

# Revisiting Roel Meijer's Typology of Salafism: A Critical Reading of the Salafi Movement Studies

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## Abstract

This research aims to review the typology of Salafists introduced by Roel Meijer in his work "The Global Salafism" to understand the core of Salafi thought, including fragmentation within Salafists and apply it in the latest context in Indonesia. To explore this object, the researcher utilized library research by presenting several perspectives outside Roel Meijer's work, both from Western scholars and Muslims who discussed the main ideology of Salafis. The literature studies showed several misconceptions about Salafi's original thought by both Western and Muslim scholars. The misconceptions understood by Western scholars tend to attribute reform movements such as Jamaluddin Al-Afghani or Muhammad Abduh to Salafis. As for the misconceptions understood by Muslims themselves, who are at odds with the main ideas of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, they radicalize the output of their thoughts so that it causes acts of violence that cross the threshold of humanitarian tolerance in the present era. Some of the misconceptions by internal Salafis included excessive understanding of the concept of *Al-Walaa' wal Baraa'*, excessive hatred of the Shi'a, and the application of the concept of *amr ma'ruf nahy munkar*, which is restrictive, especially because it used backup from the government. The results suggested the typology of Salafism to be divided into only two, based on the same condition as those two groups, the rejection of using only logical thinking without Qur'anic or hadith basis, namely, Purists and Jihadis.

Keywords: Misconception, Roel Meijer, Typology of Salafism

## Introduction

Salafis, known by Western figures including Quintan Wiktorowicz, follow the examples set by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. They believe they should follow the Companions because they assume they are the best generation, and they witnessed firsthand what the Prophet did. They heard firsthand what he said, so they are the ones who understand the religion best.<sup>1,2</sup> Salafism is a diverse and dynamic school within Islam that emphasizes purity and attempts to emulate early Islamic figures.<sup>3</sup> While Sabine stated that the word Salafism is derived from the Arabic expression *al-salaf al-*

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<sup>1</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 2 (February 16, 2005): 75–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100590905057>.

<sup>2</sup> Frederic Wehrey and Anouar Boukhars, "Defining Salafism: Contexts and Currents," *Salafism in the Maghreb*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190942403.003.0002>.

<sup>3</sup> Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf and Mira Menzfeld, "Who Are 'the' Salafis?," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 6, no. 1 (March 9, 2017): 22–51, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-12341337>.

*ṣāliḥ* ("pious ancestors") referring to the first three generations of Muslims, who are particularly revered. This idea is also expressed in the Prophet's words in several traditions.<sup>4</sup> In developing the study of Salafists, Western researchers have found that several parts or types of Salafists may be traced regarding ideology or societal conditions. As mentioned by Roel Meijer in the *Introduction of the book Global Salafism*, the three types have the same general characteristics, namely the spirit to return to the Qur'an and Hadith.<sup>5</sup>

The book, written by Roel Meijer and his friends, explores the characteristics of Salafism from several perspectives: its doctrine, its relationship with politics, its relationship with the concept of jihad, its movements locally and globally, and the development of a unique identity for Salafi youth around the world. The choosing of Roel Meijer's study as the basis of discussion in this article is important because he has a deep understanding of the roots of Salafism and has already published many works focusing on this topic, for example: "Conclusion" in *Salafism after the Arab Uprisings* written on 2016 and "The Problem of the Political in Islamist Movements," in: *Whatever Happened to the Islamists? Salafis, Heavy Metal Muslims, and the Lure of Consumerist Islam*, written in 2012. Meijer has already dug data related to Salafism and various branches of ideology claimed to be part of Salafism, like the Islamic Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and many others.

Looking at the research headline, the division of Salafi into 3 groups is as follows: pure Salafi with its doctrine, Salafis who are close to political movements or even actively involved in them, and Salafis who have the core of thought and movement to realize jihad. Salafi typology is divided into three groups, following the theory initiated by Quintan Wiktorowicz, stating that the division of the groups is based on their contextual interpretation.<sup>6</sup> The structure of the article written by Roel Meijer and friends in describing the overall content of the book "Global Salafism" written by him and several scientists consisting of several disciplines, including politics, history, Islamic specialization, anthropology and even public security-related sciences that the author will review in the sub-discussion. There are some advantages and disadvantages of the typology of Salafism introduced by Roel Meijer. Among the advantages is that it covers all types of Salafism and helps the reader distinguish between some types of Salafi even though they seem close and cannot be differentiated. Another reason is that it focuses on ideological roots and facilitates comparative studies. While the disadvantages of this typology may also relate to the advantages because it covers all types of Salafism, sometimes this kind of typology may also include another group of Muslims that are not part of Salafi to be claimed as one of it, for example, the Islamist like Muhammad Abduh or Jamaluddin Al-Afghani. Due to its deep focus on the ideological roots when the Salafi become radicalized, it may also ignore other aspects like socio-economic conditions, personal grievances, etc.

However, Susanne Olsson highlights the frequent overextension and indiscriminate use of the term "Salafi" to describe groups that might not genuinely adhere to Salafi principles. This tendency becomes especially problematic in minority settings, where external pressures influence group behaviors and lead to the conflation of various movements under the label of Salafism.<sup>7</sup> In addition to that, the concept of "post-Salafism," along with its inherent contradictions and its collaborations with other Islamic movements, is not thoroughly examined in Meijer's analysis. Exploring this

<sup>4</sup> Meijer, R. "Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement," 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199333431.001.0001>.

<sup>5</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (August 19, 2006): 207–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100500497004>.

<sup>6</sup> Susanne Olsson, "Proselytizing Islam - Problematizing Salafism," *The Muslim World* 104, no. 1–2 (January 2014): 171–97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12046>.

<sup>7</sup> Besnik Sinani, "Post-Salafism: Religious Revisionism in Contemporary Saudi Arabia," *Religions* 13, no. 4 (April 10, 2022): 340, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040340>.

development further could provide valuable insights into its impact on Salafi ideology and its worldwide influence.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, this study aims to uncover the models and typologies of Salafism that have evolved at the local level in Indonesia and address misconceptions that persist among certain groups that, in essence, do not fall within the Salafi category.

## Discussion

### The Doctrine of Salafism

In the Salafi doctrine, the Qur'ān is considered the language of God and the life of the Prophet Muhammad is a perfect life and example, so these two things are finally recorded into the Mushaf Al-Qur'ān, and the Hadith of the Prophet are used as the main reference. They hold the texts of these two sources so tightly that they tend to be called literalists.

Starting the discussion of the doctrine, Roel Meijer raises the question, is Salafi a movement purely for da'wah and tarbiyah that can be considered *quietist* or apolitical? Or is the Salafi a movement that is active and close to politics? If it is neither, then which movement is it more inclined towards?

The Wahabi movement established by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab became one of the main studies of this research by stating that the basic concept of the Wahabi movement is inviting people to glorify God or monotheism to God. The consequence of the movement is that many other groups intersect with Wahabi because these other groups are considered to have carried out activities that are shrouded in shirk or contain heresy. However, Roel Meijer states that there is a contradiction from these Wahabis who do not follow the two figures who are the main sources of this movement, namely Imam Ahmad and Ibn Taymiyyah, who are described as passive (*quietist*) and active but not to the extent of dubbing other groups that do not follow the concept of monotheism with infidels or apostates.

In other parts of the world, some have the same concept as that put forward by Wahabi, namely, returning to the Qur'an and Hadith but with a different model. For example, in Yemen, Muhammad bin Ali As-Syaukani encouraged the movement to return to the Qur'an and hadith and do *ijtihad*. Then, there were also movements in India, such as the Deobandi Madrasa and the Tabligh Jama'ah. However, the latter two tend to be more tolerant and reject violence in their preaching. In terms of political views, Deobandi still has a contribution and activeness in political issues, as evidenced by the relationship between Deobandi in Pakistan, which is quite close to the Taliban in Afghanistan. At the same time, Tabligh Jama'ah is considered to have absolutely no interest in politics because it still adheres to their statement, "The correct solution to solving the problems of the ummah is to increase faith and return to Allah".

In "Global Salafism," Meijer also mentioned that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a type of Salafi reformer led by several Muslim thinkers such as Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (1839-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Rashid Ridha (1865-1935). He mentioned that this movement had different characteristics from the previously mentioned Salafi movement because this type of Salafi movement was a response to Western cultures. These political and economic threats come from the West, but some scientific models or knowledge of the West are still accepted. It is different from the pure Salafis who reject everything that comes from the West, even the technology.

Responding to the point of the type of Salafi reformer as mentioned by Meijer, in the book *The Making of Salafism*, Henri Lauziere mentions that there is a wrong naming of the term for *ishlah* circles

<sup>8</sup> Henri Lauzière, "The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century," December 8, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.7312/columbia/9780231175500.001.0001>.

such as Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and Muhammad Rashid Ridha with the term Salafi initiated by Louis Massignon which was then never corrected even after 100 years later. Ahmad Raisuni, a Moroccan Islamic scholar, stated that the term Salafi or Salafism had the effect of destroying the reputation of one or certain groups of Muslims.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1920s why the name Salafiyyah was wrongly attributed to the *ishlah* movement, one of them is because of the bookstore and printing press founded by Al-Khatib and Qatlan in Cairo called Salafiyyah which gained great success and its books were sought after by people both in the Middle East itself and from outside. The books in the store in the 1910s presented themes identical to the typical modernist Salafi. Some *ishlah* journals/magazines, such as Al-Manar, Al-Hilal and al-Muqtataf, even praised them.

Henri Lauziere tried to get us to look at Salafism from the correct historical concept and concludes that Westerners should give up three bad habits: 1) that is to no longer claim that Al-Afghani or Abduh had led a new version of Salafism or used the slogan *Salafiyyah* in their movement, 2) we need to abandon the assumption that Salafism is a recognized concept. Even as a concept, it must be marginalized, let alone assuming that Salafism is a movement. 3) We need to discard the myths created by Massignon, such as the claim that Ridha is the inventor of Salafism and so on.<sup>10</sup>

Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab is considered someone who can place the Wahabi movement between quietists and activists because of his role in embracing the figure of the leader of several Arab tribes in the Najd Region, Muhammad bin Sa'ud, in 1744. These two coalitions between leaders and scholars eventually formed a dynasty that went hand in hand: the Shaykh Family (Alu Shaykh) and the dynasty of leaders called the Sa'ud Family (Alu Su'ud). Since the coalition is mutually beneficial to each other, where the role of the shaykh family is to approach the community and spread religious fatwas that benefit the government, one of which is the doctrine of *al-wala' and al-bara'*, which requires its followers to obey the leader with absolute obedience, then they also have reciprocity of ease of spreading Wahhabism with financial support and also ease of bureaucracy or regulations in teaching and preaching.

The turning point of the Wahabi change in Saudi Arabia began with modernity due to the country's role as a major oil producer in 1950 and even after the oil crisis of 1973. These conditions made Saudi Arabia undergo drastic changes, from a small and isolated country to a rich country that received world attention. Meijer stated the reason for the emergence of several new faces of Salafism, which initially was an apolitical and passive movement. Still, due to the touch of modernity and its struggle with Western countries, there was a Salafism movement that tended to political movements and even jihad networks that had a hard understanding.

The Wahabi movement experienced friction with some modern Salafis, which caused the understanding of modern Salafis to become more radical. Meijer mentions four things used as case studies, one of which is the criticism of a Nashiruddin Al-Albani to Wahabism, as discussed by Stephane Lacroix, that Salafism practiced in Saudi is not a true concept. This movement has deviated from its original purpose because they practiced *taqlid* to the Hanbali madhhab when their original goal was to return to the Qur'an and Sunnah and avoid *taqlid*. This criticism made Al-Albani's ideas considered quite radical because it has shaken the establishment of the Hanbali madhhab that the Saudi Government has patented. However, radicalism did not reach the action stage because it is limited to the courage to be different from the government.

Furthermore (second) which is also a point of friction is the concept of *al-Wala' and al-Bara'* which turns out to be understood with an exaggerated approach so that it raises a strong point of protest

<sup>9</sup> Henri Lauzière, "The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century."

<sup>10</sup> Natana J. DeLong-Bas, "Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad," July 15, 2004.

against the Saudi government which is considered not Bara' (freeing itself) to the Western world, as understood by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi or Juhayman Al-Utaybi who terrorized and occupied the Grand Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Haram*) in 1979. The third point of radicalization of the concept of Wahabism is their anti-Shia understanding, which later also became the basis of Muhammad Surur Zainal Abidin's (born 1938) thinking and then influenced the violent actions initiated by Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi (2006).

Another point of radicalism that is considered to have originated from Wahabism is the existence of *hisbah* or Sharia police that enforce *amr ma'ruf* and *nahy munkar*. This concept is considered violent because it often forces people to perform certain worship in the public space or prohibits immorality in the public space, such as smoking, worshiping sacred things and other shirking things. *Hisbah* as a tool of social control practiced by Wahabi was then considered radical when applied by Sayyid Qutub (1906-1966) in Egypt through Jama'ah Islamiyah because the *hisbah* model reached the stage of using it to legalize revolution against the government in 1970 and 1980.

One of the interesting things about reading Roel Meijer's article is the opinion that Salafis tend to be fragmented in their thoughts and thus increasingly fragmented, for example, what happened to Jama'ah Islamiyah in Egypt or what happened to Umar Talib's group in Indonesia, or what happened in Ethiopia and Britain.

The fragmentation that occurred among Salafism occurred due to several aspects:

1. There are different interpretations of Qur'anic and hadith texts due to their literal methods, which are sometimes too rigid.
2. The differences in regions or locations/countries also lead to interpretations that sometimes follow the prevailing culture in those places, creating new fragments in the Salafi culture.
3. Political differences or political attitudes.
4. There is also fragmentation caused by determining who is most worthy of being the main reference in religious matters, who is worthy of being called an *ustadz*, and so on.
5. The rapid development of the media has also contributed to the fragmentation of Salafism due to the emergence of individuals with different interpretations.
6. External factors can also cause such fragmentation. For example, interaction with other groups outside Salafism can result in different responses to external pressures.

Although these Wahabis are considered the basis of the radical elements of some other Salafi models, Natana J. DeLong Bas thinks otherwise. She commented that Wahabi was never known before, especially in America. Still, since the 9/11 case, the conversation about Wahabi has even become a household conversation because of the information that talks about it. In his book entitled *Wahhabi Islam from Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*, she mentioned that there are many misconceptions about Westerners in recognizing Wahabi and then assuming that Osama bin Laden is a Wahabi.

Natana explicitly mentioned the points of misunderstanding by saying, for example, that Bin Laden called for jihad while Ibn Abdul Wahhab called for monotheism. Another difference is that jihad initiated by Bin Laden is an uncompromising concept of jihad, while Ibn Abdul Wahhab called for compromise and agreement with the opponent. Ibn Abdul Wahhab invited a good agreement between Jews and Christians as they described the Muslim community of Medina at the time of the Apostle, while the concept promoted by bin Laden was to kill all infidels and even tell his people to destroy their properties and assets. Fundamental matters related to differences in the concept of jihad make the boundaries between bin Laden's thought and Wahabism promoted by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab quite far apart.

Natana also highlighted a unique thing because it looked at Wahabi's thoughts from the point of view of women, that some aspects are also misunderstood by some Westerners regarding Ibn Wahab's views on women. For example, Natana commented on one of Ibn Wahab's writings that discussed marriage and divorce, that women are even involved in these two affairs, and not only as objects that are bargained for or sold, even to the extent that women are allowed to choose their future husbands and propose marriage conditions such as not wanting to be polygamous, which perhaps in that era women were still objects for men in many cases.<sup>11</sup>

From the study of Natana's works, Wahhabism and Salafi are different terms. Wahhabism is an epithet of a smaller group of Salafism, the purist or the quietist. The definition of Salafism can be divided into three: Quietist, activist and jihadist.

## Discussion

### Identity and Empowerment

When seen from the perspective of its doctrine, Salafi is unique because its understanding can change one's outlook on life, so it has the confidence to deal with other groups and seems privileged to claim the truth. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood or Hizbut Tahrir, which focused on political issues, because Salafis departed from the doctrine of purity, they have advantages regarding universal values and are not limited by location. As mentioned by Mohammad Ali Adraoui in the case of Salafis in France, they dare to say "we are better than you" to others because they have high self-confidence. The feeling of superiority has 6 dimensions: 1) Not too revolutionary, 2) The superiority is claimed to be based on knowledge (religion), 3) The superiority is shown with a strong identity in the form of a different appearance, 4) Universal, 5) Although it is quietist in politics, but it is activist in terms of the missions of calling to Salafism, 6) There is a side of ambiguity and flexibility in an understanding related to political dogma even though they claim that their doctrine is rigid and clear, it is what makes sometimes there are groups that support the government and some reject it.

How the Salafi phenomenon could become global because the recognized personality change does occur among migrant youth (second generation) who are finally touched by Salafi understanding in several parts of the world, especially in Europe, as stated by Adraoui (France) and Martijn de Koning (Netherlands). In Bale, Ethiopia, the spread of Salafism is seen as a way to overcome the identity crisis of the modern world. According to Terje Ostebo, it began to enter youth communities after the fall of the Marxist Derg regime in 1991, at a time when many youths were disoriented and in an ideological and psychological vacuum. Salafism gave hope to their empty purpose in life, so its ideology was very well received there. In Saudi Arabia, which is the heart of Salafism itself, there is also a new generation of Salafi models that are more critical of the government, as stated by Madawi Rasheed.<sup>11</sup>

There is a paradox in the Salafi understanding presented by both de Koning and Ostebo that although they showed a very exclusive personality identity and even rejected their own culture, even they also severely limited their relationship with non-Muslims as the concept of *al-Walaa'* and *al-Baraa'* they hold, they still related to non-Muslims also in economic matters with quotes "as long as their loyalty remains to their Salafi community".<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement."

<sup>12</sup> Zoltan Pall and M.J.M. de Koning, "Being and Belonging in Transnational Salafism: Informality, Social Capital and Authority in European and Middle Eastern Salafi Networks," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 6, no. 1 (March 9, 2017): 76–103, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-12341338>.

## Politics

Meijer admitted that the political aspect is the only aspect that complicates the classification of Salafis. The political dimension used by Salafi can be classified into three forms: 1) Quietist or passive but indirectly involved, such as advising the leader although not openly; 2) Covert or passive but directly involved in political matters in the form of groups; and 3) Involved in active politics and invites changes in the form of politics. This third form is included in Islamic political groups such as *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, the Sahwa movement in Saudi Arabia, and Jama'ah Islamiyah in Egypt.

In the next paragraph, he also criticized some of the views of passive Salafis (*quietists*) who, because of their apolitical side, even seem to support colonialism and caused criticism from political Salafis such as *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*. Nasiruddin Al-Albani stated that the Palestinians are better off choosing to leave Palestine to save their Islamic creeds and security in worship than fighting to defend their land. Being in a place that Israel occupies will only make it difficult for them to worship. Similarly, Muqbil Hadi Al-Wadi'i also stated that South Yemen is better to be in the grip of the British government than to be independent but under a socialist government and cause the death of several Muslims. Similar thoughts were also expressed by some Salafi groups in Indonesia when the Soeharto regime was overthrown in 1998, who later regretted the event.

However, in reality, this apolitical thinking will never last forever because religion and politics can never be separated in Islam. As asserted by Noorhaidi, the closer a group is to puritanical beliefs and religious knowledge, the more it will understand reality and eventually tend to criticize governments that are deviant, corrupt or not in favor of Islam.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Al-Albani then dared to say that the Al-Sa'ud regime was an illegitimate leader because the royal family did not come from the Quraysh tribe mentioned in the hadith about the leadership of Muslims. Juhayman Al-Utaybi, with his group JSM (*al-Jama'ah as-Salafiyyah al-Mutasibah*), later condemned the proximity of the Su'ud regime to the West and eventually rebelled at the Grand Mosque. The incident eventually led to Al-albani's expulsion from Saudi Arabia, followed by Muqbil Hadi, a member of JSM, being sent back to Yemen.

This expulsion did not happen to two other students of Al-Albani, Rabi' bin Hadi Madkhali and Muhammad Aman al-Jami, who supported the government's decision to send American troops in 1990. Because of this stance, they received strategic roles by becoming central figures in several important institutions, such as the Islamic University of Madinah. According to Adraoui, the apolitical Salafi trend in Islamic campuses, such as the Islamic University of Medina, eventually made many students central figures in important institutions such as the Islamic University of Medina. The Islamic University of Medina eventually made many graduates who returned to European countries such as France and the Netherlands apply apolitical Salafi.<sup>14</sup>

The political dimension in Salafism thought can be caused by strong elements of nationalism, such as in Palestine, or strong ethnic conflicts, such as in Bale, Ethiopia and also because of a more developed political situation, such as in Egypt. Some of these things make the position of al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun stronger than the quietist Salafis, and vice versa when there are no such things. While the conditions of society are also desperate and radicalized, the jihadist side of the Salafis is stronger, as happened in Algeria in 1990, the second war in Chechnya, or the American invasion of Iraq. Although Salafis and *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* are often related like oil and water, which cannot mix, it is also known in the historical record that several times these two groups made coalitions to face a *common enemy*, such as in Indonesia in the 1980s and 1990s when facing Soeharto's New Order, there was a joint study group that had the slogan "Beraqidah Salafi, Bermanhaj Ikhwani".

<sup>13</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, "Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia," January 1, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Mohamed-Ali Adraoui, "Salafism Goes Global: From the Gulf to the French Banlieues," April 23, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190062460.001.0001>.

## Jihadi Salafi

Islam, as understood by Wiktorowicz, divided jihad into two types: offensive jihad and defensive jihad. This active jihad is a jihad carried out to spread Islam and control *dar al-harb*, which at this time is not carried out by any Muslim. At the same time, this defensive jihad is a type that defends itself from attacks from outsiders to maintain faith and security. But Al-Qaeda here as one of the groups that is considered to have a Salafi slice but is quite radical, apparently understands their attack actions, even against western civilians, with the title of defensive jihad as they understand that they are the target of murder and cruelty of the Americans so that everything they do is jihad to defend themselves.<sup>15</sup>

In this section, Meijer emphasized the main difference between quietist or Wahabi Salafis and Jihadi Salafis, where Jihadi Salafis are concerned with analyzing reality and changes in reality and are, therefore, sensitive to political issues. In contrast, Salafis, whose source is Wahabism, emphasized only *aqeedah* issues such as *tawhid* or shirk, so they sometimes seem to lose their reactive side to reality and political issues. Because of this difference, the *aqeedah* held by jihadi Salafis also evolved and finally, with its full energy, made jihad its main movement. The Jihadi Salafis found their common ground in the opinions of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) on the matter of ignorance and the power of Allah. Other examples that could be considered representative of how contemporary jihadists combine their thought with Salafi's thoughts include those of Yusuf Al-Uyairi or Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.

Meijer implied that Wahabism has a strategic role in the birth of radical Salafi jihadi ideas because they have many embryonic thoughts in common. But he also cited a question from Hegghammer, which again raises confusion over the definition of Salafism itself when it is associated with politics and jihadism, how Salafism can be identified with groups that are different, like Nasiruddin Al-Albani and Muqbil Hadi, who tend to be quietist with groups that clearly show their radicalism like Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi or Abu Yahya al-Libi. However, Hegghammer then ended the confusion by proposing a new model of analysis that distinguished the extent to which their work in politics influenced them. That is why he finally differentiated the Salafi groups into three: 1) Islamic orientation (Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi), 2) Moral orientation (semi-Salafis in Egypt like Jama'ah Islamiyah) and 3) sectarian like Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. Those who already have a more developed political thought and focus on the development of the nation and state and are nationalist are also considered as another form of Salafism represented by *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, Hamas or Sahwa in Saudi Arabia.

## Local and Global

In his book or article discussing Salafis in Jordan, Wiktorowicz mentioned how Salafis differ from al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun in terms of not using organizational means to carry out their da'wah or activities. Another concern of Wiktorowicz is how the dogma of Salafism is spread even though they do not have or function as an organization. The spread is through private meetings, seminars, scientific publications, and close relationships between students and teachers, all of which make the bond of Salafi brotherhood feel solid.

However, there is a reason why they did not use organizations as a means of development, one of which is because of the government's ban, especially after the 1990s, especially on Salafi organizations with jihadist beliefs such as the Qur'an and *Sunna Society*. For this reason, after the government banned their formal form, they eventually changed to an informal form that made their movement more flexible and had many alternatives to regroup their community. So, they continue to

<sup>15</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam."



use classic mobilization methods in developing their communities, such as recruitment, communication and information dissemination.

Some other factors that are suspected of contributing to the spread of Salafism of any kind worldwide are educational institutions looking at the role of the Islamic University of Medina and the institution of Muqbil Hadi in Yemen, for example, and Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia that have a Salafi understanding. The case of the spread of Salafism in Indonesia was specifically researched by Din Wahid, finding that the LIPIA institution was among those who had an important role in the propagation of Salafists, and there were 50 Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia in 2014 that were affiliated with Salafism in 2014.<sup>16</sup>

It is also mentioned that the first time Salafism finally became a global trend was mainly when the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh bin Baz, issued a fatwa on the permissibility of stationing American soldiers in Saudi Arabia in 1990-1991. However, the transnational Salafi movement was hampered when conditions in certain places were deemed less conducive. For example, Hroub mentioned that what happened in the West Bank and Gaza was a battle of nationalism that was very dominant, so understandings like Salafism were not accepted and difficult to develop.<sup>17</sup> So, as the book opens, Meijer emphasized that the role of the book is significant enough to prove that the more global a Salafi movement/understanding is, the more it will be fragmented, contradicted or fragmented by the circumstances that existed in different places.

### Sa'id Buthi's view

One Syrian scholar who also has an intellectual closeness to Salafis because he was involved in several criticisms with Salaf scholars, Sa'id Ramadhan Al-Buthi, mentioned the beginning of the term "salafiyah". It is important to mention Sa'id Al-Buthi's perspective to clarify the misconception addressed to other non-Salafi groups. Previously, the term salafiyah had not been found, even by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, who also took salaf thought. The term salafiyah was initially intensively used as a *brand* by the People's Reconciliation Movement led by Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. Both of them took this name because they departed from the mission of saturation, seeing the state of the Muslims around them who had been trapped with heresy and *khurafat*. It was coupled with Al-Azhar's helplessness in responding to the issues in the community, stating that Al-Azhar only became a static institution and passed down old texts that had no connection with people's lives. Al-Azhar is considered to have allowed the emergence of Sufism, which has no basis in religion and even happened on their campus.<sup>18</sup>

Shaykh Buthi also mentioned that there was no connection between Wahabi and the *Islah* movement. Wahabis today prefer to use the term Salafi and finally patented the use of the term because it is considered more able to cover more groups, including scholars, in the early days. It also avoids the image that they only base their ideology on the thoughts of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab as the originator of Salafi thought. The term was also eventually used to strengthen the group's slogan so that it became a separate school that characterized and distinguished it from other groups of thought.

<sup>16</sup> Din Wahid, "Nurturing Salafi Manhaj; A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia," *Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 15, no. 2 (July 1, 2015): 367–76, <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v15i2.413>.

<sup>17</sup> Khaled Hroub and Khaled Hroub, "Salafi Formations in Palestine and the Limits of a De-Palestinised Milieu," *Holy Land Studies* 7, no. 2 (December 8, 2008): 157–81, <https://doi.org/10.3366/e1474947508000206>.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Saeed Ramadhan al-Buthi, *As-Salafiyah Marhalah Zamaniyah Mubarakah Laa Madzhabun Islamiy* (Damascus: Daar al-Fikr, 1988).

## Muhammad Imarah's view

In his two books, "As-Salafiyah" and "As-Salaf was Salafiyah," Muhammad Imarah discussed the ideology and origins of the Salafiyah. How their ideology was formed, their attitude towards text and reason, and the development of the Salafiyah movement.

The Salafiyah referred to by Muhammad Imarah in the book "As-Salafiyah" is the Salafiyah that has a tendency towards the quietist model as described by Meijer, but Imarah emphasized that the origin of the Salafi here is actually from the hadith experts as they claimed. Some scholars they relied on in almost all their issues, especially those related to aqeedah, are, for example, Ibn Mubarak. In his book "As-Salaf was Salafiyah," Imarah also stated that Salaf is one of them is a response to the rampant development and learning of Greek philosophy, according to Aristotle and others, which caused Muslims to lose direction. Therefore, Ahmad bin Hanbal then determined that the *manhaj* he and his students held was a manhaj that referred to the texts of the Salaf, which Muslims had increasingly abandoned at that time.<sup>19</sup>

In the book As-Salafiyah, Imarah further emphasized how Salafiyah viewed politics. The perception of politics held by these Salafis is a perception that makes religion separate from politics. Ibn Taymiyyah or Ibn Qayyim stated that politics is included in "Syarak and Shari'ah". It can be proven by how Ibn Qayyim in *I'lamul Muwaqqi'in* quoted a dialogue between Ibn Aqil and scholars from the Shafi'i school of thought about politics and then emphasized at the end that there are no separate terms of shari'ah and politics because politics can be part of shari'ah as long as the method is correct.

Imarah added to this critique of Salafism with their concept of shariah by saying that they rejected the political views of scholars as being included in shariah but instead thought that upholding justice, realizing *maslahat* and minimizing *madharat* in society are all shariah. There is also a view of Salafism related to politics that has also been criticized by Imarah, namely how they view *waliy amr* or a leader as the shadow of Allah on earth, which is too excessive. According to Imarah, politics is developed because human life developed or can also be termed human civilization, so politics has nothing to do with Sharia.

This view cannot be separated from the thoughts of some Salafi scholars in medieval times, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, who finally changed the views of previous scholars who approved the permissibility of revolution and issued fatwas prohibiting revolutions because of the many bitter experiences of countries that failed to carry out revolutions and caused many victims to fall. This thinking stems from how they saw the leadership in their era as very tainted with injustice, so they also took the arguments and opinions that mentioned the prohibition of rebelling or leaving the legitimate leadership, especially if it came to using the sword or violence. They quoted the opinion of Imam Ahmad, for example, who said that a person called *amirul mukminin* must always be considered a leader even if he committed crimes and many other opinions that further strengthened them to issue fatwas related to the leadership. It is also why Ibn Taymiyyah said that 60 years of life under the leadership of a dictator is more beneficial than one night without a leader.

The fatwa related to the prohibition of rebelling against a leader is also reinforced by Ibn Qayyim by quoting a hadith of the Companions who asked permission from the Prophet to fight leaders who like to be late for prayer. The Prophet then did not give this permission and replied that as long as they prayed, there was no need to fight them. Ibn Qayyim's opinion is criticized by Imarah, who compared how this hadith can be used to strengthen the fatwa of the prohibition of revolution when prayer is a matter between a servant and his God. At the same time, injustice can damage an entire community. Injustice in Muhammad Imarah's eyes is certainly more severe than not praying. Imarah

<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Imarah, *As-Salaf Wa as-Salafiyah* (Cairo: Wizarah Awqaf, 2008).

also added that there is one hadith that is forgotten by the Salafi leaders, namely a hadith that was also narrated by Imam Ahmad, who became their source of inspiration told about Hudzaifah bin Yaman's question to the Prophet about the place of refuge when there is a lot of evil, and then the Prophet replied that the answer was the sword. From Imarah's comments, Muhammad Imarah tends to recognize that revolution is legitimate, even with certain limitations.

Interestingly, Imarah mentioned that Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh were the originators of the salafiyah madrasa, as well as Abdur Rahman al-Kawakibi and Abdul Hamid bin Badis. However, there was a difference in the perception they took because, in *aqeedah*, they took the old Salafi *aqeedah*. Still, they tended to follow the rational mu'tazilah in addressing worldly matters and human civilization. This combination created a new type of Salafi, a type of Salafi that could combine a return to the truth (*nusush*) with strong rationality.<sup>20</sup> Here, Imarah differs between Islamist and Salafism because, according to what was already described at the beginning of the research, the typical group of Muslims who use strong rationality cannot be regarded as Salafi at all.

### Recent Typology of Salafism in Indonesia

The Salafi movement in Indonesia has developed into two main branches: puritanical and jihadi. The puritanical Salafi group is deeply committed to the core teachings of Salafism, focusing on cleansing Islamic practices of elements they view as innovations, heresies, or superstitions. They emphasize religious education and preaching, promoting a strict and literal interpretation of Islamic teachings. Avoiding political activism, they concentrate on spiritual and doctrinal discipline, directing efforts toward individual and community moral development. Their creation of pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools) demonstrates their dedication to fostering a society rooted in their values.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, the jihadi Salafi faction combines their theological principles with active political participation and, at times, militant actions to pursue an Islamic governance system. Both local and global political dynamics have shaped their emergence. This group often engages in political movements and has occasionally participated in armed conflicts, such as in the Moluccas region of Indonesia. Their activities are justified through religious decrees from well-known Middle Eastern scholars, helping them gain support from transnational Islamic networks while remaining relevant in local socio-political settings.<sup>22</sup>

Despite their differences, both groups show flexibility in adapting to Indonesia's diverse society. For example, puritanical Salafis have toned down their exclusive rhetoric, incorporating national education standards into their pesantren to comply with government regulations and attract more students.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, jihadi factions have, at times, moderated their views to build alliances or adjust to changing political conditions, ensuring their ongoing relevance.

This pragmatic approach highlights a broader trend within the Salafi movement, where both branches strive to balance ideological fidelity with societal integration. Through modernized education, strategic media use, and adjustments to cultural contexts, they continue to shape Indonesia's religious landscape while maintaining their foundational beliefs.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Imarah, *As-Salafiyah* (Susah: Daar al-Ma'arif, n.d.).

<sup>21</sup> Ahmad Syamsir et al., "Salafi Puritanism in Indonesia," *International Journal of Islamic Khazanah* 11, no. 2 (July 5, 2021): 134–49, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijik.v11i2.13199>.

<sup>22</sup> Hasan, "Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia."

<sup>23</sup> Nafik Muthohirin, Muhammad Kamaludin, and Fahrudin Mukhlis, "Salafi Madrasas: Ideology, Transformation, and Implication for Multiculturalism in Indonesia," *FIKRAH* 10, no. 1 (June 21, 2022): 81, <https://doi.org/10.21043/fikrah.v10i1.14380>.

## Conclusion

The typology of Salafi introduced by Wictorowicz and its refinement by Roel Meijer has been quite helpful in unraveling the problem of categorization of Salafi and provided some answers related to the debates that arise within the Salafi community itself. However, the many debates about Salafis that never end also originated from the misconceptions attached to the Salafis themselves. These misconceptions do not only arise among Western scholars or the Western lay community towards Salafis but also among some internal Muslims themselves, even those who claim to be part of the Salafis themselves.

Some of the misconceptions in Western circles, such as the naming of the term Salafi to the Ishlah group addressed by Louis Massignon, turned out to be a mistake. For example, as expressed by Natana J. Delong Bas, the original thoughts of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab are not the same as the thoughts of Osama bin Laden or those who represent Al-Qaeda because both the thoughts and actions of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab contain humanist values that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were considered progressive, for example, the freedom to propose conditions for marriage and divorce.

The next misconception comes from within Muslims themselves and even from internal Muslims who come from the Salafis themselves but have excessive and different views from the thoughts of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab so that they react more radically, such as excessive views of the concept of *al-walaa' and al-baraa'*, then excessive hatred of the Shi'a to the extent of justifying war with them, and other misconceptions are the application of *amr ma'ruf nahy munkar* which is also excessive so that it tends to be coercive, especially to use special institutions that have aspects of legality from the government.

In Indonesia, Salafism has split into two main types: puritanical, focused on theological purity and education, and jihadi, blending ideology with political activism and occasional militancy. Both have adapted to Indonesia's pluralism by modernizing education, engaging culturally, and using media to broaden their reach, reflecting Salafism's evolving and varied role in the country's religious sphere.

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