudes of some Salafi groups, who are beginning to show signs of openness to contemporary social realities (Bayat, 2013).

SALAFISM IDEOLOGY IN INDONESIA

The Salafi group is an ideological movement that has the principle of reviving the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad and returning to the way of life of the first three generations of Muslims (Yakin, 2018). The Salafi movement can be seen from its ideology or manhaj that can be formulated in two principal boundaries. *First*, the purity of *aqidah* which consists of *tawhid rububiyah*, *tawhid uluhiyah*, and *tawhid asma wa sifat*. This literal understanding of God's attributes is the main difference between Salafis and other theological groups. The concept of *tawhid* is the core of the Salafis' identity which occupies a central position in their ideological structure (Pall, 2013). *Second*, *ittiba'* or following the *salaf al-shalih* generation. This principle then underlies the idea that everything that differs from the Salaf generation is called heresy. As a result of the strict application of these two principles, the face of the Salafi movement in Indonesia became different (Hasyim, 2019).

The contestation of Salafism ideology spread as many Middle Eastern alumni were financed by a number of figures or institutions from the central countries of the Wahabi movement such as Saudi Arabia and *the Ihya' al-Turath al-Islami Foundation* from Kuwait (Ananda dkk., 2024). However, the process of acceptance of Salafi ideology in countries like Indonesia is not a simple one. In Indonesia, the Salafi position has a more complex character. The ideological paradigm of Salafism has metamorphosed into other factions (Ismail, 2021). They fill the space formerly occupied by traditionalist Islam and political Islam by offering a more scripturalistic, though not always popular, alternative. Salafis represent puritanical Islam, claiming scholarly authority based on the teachings of great Middle Eastern scholars. They emerge as an opposition to local Islamic traditions deemed deviant (Arifin dkk., 2022)

The purification of beliefs by Salafis is realized through the rejection of heresy, namely all forms of innovation in religious matters that do not have a direct basis in the

texts (the Koran and authentic hadith). In the Salafi view, practices such as commemorating the Prophet's birthday, tahlilan, congregational dhikr out loud, or the yasinan tradition, are considered forms of deviation that have the potential to drag people into minor or major shirk. Heresy for Salafis is not only a ritual error, but also a serious threat to the purity of the Islamic faith. Therefore, the main task of *Salafi da'wah* is *tajdīd al-dīn* (religious renewal) by eliminating all forms of religious practice that are considered incompatible with the *sunnah* of the Prophet and the Salaf generation (Syamsir dkk., 2021).

On the other hand, Indonesian Salafis have also experienced significant identity transformation and internal fragmentation. Although many figures and institutions remain loyal to this transnational narrative, local dynamics often force localization, doctrinal negotiations, and even reinterpretations of missionary strategies (Krismono, 2017). This fragmentation cannot be separated from the transformation of life experiences, friction, and the way they perceive the reality of daily life through a series of social interactions (Sugi dkk., 2023). The emergence of various factions and differing approaches within the Indonesian Salafi movement demonstrates that the relationship between the ideological center and periphery was never entirely linear (Hasan, 2007). Some groups remained loyal to the direct guidance of Saudi clerics, while others began to develop interpretive autonomy and locally based *da'wah* strategies (Hidayatulah, 2022).

This tension between the universality of ideology and the particularity of local contexts makes Indonesian Salafis a crucial case in the study of contemporary transnational Islam. This indicates a negotiation between global ideology and local ideology, which is also evident in the efforts to disseminate Salafi ideology. The Salafi approach is more lenient and more attentive to the conditions of local communities. They have also begun to accommodate the values of Pancasila, which they had previously rejected and distorted. This acceptance of Pancasila is based on the assumption that its first principle is the concept of monotheism, as they often preach (Fakhrullah dkk., 2023).

Furthermore, negotiations with local culture have begun to be seen in some Salafi groups who have changed their appearance, although Salafis are generally known for physical characteristics such as beards and wearing trousers that fall above the ankles (*cingkrang*). They appear wearing mainstream Islamic cultural identities, such as the black cap (*peci*) or the national peci, which are also symbols of Indonesian culture (Fakhrullah dkk., 2023). This situation, which demonstrates a loosening of ideological boundaries, flexibility in identity expression, and openness to public discourse, signals an internal transformation within Salafi groups. This phenomenon is termed the post–Salafi condition.

CONSTRUCTION OF SALAFI SOCIAL IDENTITY

One of the main foundations of the sustainability of the Salafi movement in Indonesia is its success in forming a strong collective social identity. Social Identity Theory explores how group membership shapes an individual's sense of self, attitudes, behavior, and relationships between groups. This theory suggests that people categorize themselves and others into groups based on shared characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, religion, or organizational affiliation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Through this categorization process, individuals make sense of their social surroundings, which in turn forms the basis for constructing social identities. When someone identifies with a

specific group, they tend to adopt its values, norms, and behaviors, making this identity a central part of how they view themselves (Mangum & Block, 2018).

The theory also highlights the role of social comparison in shaping identity. People often compare their group to others to enhance their group's status and uniqueness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This tendency can lead to intergroup bias, where one's group is favored, while others may face prejudice or discrimination. Moreover, Social Identity Theory points out that the influence of group identity on behavior increases when that identity becomes especially salient in a given context. This can result in stronger in-group loyalty and a greater willingness to conform to group norms (Gupta, 2022).To understand how Salafi identity is formed, persists, and functions in society, we cannot simply look at the doctrinal or historical aspects. Using the SIT framework, we can explore the psychological and social dynamics underlying the construction of this identity. The following is an explanation of these processes as they appear in the ideology and social practices of Salafi groups.

Within the framework of social identity theory, social categorization is the process by which individuals or groups identify themselves as part of a group (ingroup) and differentiate themselves from another group (outgroup) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This process is visible in the way they construct their religious identity. Based on a literal understanding of the Prophet's *hadith* regarding the division of the *ummah*, Salafis identify themselves as the group that is believed to be saved (*al-firqat al-nājiyah*). This identity represents a theological position laden with claims of absolute truth. They position themselves as the purest and most authentic representation of Islam, while other groups are categorized as deviants from the truth (Yahya, 2022).

Other Islamic groups (outgroups) are considered not to understand or follow the Salafist method because they have been contaminated by foreign ideas, including rationalism and liberalism. They are categorized as deviants and often labeled *ahlul bid'ah* (Nadia, 2018). This labeling process not only reflects differing views but also serves as an instrument for reinforcing identity boundaries. Identity demarcation serves as a dividing line between those who are 'on the path of truth' and those who have 'deviated.' This process establishes strict social and spiritual boundaries, ultimately creating group exclusivity and legitimizing internal religious authority.

After going through the social categorization process, the next stage is social identification, where individuals begin to internalize the group's distinctive values, norms, and symbols. For an individual who identifies as Salafi, belonging to the group is not merely a matter of formal affiliation but a unified identity that encompasses the way they think, feel, and act (Wahib, 2017). This identification manifests as a comprehensive way of life. The doctrine of *al-wala' wa al-bara'* is the concept used by Salafi groups in determining the form of interaction with other Islamic groups. This doctrine creates a dualism the human world, namely the world of Islam and of infidels, Salafis and non-Salafis (Iqbal, 2019).

This concept then has consequences on the formation of communal ties (*jama'ah*) into small communities that stand apart from the open society, which is generally considered a jahiliyya world full of sin, *shirk*, and heresy (Hasan, 2009). Another way Salafis *apply al-walā wa al-barā* is by following certain rules of behavior as in the days of *Salaf al-Saleh* (Hasan, 2009). They presented their religious identity in new ways, including in terms of clothing. For example, men started wearing robes (*jalabiyyah*), maintaining beards (*lihyah*), and avoiding pants that were above the ankles (*isbal*). Meanwhile, women began to wear loose and dark clothes, and the veil (*niqab*) (Qodir

dkk., 2023) Furthermore, there is distinctive language and terms frequently used by Salafi groups, such as the *manhaj salaf, da'wah tauhid, tathbiq Sunnah*, and *hizbiyah* (Hasan, 2007).

In learning Islamic knowledge, the Salafi community prohibits its followers from attending gatherings of scholars not led by religious teachers following the Salafist method (Hasan, 2007). This practice also serves as part of a symbolic separation strategy, strengthening internal identity and defining who is considered worthy of reference. In this context, in addition to serving as a theological guide, Salafi ideology also governs the group's internal and external social structures. The members' character and life orientation are entirely shaped by Salafi ideology. This demonstrates that the claim to the saved group (*al-firqah al-nājiyah*) serves as a tool for building community cohesion while simultaneously demarcating exclusivity from other Muslims. The process of social identification has formed an integrated cognitive, affective, and behavioral framework (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Individuals not only identify as members of the Salafi group, but truly embrace that identity as the center of their existence. The next stage is social comparison, a process in which a group compares itself with other groups to assert the superiority and legitimacy of its identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this context, Salafis not only feel different but also believe that they are the most correct and pure in practicing Islam. SIT explains this phenomenon through the mechanisms of ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation. In other words, group members perceive themselves as superior, more righteous, and more dignified than other groups (Spadaro dkk., 2024). One expression of this process is open criticism of other Islamic groups, especially those perceived as practicing heretical practices. Some practices of mainstream Islamic groups are often attacked for being deemed unsuitable for their *Sunnah*.

Their interactions with other Islamic groups are also influenced by the saying, *almar'u 'ala dini khalilihi* (a person's religion is in accordance with the religion of his friends). Furthermore, social interaction is restricted, leading many Salafis to choose not to attend religious activities outside their own manhaj circle, even in general socio-religious activities. They adhere to the principle of not cooperating with those who are considered corrupt or religiously deviant. This creates increasingly strong and rigid social boundaries. The above principle plays an important role in Salafi rivalry, that every Salafi is always under the scrutiny of other Salafis, leading to criticism or even expulsion from the group. Salafi rivalry also happens online with personal attacks or ad hominem criticism (Sunarwoto, 2021).

This position has implications for how they view and classify other Islamic groups. Movements such as Sufi orders, Shia adherents, and even non-Salafi Sunni groups like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) or parts of Muhammadiyah are categorized as outgroups. These external groups are often seen as outside the path of truth (Husni & Bisri, 2024). By analyzing the three components in the SIT, it can be understood that the identity of the Salafi group is not only the result of theological understanding, but also the psychological effect of the need for group superiority, strengthening internal solidarity, and external demonization. Nonetheless, it needs to be realized by various parties that Salafi groups also show different views and attitudes towards the syncretic rituals and religious practices of local communities. Some Salafi are firm without compromise in rejecting rituals and religious practices because they are considered to deviate from Islamic teachings, but some are more moderate and try to build dialogue with mainstream Islamic groups (Abdurrohman dkk., 2024b)

Islamic Thought Review
Vol. 3 No. 1 Edition June 2025

REDEFINITION OF IDENTITY

Salafi groups have evolved gradually into more open social participants and have started to gain acceptance in various parts of Indonesia. In certain regions, they have succeeded in fostering positive relationships with other Islamic communities. These different patterns of interaction highlight the internal diversity of the Salafi movement. The readiness of some Salafi communities to collaborate with other groups has contributed to easing tensions and fostering mutual understanding (Tabroni & Idham, 2023). Salafis have been active in constructing authoritative narratives through online *da'wah*. The development of technology increasingly helps the Salafi community to be able to enter into the social reality of other groups. The use of social media in preaching is considered not to degrade Shari'ah values. At the same time, Muslims are asked to continue to innovate and develop with science, but still adhere to religious principles (Setyawan & Nugroho, 2021).

The transformation and changes in the orientation of Salafi group activities today have been identified by a number of studies as part of the dynamics known as neo—Salafi or post—Salafi. In line with Bayat's thesis on post—Islamism, the emergence of post—Salafis is not a complete abandonment of Salafi identity, but rather a transition to a more contextual and inclusive Islam. In this context, Salafis no longer simply operate within a framework of rejection of modernity but exhibit signs of a new, pragmatic engagement. This engagement can take the form of strengthening digital media—based *da'wah* or adjusting *da'wah* rhetoric to reach a broader urban Muslim audience (Bayat, 2013).

From the SIT Perspective, some Salafi groups have undergone a redefinition of their identity abandoning exclusivism and becoming more moderate. When individuals interact intensively with outside groups, particularly in digital public spaces, academic spaces, or multicultural urban communities, they tend to experience identity dissonance (Isakjee, 2016). Therefore, when individuals find that their Salafi identity is no longer adequate to explain complex realities or even becomes a source of social conflict, they will seek alternative groups or methods to create a new, more flexible identity.

In this digital space, a process of "identity filtering" also occurs, where users are encouraged to avoid Islamic scholars, figures, or other content deemed deviant. Some Islamic preaching channels even provide guidance lists on who can and cannot be followed. This selection of content serves as a new symbolic boundary, and loyalty to a particular ustaz is seen as an expression of the purity of one's method. However, there is a new trend among post—Salafi circles who are beginning to refine their preaching style with a more inclusive and dialogical narrative (Abdulmajid, 2023). Salafi is basically not a movement that rejects modernity but tries to combine modernity with an authentic Islamic context (Duderija, 2007). This digital approach allows Salafi preachers to reach a broader and younger audience. Moreover, the algorithm—driven nature of social media reinforces Salafi content among like—minded users, strengthening group identity and accelerating the spread of their religious narratives across geographic boundaries(Taufik & Taufik, 2020).

They are beginning to avoid openly using the term "deviant" and instead emphasize the use of phrases such as "maintaining the faith" or "seeking knowledge with a sound chain of transmission." This shift in style demonstrates a process of adaptation to public pressure and the challenges of living in a pluralistic and democratic society. This adaptation represents a form of "ideological negotiation" between commitment to transnational ideology and the realities of pragmatic needs in the local context. In this

sense, Indonesian Salafi identity represents a form of glocality, a re-articulation of global symbols and values in contextual, strategic, and even creative ways. Social media at this stage becomes a bridge for Salafi *da'wah* packaged through religious-based social practices (Nurani, 2019).

SALAFISM AND GEOPOLITICS IN INDONESIA

In recent decades, the Salafi movement in Indonesia has not only developed as a puritanical religious expression but has also become part of geopolitical dynamics and domestic political configurations. Salafi ideology and its efforts to co-opt Islamist groups, have given rise to new forms of Salafism, which not only approach religion, but also the state (Bubalo & Fealy, 2007). Salafism does not exist as a single, homogeneous entity, but rather is fragmented into various typologies that influence its relationship with society, the state, and global actors. Domestic tensions that intersect with socio-political and ideological changes in the region have given birth to various variants of Salafism in various countries (Krismono, 2017). Based on *da'wah* and political preferences, Quintan Wiktorowicz classifies the Salafi movement into three typologies, namely purist Salafis, political Salafis (*haraki*), and *jihadi* Salafis (Wiktorowicz, 2006).

Another explanation reveals that the difference between purist Salafis and haraki Salafis is a difference in political views. These typologies not only demonstrate differences in *da'wah* strategies and political orientations but also reflect the process of social categorization, in which each group asserts who "us" and "them" are. Purist Salafis are those who follow the official Salafi clerics of the Saudi government, while *haraki* Salafis are those who follow opposition clerics or dare to be critical of the kingdom (Singh & Qodir, 2015). This fragmentation further shapes the way the Salafi diaspora in other countries view the government. In the Indonesian context, Din Wahid also added three sub-categories of puritanical Salafi groups, namely rejectionist, cooperationist, and *tanzimi* (organization) (Duderija, 2007). This category of Salafi purists shows differences in the degree to what extent they reject public sphere contestation. The Salafi purists are not all apolitical towards the government (Wahid, 2014a).

Conversely, Haraki Salafists have begun to integrate social activism and political engagement, without relinquishing their commitment to the Salafist method. At the extreme end, jihadist Salafists articulate their identity through violence, forming resistance against states and international systems they deem infidel (Han & Rahmayanti, 2021). The internal typology of Salafists cannot be separated from the global geopolitical configuration that shapes and divides their identities. Global geopolitics serves as a symbolic resource used to strengthen group solidarity and frame a common enemy, whether it be the secular state, other Islamic groups, or Western powers (Krismono, 2017). Indonesian Salafi identity, in this case, is shaped by the intersection of global doctrinal affiliations and local socio-political contexts that demand adaptation.

The dynamics of the relationship between Salafis and the state in Indonesia are complex and ambivalent. In principle, Salafis reject democracy, which is seen as a man-made ideology, in favor of theocracy, which encompasses Islamic religious teachings and politics (Qodir dkk., 2023). Salafism does not recognize the one-person-one-vote principle that is the hallmark of democracy (Irwansyah & Muary, 2024). At this level, some Salafi groups are reframing their ideology regarding their civic identity. First, upholding the concept of *ūlū al-amr* or leadership that should be a

Muslim. Second, they regard Indonesia as an Islamic state due to the Muslim majority and the presence of Islamic symbols in public spaces. Third, in line with general Salafi principles, they reject democracy as an un-Islamic system. Fourth, they accept some parts of the national education curriculum even though they are not politically active and tend to obey the state leadership (Wahid, 2014).

The state is perceived as an entity that can be part of the ingroup when it supports *da'wah* and security or an outgroup when it is perceived as oppressive or secular (Wahid, 2014). Here, the tension between loyalty and opposition plays out dynamically. In some cases, there has even been a shift in position. Salafis who were once oppositional become cooperative when given social space, or conversely, become more radical when they feel marginalized (Tabroni & Idham, 2023). As sensitivity to transnational ideologies increases due to global and national terrorism issues, many Salafi groups are engaging in local negotiations, both with the state and with public opinion. They adapt their preaching style to avoid the stigma of extremism while simultaneously attempting to maintain the authenticity of their method. Some forms of this negotiation include avoiding confrontation with the state, staying out of practical politics, not getting involved in elections, and avoiding open criticism of the government (Irwansyah & Muary, 2024).

Some groups, particularly post-Salafi groups, demonstrate openness to the public sphere and relations with the state. They engage in deradicalization programs, social advocacy, and even limited communication with security forces and state institutions. While maintaining their distance from electoral politics, their presence in national religious discourse demonstrates a shifting positionality, a change in socio-political position in response to contemporary realities that demand active involvement in religious governance (Suratno, 2022). Salafis realize the need to look at pragmatism and consider public opinion. Brown reveals that Salafi groups have sought to compromise in expressing their religious commitments in a non-threatening way (Brown, 2011). Nonetheless, some Salafis actively promote good citizenship by being agents of change through their piety and supporting the state's strategic agenda for good citizenship (Chaplin, 2018).

Geopolitics forces Salafis to make strategic calculations in determining their ideological position in local and global arenas. In dealing with the complexity of the Salafi movement, the Indonesian state does not employ a single strategy. There are three main models of state response: co-optation, repression, and fragmentation. Through co-optation, the state establishes relationships with moderate Salafi groups to stem the influence of political Islam or radicalism. This strategy is implemented by providing access to preaching, legalizing educational institutions, or providing media space (Krismono, 2017). This strategy is often successful in suppressing extremist groups, but it also generates internal resistance from groups who view co-optation as an ideological compromise.

Repression, on the other hand, is used against groups affiliated with jihadist ideology or those proven to have engaged in violence. However, the effectiveness of repression depends heavily on the strength of the group's internal identity (Aswar & Putri, 2022). The stronger the in-group loyalty, the more likely the group is to construct a narrative of martyrdom or victimhood when pressured. This condition strengthens their solidarity. The third strategy is targeted fragmentation. In practice, the state allows internal conflict within Salafis to prevent the consolidation of power (Krismono, 2017). This strategy is tactically effective, but also carries the risk of delegitimizing the state as a guarantor of justice.

CONCLUSION

The Salafi movement in Indonesia reflects a dynamic interplay between its foundational emphasis on Islamic purification and its ongoing adaptation to a pluralistic social context. Its ability to appeal to urban youth highlights the movement's strategic flexibility in *da'wah*, even as it remains firmly anchored in conservative theological . Using the lens of Social Identity Theory, this article demonstrates that Salafism forms distinct and politicized identity boundaries, both in social and digital spaces. Salafi identity is a complex field of negotiation, not a single, fixed entity. Internal fragmentation manifested through digital expansion and geopolitical dynamics opens up space for more flexible, pragmatic, and fluid forms of Salafism. Despite these internal divisions and external challenges, Salafi groups have increasingly embedded themselves within local communities. They have done so through diverse means.

This trajectory of adaptation is not entirely detached from the enduring influence of transnational ideologies, This sustained orientation toward Saudi doctrinal authority underscores an ongoing tension between the imperatives of local adaptation and the rigidity of Saudi—backed ideological imports. In sum, this study argues that the identity of Indonesian Salafism is shaped not solely by internal doctrinal purification, but also by broader negotiations involving geopolitics, state—religion dynamics, and the performative space of digital media. To mitigate public suspicion and avert marginalization, Salafi actors have sought to reframe their image. Some factions have opted to engage with democratic mechanisms, whereas others reject such participation based on theological objections to secular governance models. This pattern of selective engagement and ideological steadfastness highlights the adaptive strategies employed by Salafi groups in maintaining their doctrinal integrity while navigating contemporary socio—political realities.

REFERENCES

Abdulmajid, A. (2023). Salafi—Influencers: Analytical Study of of the Discourse of Neo—Salafi Preachers on Social Media. *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses*, *6*(2). https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v6i2.4489

Abdurrohman, A., Hidayatullah, Moh. S., Sholeh, N., & Syamsiar, H. (2024a). Persepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Jemaah Salafi (Studi Tentang Tipologi dan Relasi Sosial Jemaah Salafi). *Jurnal Humanitas: Katalisator Perubahan dan Inovator Pendidikan*, *10*(4), 665—679. https://doi.org/10.29408/jhm.v10i4.28060

Abdurrohman, A., Hidayatullah, Moh. S., Sholeh, N., & Syamsiar, H. (2024b). Persepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Jemaah Salafi (Studi Tentang Tipologi dan Relasi Sosial Jemaah Salafi). *Jurnal Humanitas: Katalisator Perubahan dan Inovator Pendidikan*, *10*(4), 665—679. https://doi.org/10.29408/jhm.v10i4.28060

Ananda, R. A., Khamdan, Muh. & Fata, A. K. (2024). Salafisme Di Indonesia: Identitas Dan Kontestasi Ideologi di Indonesia. *Al-Ittihad: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Hukum Islam*, *10*(2), 16—33.

Arifin, A. Z., Sofia, A., & Hidayah, I. (2022). Revisiting Literacy Jihad Programs of 'Aisyiyah in Countering the Challenges of Salafism. *Religions*, *13*(12), 1174. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13121174

Aswar, H., & Putri, G. (2022). State Repression on the Islamic Political Opposition in Indonesia in the Period of 2017—2021. *Communications in Humanities and Social Sciences*, *2*(2), 41—47. https://doi.org/10.21924/chss.2.2.2022.32

Bayat, A. (Ed.). (2013). *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199766062.001.0001

Brown, J. (2011). *Salafis and Sufis in Egypt*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Bubalo, A., & Fealy, G. (2007). *Jejak Kafilah: Pengaruh Radikalisme Timur Tengah Di Indonesia*. Mizan Pustaka.

Chaplin, C. (2018). Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia. *Citizenship Studies*, *22*(2), 208–223. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2018.1445488

Duderija, A. (2007). Islamic Groups and their World–views and Identities: Neo–Traditional Salafis and Progressive Muslims. *Arab Law Quarterly*, *21*(4), 341–363. https://doi.org/10.1163/026805507X247554

Fakhrullah, A., Bakti, A. F., Hermansah, T., & Fanshoby, M. (2023). The Salafi Da'wa Movement in Jakarta from the Perspective of Media Glocalization. *IJISH (International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities)*, *6*(2), 113–130. https://doi.org/10.26555/ijish.v6i2.8728

Gupta, V. (2022). Understanding a Social Identity Theory. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Computer Science & Technology*, *10*(8), 98–105.

Hamdeh, E. (2021). *Salafism and Traditionalism: Scholarly Authority in Modern Islam*. Cambridge University Press.

Hamming, T. (2013). Politicization of the Salafi Movement: The Emergence and Influence of Political Salafism in Egypt. *International Affairs Review*, *22*(1), 1–18.

Han, M. I., & Rahmayanti, I. (2021). Salafi, Jihadis, dan Terorisme Keagamaan; Ideologi, Fraksi dan Interpretasi Keagamaan Jihadis. *Kordinat: Jurnal Komunikasi antar Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam*, *20*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.15408/kordinat.v20i1.19024

Hasan, N. (2007). The Salafi Movement in Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics and Local Development. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, *27*(1), 83–94. https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x–2006–045

Hasan, N. (2009). *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post New Order Indonesia* [Disertasi]. The University of Utrecht.

Hasyim, A. (2019). *Teologi Muslim Puritan: Geneologi Dan Ajaran Salafi*. Yayasan Wakaf Darus–Sunnah.

Hidayatulah, R. P. (2022). Perkembangan Gerakan Dakwah Salafi dalam Konteks Demokrasi: Studi Kasus di Kota Tanjung Pinang. *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (JSAI)*, *3*(2), 96–110. https://doi.org/10.22373/jsai.v3i2.1754

Husni, H., & Bisri, H. (2024). Inclusivism and Exclusivism: Responses of Prospective Islamic Religious Teachers Towards Islamic Sects. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, *80*(1). https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9361

Iqbal, A. M. (2019). *Internet dan Gerakan Salafi di Indonesia: Sebuah Kajian Awal*. Diandra Kreatif.

Irwansyah, I., & Muary, R. (2024). Apolitical Salafi: Between Religious And Citizenship Identity In Indonesia. *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, *32*(1), 88. https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v32i1.29295

Isakjee, A. (2016). Dissonant Belongings: The Evolving Spatial Identities of Young Muslim Men in the UK. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *48*(7), 1337–1353. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518x16641110

Ismail, R. (2021). *Rethinking Salafism: The Transnational Networks of Salafi 'Ulama in Egypt, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia* (1 ed.). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190948955.001.0001

Kailani, N., & Ikhwan, M. (2021). *Narasi Ekstremisme Keagamaan Di Indonesia Latar Pendidikan Dan Agensi Individual*. Pusat Pengkajian Islam Demokrasi dan Perdamaian (PusPIDeP).

Krismono, K. (2017). Salafisme Di Indonesia: Ideologi, Politik Negara, dan Fragmentasi. *Millah*, *16*(2), 173–202. https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol16.iss2.art2

Kulsum, U. (2021). *Dakwah Islam Salafi Pada Instagram Khalid Basalamah Official Dalam Perspektif New Media* [Tesis]. UIN Syarif Hidayatullah.

Mangum, M., & Block, R. (2018). Social Identity Theory and Public Opinion towards Immigration. *Social Sciences*, *7*(3), 41. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7030041

Nadia, Z. N. (2018). Perilaku Keagamaan Komunitas Muslim (Pemahaman Hadis dalam NU dan Salafi Wahabi di Indonesia). *Jurnal Living Hadis*, *2*(2), 141. https://doi.org/10.14421/livinghadis.2017.1327

Nurani, S. (2019). Salafo Women and Islamic Movements: The Case of Salafism in Jama'ah Al-Khidhir. *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam*, *20*(2), 233–254. https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v20i2.5666

Pall, Z. (2013). *Lebanese Salafis Between the Gulf and Europe: Development, Fractionalization and Transnational Networks of Salafism in Lebanon*. Amsterdam University Press.

Pramana, M. A. (2023). Salafi Online: Dakwah Salafi Pada Akun Instagram @dakwah_tauhid. *Idarotuna*, *5*(1), 63. https://doi.org/10.24014/idarotuna.v5i1.22792

Qodir, Z., Krismono, K., & Abdullah, I. (2023). Salafism in Rural Java: The Struggles of Indonesian Islam Since the Fall of the New Order. *QIJIS: Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, *11*(2), 247–278.

Redjosari, S. M. (2019). Salafi dan Stigma Sesat-Radikal. *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, *13*(2), 305–324. https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2019.13.2.305–324

Setyawan, D., & Nugroho, D. (2021). The Socio-religious Construction: The Religious Tolerance among Salafi Muslim and Christian in Metro. *Dialog*, *44*(2), 190–203. https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v44i2.479

Singh, B., & Qodir, Z. (2015). *Gerakan Islam Non Mainstream dan Kebangkitan Islam Politik di Indonesia*. Pustaka Pelajar.

Spadaro, G., Liu, J. H., Zhang, R. J., Gil De Zъciga, H., & Balliet, D. (2024). Identity and Institutions as Foundations of Ingroup Favoritism: An Investigation Across 17 Countries. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *15*(5), 592–602. https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506231172330

Sugi, L., Rahman, M. Abd., & Kamarzaman, M. H. (2023). A Behaviour of Religious Moderation among Salafi in Ambon. *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion*, *8*(2), 187–202. https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v8i2.2102

Sunarwoto. (2021). Online Salafi Rivalries in Indonesia: Between Sectarianism and 'Good' Citizenship. *Religion, State and Society*, *49*(2), 157–173. https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2021.1924014

Suratno. (2022). Ideology and Identity Transformation in the Deradicalization of Muslim Extremists in Indonesia. *IJoReSH: Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity*, *1*(2), 189–214. https://doi.org/10.18326/ijoresh.v1i2.189–214

Syamsir, A., Septiadi, M. A., Nurhakiki, M. I., Al−Habsy, M. I., & Hidayah, M. R. A. (2021). Salafi Puritanism in Indonesia. *International Journal of Islamic Khazanah*, *11*(2), 134−149. https://doi.org/10.15575/ijik.v11i2.13199

Tabroni, R., & Idham, I. (2023). From Radical Labels to Moderate Islam: The Transformation of the Salafism Movement in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, *13*(2), 279−306.

Tajfel, H., & Turner. (1979). An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict. Dalam W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Ed.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Brooks/Cole.

Taufik, M., & Taufik, A. (2020). Hijrah and Pop Culture: Hijab and Other Muslim Fashions Among Students in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism*, *8*(2), 97−116. https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v8i2.5305

Wahib, A. B. (2017). Being Pious Among Indonesian Salafists. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, *55*(1), 1−26. https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.551.1−26

Wahid, D. (2014). The Challenge of Democracy in Indonesia: The Case of Salafi Movement. *Islamika Indonesiana*, *1*(1), 51−64. https://doi.org/10.15575/isin.v1i1.5

Wiktorowicz, Q. (2006). Anatomy of the Salafi Movement. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *29*(3), 207−239. https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100500497004

Wilonoyudho, S., Salim, L. A., & Muhtaram, A. (2020). The Perspective of Puritan Moslem on the Family Planning Program: The Case of Salafimovement in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. *Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology*. https://doi.org/10.37506/ijfmt.v14i4.12159

Yahya. (2022). Selektifitas Salafi Dalam Mengaktualisasikan Hadis Nabi. *Ihyaussunnah : Journal of Ulumul Hadith and Living Sunnah*, *2*(1), 54−60. https://doi.org/10.24252/ihyaussunnah.v2i1.30856

Yakin, A. U. (2018). Salafi Dakwah and the Dissemination of Islamic Puritanism In Indonesia: A Case Study of the Radio of Rodja. *Ulumuna*, *22*(2), 205−236. https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v22i2.335